

“GIVE ME MY CHILD BACK”: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC  
EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School

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“GIVE ME MY CHILD BACK”: EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC  
EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

The twentieth century saw the splintering of evangelical confidence in the project of public education. During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists fought to keep evolution out of the classroom but largely accepted that public schools must be secular. The 1940s and 1950s saw a renaissance in evangelical scholarship that included an emerging critique of secular education influenced by Dutch Calvinist scholars who were increasingly leaving their ethnic enclaves and played a growing role in conservative seminaries. Evangelical theologians increasingly worried that secular education communicated to students that religion was unimportant, even when paired with religious devotionals reintroduced during the Cold War. After the Supreme Court struck down school prayer and Bible in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington v. Schempp* (1963), several prominent evangelical thinkers argued in *Christianity Today* that the public schools needed not devotional prayer but the inclusion of religious perspectives in the curriculum. Yet as the late 1960s and 1970s brought new sex education curriculum, increased teaching of evolution, and other changes in the public schools, a growing number of evangelicals worried that public education had taken a wrong turn. When evangelical philosopher Francis Schaeffer argued that all education was based in underlying presuppositions and that education by definition could not be neutral, he found a ready audience. During the 1980s, a collection of evangelical and fundamentalist writers influenced by Schaeffer's ideas warned that the public schools had fallen under the influence of “secular humanism.” Nineteenth century evangelicals had supported the project of public education in part because the public schools served as a method for assimilating the children of immigrants into American society. Now, these evangelicals worried that their

children were the ones being assimilated—into an America they no longer recognized. By the end of the century, leaders of the emerging Christian Right began to call for dismantling public education entirely. This is the story of how some evangelicals lost confidence in public education, gave up their longstanding opposition to public funding for private education, and became among of the nation’s staunchest supporters of school choice.

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## Introduction

I set out to write a dissertation on the interplay between the Christian Right and concerns about children during the 1980s. This is not that dissertation. As I delved into my first topic, school prayer, I found something that piqued my interest and sent me in a different direction. During the 1980s, many evangelicals identified the *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington v. Schempp* (1963)—in which the Supreme Court struck down prayer and Bible reading in the public school—as the genesis of a multitude of problems in the public schools. However, when I looked at sources from the 1960s and 1970s, I found that these decisions initially had the support of many evangelical leaders. Going back still further, I found that during the 1950s evangelical theologians formulated a critique of the public schools that included an objection to devotional exercises such as school prayer and Bible reading.

Evangelical theologians' frustration with the public schools during the 1950s, a decade that would later become a locus of conservative nostalgia, pushed me to examine still older sources. It also led me to another question. Scholars looking at conflict over religion in the public schools frequently focus on the fundamentalist anti-evolution campaigns of the 1920s or on efforts to restore school prayer over the past four decades. What happened in between? How can historians understand these moments of conflict as part of a progression, rather than as isolated incidents? With this question in mind, I set out to examine fundamentalist and evangelical attitudes toward public education from the 1920s through the 1980s.

Over the course of the twentieth century, fundamentalist and evangelical ideas about the public schools changed in response to both shifts in public education and new developments in theology. While these individuals began the century as strong supporters of the project of public education, many finished it profoundly conflicted about the nature of education, as well as about

their place in the nation. During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists viewed the public schools as crucial to assimilating the children of immigrants, but by the 1970s and 1980s evangelicals increasingly worried that their children were the ones being assimilated. Such criticism of the public schools, combined with the rapid growth of the Christian school movement and the rising political influence at the emergent the Christian Right, helped pave the way for an embrace of school choice that would have been unheard of a century before.

### **What Is an Evangelical?**

British historian David Bebbington identifies four qualities as markers of evangelicalism: “*conversionism*, the belief that life needs to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.” Yet while this quadrilateral formula offers a useful starting point, it is somewhat overbroad and lacking in specifics. George Marsden, a prominent historian of American evangelicalism, defines the term only slightly more narrowly: “people professing complete confidence in the Bible and preoccupied with the message of God’s salvation of sinners through the death of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

A brief overview of the history of evangelicalism in the United States is helpful in identifying this movement’s distinctions. During the nineteenth century, evangelical Protestants held a place of widespread cultural influence. This began to change in the early twentieth century with the emergence of “higher criticism” and scholarly efforts to “modernize” Christianity by bringing it in line with new discoveries in science and psychology. By the 1920s, theological conservatives who contended, in opposition to higher criticism and theological modernism, that

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<sup>1</sup> David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

the Bible was without error—and that the Virgin Birth, the miracles of Jesus, and the resurrection were real events—came to be known as “fundamentalists.” These individuals emphasized the absolute infallibility of the Bible and held that the primary work of the Christian was to spread the gospel. Many fundamentalists embraced dispensational premillennialism, an innovative eschatology that combined the beliefs of nineteenth century millennialist groups that had declared the imminent second coming of Christ with the work of more recent prophesy conferences. Unlike theological modernists, fundamentalists focused not on social uplift and improving the world in this life but on saving as many souls as possible.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the 1920s, the term “fundamentalist” had taken on anti-intellectual connotations. While the decade that followed was a time of rich fundamentalist institution building, a number of movement leaders became increasingly uncomfortable with that label. In 1942, these individuals founded the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and termed themselves “neo-evangelicals.” This new evangelicalism soon found a national spokesman in evangelist Billy Graham. Hoping to create a more positive image and engage more fully and intellectually with the world around them, radio evangelist Charles E. Fuller and theologian Harold Ockenga founded Fuller Theological Seminary and Billy Graham founded a biweekly magazine, *Christianity Today*, installing theologian Carl F. H. Henry as its first editor. Not everyone embraced the new label, however. Some fundamentalists objected to the neo-evangelical movement, which they viewed as compromised. Beginning in the 1940s, then, we can speak of two groups: evangelicals and fundamentalists.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the label “fundamentalist,” see Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-12; and Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America’s Culture Wars* (New York, 2010), 24-40

At mid-century, the primary point of disagreement between evangelicals and fundamentalists was not doctrine or belief—these tended to be similar or identical—but the extent to which believers should work with individuals outside of doctrinally orthodox circles. Graham’s evangelistic crusades, which he frequently planned in coordination with mainline Protestant pastors, became a point of conflict. By the 1970s, however, this distinction began to erode. When fundamentalist Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority in 1979, he signaled a willingness to cooperate with religious conservatives across denominational and theological lines. Moreover, after several high profile scandals involving fundamentalist televangelists in the late 1980s, another wave of individuals and institutions that had embraced the fundamentalist label shed it for the term evangelical. Some individuals used both terms. The 1970s also saw the emergence of a new evangelical Left open to biblical criticism and progressive politics.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars often use “evangelical” as an umbrella term for a diverse body of groups. Fundamentalists exist as part of what Marsden terms the “evangelical mosaic” and historian Timothy Smith labels the “evangelical kaleidoscope.” “Fundamentalists are evangelicals, but not all evangelicals are fundamentalists,” historian Joel Carpenter wrote in his book on institution building in the 1930s. In this study, I am interested primarily in 1920s fundamentalists and their neo-evangelical descendants. While my focus shifts to neo-evangelicals beginning in the 1940s, fundamentalists never fully disappear from my study, and in my last chapter, as fundamentalists and evangelicals experienced some rapprochement, I bring fundamentalists back into my story more fully, tracing an interplay of ideas that transcended labels.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> George Marsden, “The Evangelical Denomination,” in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), x. Timothy L. Smith, “The Evangelical Kaleidoscope and the Call to Christian Unity,” *Christian Scholar’s Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1986), 125-40, esp. 128. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 8.

## A Note on Sources

For sources, I have relied primarily on periodicals, including the *King's Business*, the *Moody Monthly*, the *Sword of the Lord*, *Christianity Today*, and the *Fundamentalist Journal*, supplemented by a range of books and other promotional materials. During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, fundamentalists organized primarily around a loose network of Bible institutes. With their own theologians, conferences, pastoral training programs, and publications the largest of these Bible institutes could function like denominations. The most prominent, the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, published monthly magazines that were widely read by the pastors and laypeople within their networks. By 1940, the *Moody Monthly* had a circulation of 40,000. Seminaries, including Westminster Theological Seminary, founded in 1929, and Fuller Theological Seminary, founded in 1947, served as another locus for thought and practice, and theologians at these and other seminaries frequently published articles in the *Moody Monthly*, the *King's Business*, and similar periodicals. For much of the twentieth century, these publications served as locations for theological development and the application of conservative religious thought to the modern world.<sup>5</sup>

After its founding in 1956, *Christianity Today* functioned as a mouthpiece for evangelical thought and became the movement's flagship magazine. By 1979, *Christianity Today* was read by 46% of evangelical clergy. It, too, served as a space where evangelical theologians and pastors from seminaries and churches across the country could work out a wide range of theological issues. As part of this process, the editorial board of *Christianity Today* exercised

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<sup>5</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 17-18, 25.

editorial control to keep evangelical thought within certain parameters; content that was considered heretical or out of step with the needs of readers would not be published.<sup>6</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise a range of Christian Right organizations—including the Moral Majority, Concerned Women for America, and Focus on the Family—that augmented fundamentalism and evangelicalism’s undefined network of overlapping spheres of influence. For these decades, I continue to draw on *Christianity Today* and other existing periodicals; doing so allows me to identify shifts in thought during this often-tumultuous period, as Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, and other Christian Right leaders sought to bring religious conservatives into national politics. Yet these years also saw a rise of new forms of communication; Christian Right organizations spoke directly to laypeople without in mailings separate from the editorial review that took place in established periodicals, and TV programs run by individual pastors gained in influence. To address these shifts, I draw on Jerry Falwell’s magazine, the *Fundamentalist Journal*, and delve into a range of books published by Christian Right leaders.

In the absence of a denominational body, theology could change and evolve in ways not monitored by church counsels or resolutions. The informal nature governing the inclusion of groups under the evangelical umbrella could also contribute to theological shifts. The Dutch Calvinist Christian Reformed Church (CRC) joined the NAE for a few years during the 1940s before leaving the body over concerns that it made too many theological compromises. However, CRC scholars still taught at evangelical seminaries, and by the 1950s evangelical theologians not affiliated with the CRC began integrating CRC beliefs into their own ideas about education. While the editorial teams at evangelical periodicals did place some constraint on shifts in theology, their makeup changed over time as well. Furthermore, by the 1970s and 1980s, the

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<sup>6</sup> Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds., *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 178, n. 1.

gatekeepers of evangelicalism began to shift as Christian Right organizations and televangelists operated outside of even the editorial control in place at these periodicals.

The individuals I examine disagreed with each other on everything from theology to approach. The 1920s was home to both J. Frank Norris, who often used provocative language and spoke off the cuff, and J. Gresham Machen, a well-respected theologian who framed his concerns in measured, scholarly language. During 1940s, Harold Ockenga founded the NAE in an attempt to distance himself from the fundamentalist label, with its negative anti-intellectual connotations. Yet as historian Matthew Sutton notes, “the priorities of prewar fundamentalists and postwar evangelicals remained far more alike than not.” What differed was not so much substance as approach. This diversity in style, along with the lack of a single denominational church body, meant that this movement was frequently made up of a cacophony of different perspectives. To address this challenge, I have sought wherever possible to analyze a range of source material, working to bring a variety of characters into conversation with each other.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the sources I examine were created by theologians and pastors, and not by laypeople. This dissertation, then, primarily traces shifting views among fundamentalist and evangelical leaders. The periodicals I examine, however, were typically not designed for a scholarly audience alone. They were consumed by laypeople, and, where possible, I bring letters to the editor into the conversation. Several of these periodicals also had sections that encouraged individuals to write in with questions about the Bible or Christian life. Still, this study looks primarily at thought among pastors and theologians, and not those in the pew.

I have limited my study to white evangelicals. Due to the fraught relationship between race and public education in the United States, black Protestants approached the public schools

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, Ma.: Belknap Press, 2014), xiv.

from a far different perspective and background. Additionally, regional plays only a small role in my analysis. While the periodicals I examine were published in the West, Midwest, and South, the authors of the individual articles published in them were located around the country. I have made a point to note where contributors were located as much as possible.

### **Anxious Churches**

During the twentieth century, fundamentalists and evangelicals frequently approached childrearing with deep concern. Pastors and theologians warned that the family was in decline; that children were growing up religiously illiterate; that juvenile delinquency was on the rise; and that the next generation would be the last one for the church. Fundamentalists and evangelicals were not alone in looking on children and youth with anxiety. Over the course of the century, the United States saw moral panics over everything from flappers to comic books to video games. Historian Paula Fass identified youth as a locus for conservative fears and progressive hopes during the 1920s, and historian Peter N. Stearns found that levels of parental anxiety rose over the course of the twentieth century even as children became safer and better educated. Changing views of children played a role in fomenting this anxiety. Stearns identifies a shift from seeing children as “hardy” to viewing them as “vulnerable,” while historian Steven Mintz argues that modern childhood came to be characterized by a conception of children as “innocent, malleable, and fragile creatures who needed to be sheltered from contamination.”<sup>8</sup>

During the twentieth century, school played an increasingly significant role in children’s lives. In the 1930s, high school attendance became nearly universal; the 1940s saw the development of the term “teenager.” As children spent more time with their peers and less time

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<sup>8</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). Peter N. Stearns, *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2004). Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Ma.: Belknap Press, 2006), 3.

with their families—combined with increased leisure time and declining levels of child labor—new forms of youth culture developed. As the role of the school in children’s lives grew, educators sought to teach children more than reading, writing, and arithmetic, adding “life-adjustment” courses that instructed children in “health, marriage, and family life,” as well as sex education classes. Perceiving that the role they played in their children’s lives had changed, parents sometimes grew critical of professional educators, igniting panics over what children were being taught in school, and by whom.<sup>9</sup>

In the preface to their anthology on children and childhood in American religions, Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore outline four themes to consider when examining children and childhood in American religions: formal doctrinal beliefs; the relationship between adults and children; children’s development and religious formation; and the relationship between religion and culture. While many Americans in the 1920s and 1930s increasingly viewed children as “pure” and “innocent,” fundamentalist pastors and theologians reminded parents that children were still in need of salvation, and placed a strong emphasis on children’s obedience to adult authority figures. Fundamentalists and evangelicals typically lacked the visible markers of religious formation present in the Catholic Church—infant baptism, first communion, confirmation. Unlike many mainline Protestants, they also did not believe that growing up in the church and attending Sunday school was sufficient to a child’s religious formation. Instead, they emphasized children’s need for a genuine conversion experience. Asserting that people were rarely converted as adults, they placed a high degree of pressure on

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<sup>9</sup> On high schools, see Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 239. On the development of the term “teenagers” and new forms of youth culture, see *ibid.*, 251-53. On life adjustment, see *ibid.*, 287-88. For panics, see Natalia Mehlman, “Sex Ed . . . and the Reds? Reconsidering the Anaheim Battle over Sex Education, 1962-1969,” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (May 2007), pp. 203-32; and Adam Laats, *The Other School Reformers: Conservative Activism in American Education* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

the conversion of children *as children*. Their concern that American culture stood at odds with their belief and practice injected only more urgency into their efforts to bring their children—and other children—to a conversion experience before they reached adulthood. Thus children’s religious formation, as well as the relationship between religion and culture—the last two the themes mentioned by Browning and Miller-McLemore—could both be topics of anxiety.<sup>10</sup>

My subjects responded to changing societal ideas about children with a combination of resistance and adaption. Mintz writes that well into the nineteenth century Americans typically viewed children as deficient and approached childhood as a period to be moved through quickly on the way to adulthood. By the mid-twentieth century, however, most Americans had come to see children as innocent and to view childhood as an important period of life in its own right. During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists’ theology led them to retain older ideas about childhood depravity; at the same time, they responded to developing ideas about childhood innocence by increasingly viewing children as predisposed to be spiritually precocious. In Browning and Miller-McLemore’s anthology, sociologists John P. Barkowski and Christopher G. Ellison look at how this process of resistance and adaption could play out in beliefs about discipline: They found that in fundamentalist and evangelical households “an emphasis on children’s submission to parental authority and caregivers’ use of corporal punishment is coupled with progressive child-rearing orientation such as less parental yelling, more affectionate child rearing, and higher levels of parental involvement.” In other words, individuals could retain

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<sup>10</sup> Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, eds., *Children and Childhood in American Religions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 3-5.

some traditional childrearing practices—such as corporal punishment and an emphasis on obedience—while also adopting certain aspects of new societal conceptions of childhood.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalist pastors and theologians frequently expressed grave concern about what changes accompanying modernization were doing to the family—and about the impact changing family norms were having on children. Throughout this period and in the decades that followed, parents were urged to resurrect the “family altar,” a form of family worship that reached its height in the Victorian family. For the evangelical parent, there was little worse than seeing a child leave the faith or enter adulthood unsaved. Raising godly children in the modern world, for many, felt increasingly like navigating a minefield.<sup>12</sup>

### **A Rock and a Hard Place**

My subjects’ ideas about education changed dramatically over the course of the twentieth century, but in one area they remained fairly consistent—education ought to be about imparting known facts and ideas to children rather than about exposing children to a wide body of ideas and urging them to choose for themselves. During the 1950s, two decades before they would make hay of the fact that philosopher John Dewey signed the Humanist Manifesto (a document that calls for improving human welfare outside of the framework of traditional religion), evangelicals objected to the education reformer’s emphasis on experiential learning. Children should be taught known truth, these individuals said, not be encouraged to form their own truth. At issue was not merely who *controlled* education, but also what education *was*.

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<sup>11</sup> John P. Bartkowski and Christopher G. Ellison, “Conservative Protestants on Children and Parenting,” in *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, ed. Browning and Miller-McLemore, 42-55, esp. 43, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002). For the “family altar,” see Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1994).

During the 1970s, feminists and minority groups successfully changed the content of public school reading and social studies textbooks; increasingly, these books included stories from a variety of cultures and a diversity of viewpoints. When a group of Alabama parents and teachers sued, arguing that the school district was violating the Establishment Clause by teaching that “the student must determine right and wrong based only on his experience,” the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit found that “the message conveyed [in the textbooks] is one of a governmental attempt to instill in Alabama public school children such values as independent thought, tolerance of diverse views, self-respect, maturity, self-reliance and logical decision-making ... an entirely appropriate secular effect.” What was the purpose of education? Whose values were reflected in public schools? Whose goals did education policy reflect?<sup>13</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists supported the project of education in part because they viewed the public schools as avenues for Americanizing the children of the nation’s large immigrant population. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the public schools had become less connected to the project of Americanization in the minds of many Americans, and by the 1970s and 1980s, many fundamentalists and evangelicals were no longer confident that public schools *were* effective agents of Americanization—or rather, they worried that the public schools were assimilating children into an America they no longer recognized.

In part, fundamentalists and evangelicals’ objections to the content of public education reflected genuine changes in the curriculum. In part, however, their objections reflected changes in their beliefs about education. During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists typically adhered to Scottish Common Sense Realism: the idea that truth is objective. In this frame of reference, it

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<sup>13</sup> *Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County*, 827 F2d 684 (11th Cir. 1987). Alan Peshkin, *God’s Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 293.

did not matter whether a teacher was Jewish, or Buddhist, or atheist. A rock was a rock was a rock, and—provided a teacher taught only about that rock—their religious beliefs would not impact the content of their instruction. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, many fundamentalists and evangelicals’ ideas about education—and truth—changed. Influential philosopher Francis Schaeffer spread the idea that all beliefs were built on presuppositions. A growing number of fundamentalists and evangelicals questioned whether secular education could be religiously neutral. All education, they argued, communicated someone’s values.

We cannot fully understand either the emergence of the Christian Right or the rise of fundamentalist and evangelical support for school choice without examining the shifts in theology that were foundational to these developments. At the same time, we cannot understand theological shifts without examining cultural changes taking place in the wider society. Would fundamentalists and evangelicals have become politically active in the 1970s and 1980s without the influence of Schaeffer, who declared that Christianity was locked in a struggle with “secular humanism” and urged them to engage in battle rather than passively watching it happen? This question leads to another—would fundamentalists and evangelicals have been susceptible to Schaeffer’s narrative of a “secular humanist” enemy if they had not been so disturbed by the sexual revolution and other cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s?

As the twentieth century drew to a close, fundamentalists and evangelicals increasingly perceived of themselves as marginalized and embattled. My goal in this dissertation is to trace these individuals’ views of public education over the course of the twentieth century, not to examine the truth or falsehood of specific assertions they made about public schools or their curriculum during this period. For example, I do not scrutinize textbooks to determine whether claims made during the 1980s that these texts maligned or omitted evangelical viewpoints had

merit. My focus is on perception. The reader should be aware, however, that evangelicals' claims of anti-Christian bias in the public schools existed alongside claims made by other religious minorities (and atheists) that the public schools enshrined Christian viewpoints and ideals.<sup>14</sup>

### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 1 opens with the 1920s. This decade saw the growth of new forms of youth culture, the emergence of fundamentalism as a cohesive movement, and efforts to ban the teaching of evolution in public schools. This chapter covers fundamentalists' ideas about children (and why they placed so much importance on youth); the family (which they believed was collapsing); and the public schools (which they argued had been infected by modernism). Fundamentalists sought to address concerns about the schools through political activism, working to ban evolution and, in some cases, to mandate Bible reading. Yet while many sects had already created their own parochial schools, fundamentalists did not do so. Despite their complaints about content, fundamentalists remained wedded to the project of public education.

Chapter 2 covers the 1930s and early 1940s. During these decades fundamentalists expressed concern that religious instruction had declined in the school, the church, and the home, leaving many children without any religious education at all. As they withdrew from the political battles that had brought them so much attention during the 1920s, fundamentalists shifted their focus toward new child outreach programs and created their own Sunday school curricula and teacher training networks. A new consensus developed that accepted the increasingly secular nature of many public schools and sought to replace religious material once provided in school with innovative religious education programs that operated parallel to the school. I also examine specific individuals who disagreed with this approach.

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<sup>14</sup> Christian Smith, *American Evangelicals: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

I open Chapter 3 with a discussion of the emergence of neo-evangelicalism, the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals, and the creation, under its umbrella, of the National Association of Christian Schools (NACS). During the mid- to late 1940s and 1950s, evangelical ideas about public education shifted dramatically. By the end of the 1950s, many evangelicals came to believe that secular education sent students the wrong message, even when couched with prayer, Bible reading, and released-time education, practices that increased during the Cold War. The emergence of the Christian school movement was also new. These changes were the result of a number of factors: First, Dutch Calvinist scholars and theologians, who had long supported parochial education, influenced broader evangelicalism in identifiable ways. Second, evangelicals were shocked when *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948) struck down released-time education programs. Third, many evangelicals were deeply concerned by a Cold War culture that embraced ecumenicalism and elevated a “faith in faith” over doctrinal specifics.

Chapter 4 begins with *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington v. Schempp* (1963), the U.S. Supreme Court rulings that struck down school prayer and Bible reading. Evangelical and fundamentalist reaction to these rulings was mixed. In fact, many of the pastors and theologians writing for *Christianity Today* viewed the decisions as an opportunity. They drew on the Court’s statement that public schools could include instruction on the Bible as part of a secular program of education to argue for a greater inclusion of religious perspectives in the public school curriculum. These individuals’ views of *Engel* and *Schempp* shifted as these hoped-for changes failed to materialize and as schools instead gave increased time to sex education and evolution and adopted new reading textbooks that included stories about beliefs and cultures considered pagan or immoral. By the end of the 1970s, many fundamentalists and evangelicals were

convinced that something had gone very wrong with the nation's public schools. In this chapter, I also trace the growth of the Christian school movement and the impact of school desegregation.

In Chapter 5, I cover the 1980s and the emergence of the Christian Right. Concerned by the changes they saw taking place in the public schools, some fundamentalists and evangelicals pointed to the removal of school prayer and Bible reading from the public schools as the origin of these problems. Turning back the clock on these changes by restoring school prayer became one of many hot button issues promoted by the emerging Christian Right. Many individuals were primed to listen when pastors—often through platforms associated with Christian Right organizations—argued that the public schools had become atheist indoctrination centers run by “secular humanists.” Concerned by what they were hearing, a growing number of evangelical and fundamentalist parents turned to Christian schools and homeschooling; those who continued to send their children to the public schools often felt the need to defend their decisions.

### **The Project of Public Education**

The most persistent, substantial change to come out of the transformations outlined in this dissertation is an evangelical embrace of school choice, along with the development of a political movement actively working to dismantle public education, with substantial policy and structural consequences for the United States. Fundamentalists and evangelicals turned toward politics at the very moment they turned away from public schools. The influence of the Christian Right that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s never disappeared. Evangelical voters and the Republican Party became entwined, giving Christian Right groups substantial influence in Washington. As these evangelicals, increasingly critical of the project of public education, called for vouchers and the dismantling of public education, the Republican Party followed suit.

For more than a century, evangelicals were counted among the staunchest supporters of public education. After the 1980s, this was no longer the case. Fundamentalist and evangelical support for school choice today can be understood in part as a lack of confidence in their ability to use the public schools to put their stamp on students. These individuals are not opposed to using the public schools to inculcate a specific mindset or set of values in students. They are opposed to the public schools inculcating what they view as *the wrong* set of values. To be sure, large numbers of fundamentalist and evangelical parents continue to send their children to public schools. Some view the public school as a “mission field” while others argue that it is good for children to be exposed to the world while they are still in the home and can talk through challenging situations or issues with their parents. Many of these parents, too, are likely happy with their local public schools.<sup>15</sup>

Today, national Christian Right organizations are among the most active promoters of school choice, including both vouchers (which provide public funding for private schools) and the creation of charter schools (public schools that are privately run). President Donald Trump’s nomination of private school lobbyist Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education in 2017 makes understanding how we arrived at this point only more important. This, then, is the story of those evangelicals who lost confidence in the project of public education.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Stephen Bates, *Battleground: One Mother's Crusade, the Religious Right, and the Struggle for Control of Our Classrooms* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993). Americans tend to rate their local public schools more favorably than they do the public schools of the nation as a whole. Fundamentalist and evangelical parents may experience the same phenomenon. See Martin R. West, “Why Do Americans Rate Their Local Public Schools So Favorably?” *Brookings Institute*, Oct, 23, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-do-americans-rate-their-local-public-schools-so-favorably/>.

<sup>16</sup> “School Choice: Talking Points,” Focus on the Family, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/education/school-choice/school-choice-talking-points>. “Education,” *Concerned Women for America*, <https://concernedwomen.org/issues/education/>.

## Chapter 1: Secular Schools, Absent Churches, and Pleasure-Seeking Homes

“Where is father? At the office, the shop, the business meeting, the club, or the movie.” evangelist T. C. Horton wrote in the *King’s Business* in 1925. “Where is mother? She, too, is at the club, the dance, the movie, or in the auto.” He continued: “Where are the boys and girls? God only knows! The auto parked beside the road, the dance hall, the Probation Court, the maternity hospital, tell the story.” The internal order of the family had broken down, Horton warned, leaving absent fathers, distracted mothers, and wayward children. Nineteenth century American religion consisted of three parallel strands: official denominational religion, civil religion, and domestic religion. By the 1920s, fundamentalist pastors and evangelists warned that modernism had corrupted official denominational religion; that secularism had eroded civil religion; and that consumerism was laying waste to domestic religion. The home, once viewed as a bastion of Christian teaching, was now empty, no more than a way stop for busy parents and children coming and going amidst various worldly affairs. The family Bible had disappeared, replaced by jazz music pouring from the radio and the honk of the automobile outside. Some wondered whether modern parents were capable of providing religious instruction even if they were willing to do so. Failure to observe family worship and domestic religion, these individuals worried, spelled disaster for nation’s children—and the nation’s future.<sup>17</sup>

Things were indeed changing. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, German scholars developed new ways of examining the Bible, questioning many of its historical and

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<sup>17</sup> Editorial, “The Obscuration of the Old-Fashioned Home,” *King’s Business* (March 1925), 101. For repetition of the club/dance/movie formulation in the 1930s, see “Christian Homes,” *American Baptist*, in “*Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1935), 574-575. See also Editorial, “Youth and Crime,” *Moody Monthly* (May, 1937), 451. On the nineteenth century, see Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). See also “The Divinized Home,” in Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

scientific claims. Known as “higher criticism,” these methods came to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and were embraced by Protestant leaders eager to adapt Christianity to the modern era. As ideas about science and religion shifted, “modernist” theologians approached many of Christianity’s central claims as myth, downplaying sin and even denying the existence of a literal hell. Not everyone accepted these changes with equanimity, however. Theologically conservative Protestants pushed back against the inroads made by modernism. The fundamentalist movement, its roots in a loose network of late nineteenth century prophesy conferences, would become modernism’s most vocal opposition. The years 1910 through 1915 saw the publication of the *The Fundamentals*, a series of ninety essays that defended the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, atonement, the resurrection, and the reality of miracles—and gave the movement its name.<sup>18</sup>

By the 1920s, the U.S. had experienced significant cultural changes. Women could vote, the automobile offered young adults newfound freedom, and the advent of movies and other new forms of entertainment altered traditional patterns of leisure time. Fundamentalist leaders viewed these changes with concern, and because they believed that the future of the church and the nation rested on their ability to effectively evangelize youth, their greatest worry often centered on children and adolescents. They worried that the family itself was in decline, and that changes taking place in education served to undermine children’s faith. Much of my analysis rests on a three-part division in the raising and nurturing of children: home-church-school. In the 1920s,

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<sup>18</sup> Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America’s Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 24-40. While T. C. Horton, who edited the *King’s Business* from 1910 to 1925, claimed label “fundamentalist,” the editors of the *Moody Monthly* published articles both for and against the label. J. Gresham Machen, a Presbyterian theologian widely considered one of the leading intellectuals of the fundamentalist movement by both contemporaries and historians, pointedly refused to use the label. In these cases the label was applied from without rather than within. See Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 32; and T. C. H., “Wake Up! Wake Up!” *King’s Business* (June 1921), 534-36.

fundamentalist leaders expressed grave concern about all three institutions. The public school, they worried, was secular at best and antagonistic toward Christianity at worst; the church was absent, the pastor sleeping at the wheel or preaching a false gospel; and the home was given over to pleasure seeking, characterized by absent parents and a dusty family Bible. Anti-evolution campaigns were one response to these greater problems.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Secularization of the Public Schools**

“The Godless theory of education has already had a fair trial for demonstrating its merit over the former policy in the use of the Bible in the school room,” S. M. Ellis, a pastor from Memphis, Tennessee, wrote in an article for the *King’s Business* in 1924. “The morals of this generation of youth have reached a stage in the downgrade that has no parallel in the history of public education.” Proclamations of moral decline among youth were nothing new. What was new were the explanations being offered. “Shall we have a Godless education and then a Godless civilization, and then the inevitable wreckage and ruin—our own soil buried under the dust and ashes of past empires?” asked Cortland Myers, pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church of Boston, in a speech delivered at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles the same year. Throughout the 1920s, evangelicals warned that the public schools had discarded their earlier Christian trappings and become increasingly secular. There was some truth to this claim.<sup>20</sup>

During the colonial period, education took place in the home and through a mixture of often fee-based schools. Children attended school sporadically; the length of terms varied,

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<sup>19</sup> For concerns about the family, see DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*: and Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For the home-church-school division, see Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 13-38; and Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York, 1847).

<sup>20</sup> S. M. Ellis, “Secularized Public Schools—the Nation’s Menace,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1924), 622-23. Cortland Myers, “The Crime of Our Godless Schools,” *ibid.* (May 1924), 270-71, 322-23.

curriculum could be haphazard, and some children never attended school at all. During the early republic and antebellum periods, an increasing number of charity schools sprang up to educate children of the poor. Still, by the 1830s and 1840s reformers and government officials worried about the nation's ability to assimilate a growing number of Irish Catholic immigrants. The solution, many felt, was a universal system of education that would equip children to become engaged, educated, moral citizens. In the 1840s, educational reformer Horace Mann set up the nation's first system of common schools in his home state of Massachusetts. Other states soon followed suit, using Mann's system as a model. By 1918, every state had a public school system and compulsory education laws mandating school attendance.<sup>21</sup>

Mann knew he had to address the role religion would play in the common schools. He sought to hew a middle road by arguing that the King James Bible should be read aloud each day, but without commentary. This meant that denominational differences would be left out of the classroom. Yet while Mann claimed this practice was nonsectarian and thus should be acceptable to all, many Catholics disagreed. They argued that Bible reading without comment assumed that the ordinary person was capable of understanding the Bible without the help of a priest, and was thus itself a Protestant practice. If the Bible must be read aloud, they added, it should be the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible. Catholics also voiced concerns about secular education more generally. While some school districts sought to make accommodations, these were not enough for the Catholic hierarchy. Faced with common schools that were Protestant at

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<sup>21</sup> For education in the colonial period through the antebellum period, see Edward B. McClellan, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999). Mann was not the first to argue that a system of public education was necessary to the nation's success. See also Benjamin Rush, "Of the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), available online at <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch18s30.html>.

worse and secular at best, Catholics set about founding their own system of parochial schools. Most Protestants, meanwhile, were satisfied with Mann's compromise, especially given that Bible reading was augmented by moral lessons in other subject areas through materials such as McGuffey's Readers, which drew heavily on biblical themes.<sup>22</sup>

Still, Catholics were not the only ones dissatisfied with Mann's middle way. For one thing, Mann was a Unitarian and was sometimes accused of irreligion. In 1838, Frederick Packard of the American Sunday School Union asked Mann to include a book, *Child at Home*, in the common school library list he was compiling. Mann not only refused but also wrote a scathing critique of the book. During the ensuing correspondence, Mann condemned aspects of evangelical Protestantism as deleterious to children's development. Packard, in exchange, publicly accused Mann of being anti-evangelical, and while the controversy eventually died down, it presaged future concerns. Mann also faced opposition from Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge, who argued that common schools did not teach enough doctrine to give students a firm grounding in their religious beliefs, and worried that these schools would become secular and atheistic in the future. Hodge warned of common education becoming controlled by "a clique of Unitarian or infidel statesmen" and urged churches in his denomination to found their own schools. Even though Hodge's denomination backed his call for parochial schools, most local congregations were unwilling to undergo the effort and expense of creating their own schools. Presbyterian congregations founded 265 schools between 1847 and 1870, but Hodge's dream of a nationwide system of Presbyterian parochial schools was never realized.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For the nature of religious education in the early public schools, see McClellan, *Moral Education*. For Catholic objections, see James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt, *The Dissenting Tradition in American Education* (New York: P. Lang, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> On Frederick Packard, see Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1972); Raymond B. Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools*

As Hodge had predicted, the nation's public schools grew more secular during the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century. Religious exercises in the public schools were gradually scaled back, partly to undercut Catholic schools' bid for public funding and partly as a process of local accommodation. Changes in pedagogy and educational goals also contributed to a gradual secularization of the nation's public schools. As the United States industrialized, academics became more central to public schools' mission at the expense of moral instruction. While the nineteenth-century founders of the common schools had been religious and moralistic, the education reformers of the early twentieth century were secular and scientific. There was a new emphasis on naturalistic science and human progress among the nation's educational theorists, perhaps best embodied by philosopher John Dewey and the increasingly influential Teachers' College at Columbia University, where he taught from 1904 until 1930. Shifts in educational theory led to disagreement over how to teach morality in school. Progressive and conservative educators found themselves at odds in both goals and methods. Should children be taught to obey authority, as conservatives urged, or to question authority, as progressives argued? Moral education itself became a contentious issue.<sup>24</sup>

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(New York: Arno Press, [1929] 1969). On Charles Hodge, see Carper and Hunt, *Dissenting Tradition*.

<sup>24</sup> John L. Rury argues that public schools shifted from religious and moralistic to secular and academic in response to changing economic needs. See John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change: Themes in the History of American Schooling*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2005), 90. James W. Fraser focuses on the role of increasing religious diversity and writes of the gradual dethroning of the "Protestant establishment." See James W. Fraser, *Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America* (New York: St. Martin's Press: 1999), 150. Benjamin Justice focuses on the local level, examining the way religious disagreement within a school district could lead to the removal of public school devotionals. See Benjamin Justice, *The War that Wasn't: Religious Conflict and Compromise in the Common Schools of New York State, 1865-1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). See also "Trouble over the Lord's Prayer," *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1885, p. 8. Carper and Hunt argue that a secular orthodoxy replaced the older Protestant orthodoxy of the public schools. See Carper and Hunt, *Dissenting Tradition*, 201.

As public schools became more secular, questions arose about the role of prayer, Bible reading, and religious instruction in these institutions. In 1895, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Minnesota wrote an opinion declaring recitation of the Lord's Prayer incompatible with the state's constitution. In 1910, the Illinois Supreme Court struck down religious exercises in the state's public schools, holding them a violation of the state constitution. In all, twelve states barred Bible reading in the public schools. Supporters of Bible reading who sought to mandate the practice found their efforts resisted by the American Civil Liberties Union. Between 1913 and 1930, eleven states passed laws requiring daily Bible reading, bringing the total number of states that required Bible reading to 12. Most states neither mandated nor forbade religious exercises, leaving the matter up to local school districts. The result was a mix of practices that left many fundamentalist leaders unsettled.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Urgency of Childhood**

In the 1920s, fundamentalists existed in a rapidly changing world—and perhaps no American institution had seen more change than that of the family. Colonial and early nineteenth century Americans had viewed children as depraved and deficient, in need of hurrying through childhood to adulthood. Childhood was not a time to be celebrated; it was a time to be survived. Beginning among the growing nineteenth century urban middle class and into the twentieth

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<sup>25</sup> Edwin H. Rian, *Christianity and American Education* (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1949), 53; Adam Laats, “Our Schools, Our Country,” *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Sept. 2013), 310-334; Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*. For contemporary news coverage, see “Prayer in School Is Not Lawful,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 11, 1895, p. 1; “Court Bars Bible to Public School,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 30, 1910, p. 1. For other states where school prayer requirements went back and forth, see “To Test Delaware School Bible Law,” *Boston Daily Globe*, June 1, 1925, p. 8; “Use of Bible in Schools Is Contrary to the Law,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 30, 1909, p. II7. On the legal status of Bible reading, see Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 141; and Ward W. Keesecker, *Legal Status of Bible Reading and Religious Instruction in Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1930). See also “Bible Reading in the Schools,” *Asheville Citizen*, reprinted in the *Moody Monthly* (Feb. 1932), 300-301.

century, this conception changed. Children were increasingly viewed as innocent and pure, and childhood itself was understood as a special period of school and play separated from the adult world of work. This shift coincided with other changes taking place in the middle class home, which ceased to be a place of work and became instead a space designated for leisure and family repose. During the early twentieth century the home shifted still further as new patterns of leisure and transportation took the family outside of the home to participate in new amusements. At the same time, the school occupied an increasing position in children's lives, drawing children out of the family and into new peer networks. Early twentieth century fundamentalists responded to these changes by internalizing some aspects while rejecting others.<sup>26</sup>

In their anthology on children and childhood in American religions, Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore identify a tension between a "high" and "low" view of childhood, a distinction based on whether the child was seen as a source of wisdom or a being in need of careful instruction by adults. The contrast between children's "inherent goodness" and "capacity for evil," Browning and Miller McLemore write, is constantly being worked out in world religions. During the 1920s, fundamentalists drew on a "low" view of childhood most frequently, standing markedly out of step with contemporary trends as they pointed to children's sinful nature and need for conversion. Yet in their discussion of "childlike faith" and their emphasis on children's natural openness to the gospel, fundamentalists also dabbled in a "high" view of childhood more in tune with developing conceptions of childhood and the rise of the "pure" or "innocent" child.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Ma.: Belknap Press, 2006). Vivianna A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

<sup>27</sup> Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Children and Childhood in American Religions* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 14.

Fundamentalists were quick to distinguish between their view of the child and the more mainstream ideas held by those who would become known as “mainline” Protestants. Mainline Protestant ideas about children had their roots in Horace Bushnell’s well-known 1847 book, *Christian Nurture*. Bushnell argued that parents could create a godly atmosphere in the home such that a child might “grow up a Christian, and never know himself being otherwise.” Fundamentalists objected to the idea that children could “grow into” Christianity, and emphasized instead the importance of the emotionally charged conversion moment Bushnell hoped to forestall. “Is the child an angel born, needing only the right environment to develop into a full-grown heir of heaven, or is he another of those for whom Christ died and needing the birth from above, because that which is born of flesh is flesh?” asked Charles Calvert Ellis, professor of education at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, in a 1923 *Moody Monthly* article. His question was rhetorical; for fundamentalists, the answer was emphatically the latter.<sup>28</sup>

“We must not get away from the fact that as surely as the child is born in sin and shaped in iniquity, so surely does the child need the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit,” warned Presbyterian evangelist W. E. Biederwolf, founder of the Family Altar League, in a 1921 *Moody Monthly* article. Yet those writing in the pages of the *Moody Monthly*, the *King’s Business*, and similar periodicals during the 1920s did not reject new constructs of childhood entirely. Bushnell’s “liberal child” was not merely unbound by sin nature but also pliable and predisposed toward good. Here fundamentalists were more open, writing repeatedly about the influence parents have on their children and about the importance of the family altar to children’s moral

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<sup>28</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant*, 19; Charles Calvert Ellis, “What Is Real Religious Education?” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1923), 177. Juniata College was associated with the Church of the Brethren. Ellis went on to serve as the school’s president.

development. Children were born sinful and in need of conversion, fundamentalists insisted, but they were also plastic and easy to persuade. This made childhood the best time for conversion.<sup>29</sup>

In their 1901 book on holding successful revivals, evangelists E. P. Hammond and R. A. Torrey included a chapter on “The Conversion of Children”; this chapter was reprinted or quoted in fundamentalist publications as late as the 1930s. A related address given by Torrey at some point before his 1928 death was reprinted under a similar title; in it Torrey argued that “it is much easier to win a child to Christ than an adult” because “children have no old prejudices to overcome as many grown people have.” Torrey added that “[e]very year that passes over our heads unconverted our hearts are less open to holy impressions” because “[e]very year away from Christ our hearts become harder in sin.” Children were sinners in need of salvation, but they were also more open to conversion than adults.<sup>30</sup>

When emphasizing children’s special receptivity to the gospel, fundamentalists engaged with the language and terms of modernity. Florence M. Chaffee, director of the Christian Education Course at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, described children as “young and plastic” in an article in the *King’s Business*. “Whoever captures childhood holds the future in his hands, for this is the time of trustfulness, confidence, plastic ideals and habit formation,” wrote J. M. Price, director of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary’s School of Religious

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, “Mainline Protestants and Children,” 25-41, esp. 26-27, in Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, *Children and Childhood in American Religions*. W. E. Biederwolf, “Are You Winning Your Sunday-School Scholars to Christ?” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1921).

<sup>30</sup> E. P. Hammond and R. A. Torrey, “The Conversion of Children,” in R. A. Torrey, ed., *How to Promote and Conduct a Successful Revival* (Fleming H. Revell, 1901), reprinted in *Sword of the Lord* (Feb. 18, 1938), pp. 1-4. Both the *Moody Monthly* and the *King’s Business* printed a message R. A. Torrey delivered in Chicago before his death in 1928, which was originally published in the *Moody Church Herald*. See R. A. Torrey, “The Conversion of Children,” *Moody Monthly* (April 1934), 354-355; and R. A. Torrey, “Except a Child Be Born Again...”: The Necessity for the Conversion of Children,” *King’s Business* (May 1938), 192-193, 227.

Education, engaging in similar language. An excerpt from a *Watchman-Examiner* article republished in the *Moody Monthly* also used the term: “More dangerous than an unsound preacher is an unsound religious director, because it is the peculiar function of religious directors to deal with minds and hearts that are yet plastic,” the piece read. Children’s special pliability inserted an air of urgency into efforts to bring about their conversion.<sup>31</sup>

Other factors added urgency as well, such as Torrey’s claim that “persons converted in childhood make the best Christians.” This was, Torrey argued, because those converted as adults had “many bad tricks of character and life that have to be unlearned” whereas “when one is converted in childhood, character is yet to be formed and it can be formed from the beginning on right lines.” This “blank slate” understanding of child development is perhaps best illustrated by a poem printed in a fundamentalist periodical that compared a child to a scroll “lovely and white” and warned parents to be careful who might write on it. Torrey had another reason for preferring early conversion as well: those who converted while they were still young had more years of Christian service ahead of them than those converted as adults.<sup>32</sup>

Yet childhood was a moment that was easily lost. Christopher G. Hazard, a pastor in Catskill, New York, wrote of childhood as “that most receptive soil of early and eager religious susceptibility, when the Bible stories and the Bible Christ are welcome to the simple and undoubting mind.” Hazard warned that when “the seed of the eternal life” is not sewn on this receptive soil, “the heart hardens into worldliness.” Those who would evangelize children must act swiftly. Most believers were converted as children, and conversions during adulthood were

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<sup>31</sup> Florence M. Chaffee, “Christian Education—Its History,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1928), 84-85. J. M. Price, “Christian Education and Modern Civilization,” *ibid.* (July 1928), 408-9. “Sound Educational Directors,” *Watchman-Examiner*, in “*Moody Monthly* (March 1929), 348. Richard W. Lewis, “The Child in God’s Plan,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 173, 183.

<sup>32</sup> R. A. Torrey, “Except a Child Be Born Again...”: “The Necessity for the Conversion of Children,” *King’s Business* (May 1938), 193, 227.

comparatively rare, warned those writing in the *King's Business*, the *Moody Monthly*, and similar publications. "Remember—the time to reach children for the Lord is while they are children!" urged a 1925 *King's Business* editorial. "The fact is, that with very many if they are not converted in childhood they will never be converted at all," warned Hammond and Torrey. The pressure to act now, before it was too late, suffused fundamentalist writing about children.<sup>33</sup>

Fundamentalist evangelists at home and abroad were explicit about their efforts to use children as missionaries to their families. Children, Hammond and Torrey wrote in 1901, "can reach their parents oftentimes when we cannot." Fundamentalists continued to repeat this truism in the 1920s and beyond: "Little children brought to Christ often bring their parents with them," read a short excerpt from *Preaching to Children*, by children's evangelist Robert W. Lewis, reprinted in the *Moody Monthly* in 1928. "Not only the children are being reached, but through them the parents and older brothers and sisters at home are also being helped," declared an advertisement for Moody Bible Institute's Bible Institute Colportage Association, which distributed evangelical literature and materials in the Appalachian region.<sup>34</sup>

If the payoff for reaching children while they were still children was immense, the cost of failure was only larger. The very things that made children ideal converts—their pliability and willingness to trust authority—also made them susceptible to modernist preachers and professors and negative peer influence.

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<sup>33</sup> Christopher G. Hazard, "Who Makes the Best Sunday-school Teacher?" *Moody Monthly* (March 1922), 850-51. Editorial, "A Challenge from the Children's Garden," *King's Business* (Feb. 1925), 54. See also "Begin With the Children," *King's Business* (Feb. 1927), 111. E. P. Hammond and R. A. Torrey, "The Conversion of Children," 97.

<sup>34</sup> "Preaching to Children," excerpted from Robert W. Lewis, *Preaching to Children*, reprinted in "For Sermon and Scrap Book," *Moody Monthly* (June 1928), 485. Advertisement, "America's Greatest Open Door for the Gospel!" *ibid.* (Nov. 1930), 145. See also Tordis Christofferson, "Children of Poland—For Christ," *King's Business* (May 1937), 166-167, 188; and Hammond and Torrey, "The Conversion of Children",

## Professors and Preachers

By the 1920s adolescents had come to inhabit a new age category bound together by increased school attendance and signified by institutional changes such as the juvenile court. As increasing numbers of adolescents attended high school and college, new forms of youth peer culture grew up around these shared spaces. As the United States modernized in the early twentieth century, youth became a flashpoint for the rapid changes taking place across the country. Conservatives and moderates alike expressed concern about young people smoking, drinking, driving in automobiles, and going to dances. Progressives praised youth's ability to flexibly navigate changing social mores. The "flapper" became at once the most celebrated and the most derided image of the decade. For their part, fundamentalists saw youth as the most visible symptom of the breakdown of society.<sup>35</sup>

Warnings of the disaster awaiting youth suffused the pages of the *King's Business*. Editor and evangelist T. C. Horton declared that "Christians are discovering now that it is too late, that the youth of our country are drifting beyond their reach, and that the schools in their courses [i.e. universities] are fighting for Atheism." Other authors expressed dismay at changing social mores: "Youthful delinquency has attained frightful proportions. Jazz, petting parties, obscene dances, liquor orgies are reaping a daily toll of our boys and girls," warned William A. Fisher, a publisher working to improve the circulation of the *King's Business*, in a comment published in that magazine in 1925. While fundamentalists were far from alone in their concern about youth,

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<sup>35</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

their belief in the importance of conversion and the need for salvation from sin heightened their fears. Satan, they worried, had taken hold of the nation's youth.<sup>36</sup>

In 1924, two students at the University of Chicago—Nathan Leopold, 19, and Richard Loeb, 18—shocked the nation by carefully planning and carrying out the kidnapping and murder of a young teenage boy. The case received extensive press coverage. For many Americans, the sensational murder highlighted a need for more thorough moral instruction in the educational system. One could obtain all of the learning in the world, fundamentalist leaders warned, and still be a moral monster. What mattered was not what was in the mind but what was in the heart.<sup>37</sup>

Fundamentalist leaders worried that if they did not reach young people with the gospel quickly enough, someone else would get there first. Perhaps it would be a modernist preacher. Perhaps an atheist professor. Perhaps it would simply be the dance hall or the bottle. Whatever the end result, fundamentalists saw themselves in a race to reach the nation's youth, to plant good seeds in their receptive soil before weeds had time to take root and the soil to harden. When a *Western Recorder* article reprinted in the *Moody Monthly* called attention to “the almost unbelievably satanic teachings which have been emanating from not a few American universities and colleges” and put the blame on a “diligently chaperoned penetration of educational institutions by as perverse a group of spiritual cut-thoughts as ever cumbered the earth,” the author was engaging in language common in fundamentalist periodicals during the period.<sup>38</sup>

In 1922, the editors of the *Moody Monthly* reported that an increasing number of parents had been “asking the Moody Bible Institute to receive their children, though under the regular

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<sup>36</sup> T. C. Horton, “The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism,” *King's Business* (Sept 1926), 504-505. William A. Fisher, “Who Is Responsible?” *ibid.* (March 1925), 101.

<sup>37</sup> See Paula S. Fass, “Making and Remaking an Event: The Leopold and Loeb Case in American Culture,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (Dec. 1933), 919-951.

<sup>38</sup> “The Red Trail in Our Colleges,” *Western Recorder*, in *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1927), 68-69.

age of attendance, that they may be equipped in a knowledge of the Bible and strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit before they enter college, so that they may be the better able to withstand the attacks upon their faith.” Publications like the *Moody Monthly* and the *King’s Business* frequently ran stories of fundamentalist young people leaving for college only to return home with their faith in shambles. Some drew connections between atheistic teaching and the Soviet Union. In 1923, evangelist William Bell Riley warned that “if our children are to be taught, from four to eight consecutive years, such God-denying, Christ-repudiating, Bible-scorning theories as are in these text books . . . the last plank will be laid for the platform on which Soviet propaganda will eventually parade its atheistic, anarchistic, and inhuman philosophy before the world.” Fundamentalist leaders urged parents to send their children to Christian colleges or Bible institutes rather than secular colleges and universities.<sup>39</sup>

In 1927, James M. Gray, president of Moody Bible Institute, warned that “pastors who have gotten away from the Word of God” were leading youth away from the foundational truths of the Bible. Colleges and universities would not make such quick work of children’s faith, these individuals argued, if pastors were doing their duty. In a short article for the *Moody Monthly*, Edith May Evetts of Vachon, Washington, shared the story of a young woman who had “consecrated her life to Jesus Christ” and trusted the church to guide her only to commit suicide at age 19, a “broken-hearted, sin-crushed girl.” Evetts explained that “it was at a dance given in a church parlor when she was only fourteen years old that [the girl] took her first step away from

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<sup>39</sup> Editorial, “Watch the Colleges,” *Moody Monthly* (June 1922), 1052. For examples of stories of college leading fundamentalist youth astray, see Editorial, “Breakdown of Modern Education,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1922), 843. “According to historian Paula S. Fass, it was not uncommon for college to occupy an oversized space in public discourse about youth during the 1920s. College students played a significant role in shaping youth culture during this period, and would become the leaders of the future. See Fass, *Damned and the Beautiful*.

God.” Shortly before her death, Evetts reported, the girl wrote a letter condemning the church. “Where is your Christ?” she asked scathingly.<sup>40</sup>

“What are the conditions confronting the rising generation?” asked the author of a short article in the *King’s Business* in 1925, who signed his name “Old Fossil.” “Evolution in many of the high schools, colleges, and universities; the Bible treated as mythical, allegorical, or pure fiction,” he lamented. Even church was not a sure solution. “If they chance to go to church on Sunday, and a modernist speaker occupies the pulpit, they will probably hear a discourse on evolution, or biology,” he warned. The odds, many fundamentalists of the 1920s worried, were stacked soundly against youth, with pitfalls all around.<sup>41</sup>

### **Religion at Home**

Under the “separate spheres” ideology of the nineteenth century, women were the keepers of the home and of domestic religion. During the 1920s, fundamentalist leaders worried that this order was breaking down.<sup>42</sup> “God designed woman as the home-maker, but somehow she seems to have been sidetracked,” warned Horton in 1921. “Ten years ago it was the almost universal custom that when a girl in business married, she gave up her work and established a home,” wrote Harold L. Lundquist, an administrator at Moody Bible Institute, in 1929. “Today she very frequently keeps her position.” Fundamentalists frequently blamed women for rising divorce rates: “We hold the women of the country just now, more responsible than the men for the child tragedy in mind, that is to say, for the lax marriage and divorce,” read an editorial in the

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<sup>40</sup> William A. Fisher, “Who Is Responsible?” *King’s Business* (March 1925), 101. Editorial, “Examples for Youth,” *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1927), 48. Edith May Evetts, “Results of a Church Dance,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1930), 17.

<sup>41</sup> “Is America Becoming Pagan?” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1925), 84-85.

<sup>42</sup> On fundamentalists’ views on gender during the 1920s, see DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*; and Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*. For background of fundamentalists’ understanding of women’s role in the home, see Colleen McDannell, *Christian Home in Victorian America*.

*Moody Monthly*. Concern about the effect changing patterns of motherhood might have on children, especially daughters, suffused fundamentalist publications.<sup>43</sup>

New forms of child discipline also concerned fundamentalists. “We have nothing to say against parental kindness and gentle forbearance,” wrote managing editor Keith L. Brooks in the *King’s Business* in 1920, “but there is such a thing as a parent being amiable to the point of wickedness.” New understandings of child psychology, a desire to parent “scientifically,” and shifting conceptions of childhood were changing the ways parents raised their children, including their means of discipline. Many fundamentalist leaders refused to back down; their belief in children’s sinful nature and need for salvation and their desire to parent “as taught by the Bible” shaped their understanding and strategies of child discipline. Brooks warned his readers that parents who failed to discipline their children were “bringing the wrath of God upon themselves and their children.” Many fundamentalist leaders centered corporal punishment. “The saying that the child, like a canoe, behaves better when paddled from the rear, has long since been forgotten,” read a provocative 1927 *King’s Business* editorial.<sup>44</sup>

More than anything else, fundamentalists blamed the breakdown of the family on new forms of entertainment and increasing material ease. Evoking language from the Victorian era,

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<sup>43</sup> Harold L. Lundquist, “The Decay of the Home,” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1929), 582. T. C. H., “Wanted—More Mothers,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1921), 107-108. Editorial, “Child Tragedy,” *Moody Monthly* (May 1921), 388. See also Leora M. Blanchard, “Bathsheba—A Study of an Immodest Woman,” *Moody Monthly* (May 1921), 396; and editorial, “Mother and Daughter,” *ibid.* (July 1934), 491. Fundamentalists did not exempt fathers from responsibility entirely. ““See Editorial, “Growing Disrespect Among the American Youth,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1927), 70; and G. B. Young, “The Ideal Mother,” *ibid.* (May 1930), 231.

<sup>44</sup> K. L. B., “The Parental Frown—A Minus Quantity,” *King’s Business* (April 1920), 344-45; Editorial, “The Parental Frown,” *ibid.* (July 1927), 413. See also B. Davidson, “The Salvation of the Household—God’s Plan,” *ibid.* (July 1920), 652-55, esp. 653; and John Roach Straton, “Right Home Life,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1921), 116-119, esp. 117. Editorial, “Growing Disrespect Among the American Youth,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1927), 70. On new parenting developments, see also John P. Bartkowski and Christopher G. Ellison, “Conservative Protestants on Children and Parenting,” in *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, ed. Browning and Miller-McLemore, 42-55.

John Roach Straton, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City and a well-known leader in the fundamentalist movement, warned in 1921 that “[t]he family altar has been decayed almost universally” and that “more and more we are going outside of our homes for recreation and pleasure.” The family altar, where the members of the family gathered daily for Bible reading, prayer, and hymn signing, was considered a staple of the Victorian home, but had fallen out of use in the early twentieth century as family leisure patterns shifted. Fundamentalists mourned this loss and urged parents to reestablish family worship. More than anything else, they worried that the home had ceased to be a place where family members gathered and become instead a place from which family members fled. “With multitudes of people today,” Straton wrote, “it seems that home is the last place they want to be.” Rather than sitting together around the fire and reading the Bible as a family, modern families scattered to the wind.<sup>45</sup>

Horton wrote directly to parents in editorials and columns in the late 1910s and early 1920s, elevating home life above even the church. “Don’t leave your children in the hands of some Sunday School teacher, or even some preacher,” he warned. “It is your business—your solemn and sacred business—and God will hold you accountable. Every child is a sacred trust.” Horton urged parents to spend time with their children at home in Bible reading and prayer—to “erect an altar in the home”—and to pay careful attention to what their children were being taught in the school and at church. “Help God save your children by asserting your rights,” he wrote. “Every parent with children in schools or colleges should know what is being taught them.” Horton encouraged parents to ask questions of their children’s instructors to ensure that their children were not being taught “the seed of unbelief and denial of the World of God.” He turned also to the Sunday school, informing parents that they had the right to know what their

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<sup>45</sup> Straton, “Right Home Life.” See also, Carl G. Westerdahl, “The Christian Home: Our Country’s Greatest Need,” *King’s Business* (May 1934), 172-173.

children were being taught there as well. “If you are faithless in this you are recreant to the great responsibility imposed on you in becoming parents,” he warned. Horton urged parents to question their minister, and to treat any minister who “denies the Infallible Word of God” as an infidel.<sup>46</sup>

During the 1920s, fundamentalists lost their battle to gain control of the major Protestant denominations. Some remained in these denominations, often attending churches that still hewed conservative, while others left to found their own denominations or to form independent churches. This experience left many fundamentalists wary and unsure of how far they could trust any given church to uphold the doctrines they considered foundational. Articles in the *King’s Business* frequently spoke to this distrust: “With the Bible teachings barred from the schools, and with mere perfumed oratory coming from many a pulpit, the need for real Christian homes is more imperative than ever,” read a 1927 editorial. Many fundamentalists displayed a suspicion of religious institutions; in this context, some fundamentalists positioned individual families as small godly islands in the midst of a sea of unbelief.<sup>47</sup>

Fundamentalists hoped that by reestablishing the family altar they could reverse the trends caused by modernization and secularization. “How are we to save religion in the United States?” asked Boston pastor Cortland Myers. “By saving the family altar.” In August 1925, the cover of the *King’s Business* featured a family sitting around a table as the father read the Bible

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<sup>46</sup> T. C. Horton, “The Home Builders,” *King’s Business* (Dec. 1919), 1087-1088. Editorial, “Shall We Assert Our Rights?” *ibid.* (Nov. 1919), 988-989. Writing in the *Moody Monthly* in 1928, Robert Hill also reminded parents that their children belonged to God. “The child is His,” he wrote, “a solemn trust which he has committed into your keeping.” God would demand an accounting. “For a so-called Christian home to allow anything to stand in the way of the careful training of a child God-ward is condemnation without extenuation,” he added. See Robert Hill, “The Home, the Key to the Situation,” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1928), 103-104.

<sup>47</sup> Editorial, “Growing Disrespect Among the American Youth,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1927), 70.

aloud under the caption “Re-establish the Old-Fashioned Family Worship and Let the Word of God Settle All Our Problems.” When describing the family altar, fundamentalists typically wrote of family Bible reading, prayer, and singing. The *King’s Business* and the *Moody Monthly* published letters from readers about the impact the family altar had on their lives, outlining an atmosphere of love and trust, combined with a focus on the spiritual in the every day life that prepared them to meet the challenges of the world with a firm grounding. “If your home is just a stopping place, seek unto God, build up the family altar, receive Christ in his fulness, and ask Him daily to honor your home with His presence and to make it a blessing,” wrote Rev. J. T. Ladsen of Chicago in a 1928 article in the *King’s Business*.<sup>48</sup>

Family life, fundamentalists noted with some worry, had an impact on the life of the church as well. A *Christian Herald* article reprinted in the *Moody Monthly* in 1930 exuded concern for young people and low church attendance rates. The author criticized parents who failed to require their children to attend church, arguing that we are “all creatures of habit” and that a child not required to attend church would have no attachment to it. Besides, the author added, young people today “will be the fathers and mothers of another generation.” Parents had an obligation not only to provide their children with religious education in the home but also to ensure that their children attended church—preferably one that adhered to the fundamentals.<sup>49</sup>

### **Sunday School Blues**

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<sup>48</sup> Cortland Myers, “What Will Save Religion in These United States? Getting Back to the Family Altar, the Church Altar, and the Altar of Sacrifice,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1921), 970-972; Cover, *ibid.* (Aug. 1925); Editorial, “The Old-Fashioned Christian Family Altar,” *ibid.* (Aug. 1925), 339; J. T. Ladsen, “What Is Becoming of the Christian Home?” *ibid.* (June 1928), 346. See also advertisements for *A Book of Family Worship* and *The Home Beautiful* in “Best Books for the Christian Life,” *ibid.* (March 1921), np; and Editorial, “Homeless Houses,” *ibid.* (May 1926), 253. For a description of the family altar, see W. C. Hoover, “Three Generations of Family Worship,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1930), 17. For a plan for promoting the family altar through traveling conferences, see Richard W. Lewis, “A Family Forum,” *ibid.* (May 1931), 447.

<sup>49</sup> “Churches and Children,” *Christian Herald*, in *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1930), 192-193.

Throughout the decade, fundamentalists linked the decline of religious instruction in the home and school to a need for expanded Sunday school programs. “[T]here is less Bible taught in the American home and school than in any other time in its history,” wrote Moody Bible Institute President James Gray in 1928. “Crowded out of the home and public school the Bible is making its last stand today in the Sunday-school.” The Sunday school first arose in England in the late eighteenth century as a way to educate children who worked six days a week; once adopted in the United States it quickly became a program centered on providing religious instruction to children—both churched and unchurched—on Sunday mornings. By the 1920s, fundamentalist leaders expressed concern about the state of the nation’s Sunday schools. These programs, they warned, needed to pick up the slack for the lack of Bible reading or other religious instruction in the public schools, and for the decline of the family altar—but could they? Many fundamentalists worried that modernism had infected Sunday schools as well.<sup>50</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the nation’s public schools increased in efficiency, with higher standards and better facilities. Sunday schools, fundamentalist educators noted with concern, had not seen a similar renaissance. The resulting difference in quality, they argued, did not go unnoticed by students. “Think of a cosy public school room with its flowers, pictures, quiet, and its intimate group spirit and then come back to the Sunday-school room!” wrote Frank E. Duddy, an Ohio pastor and author of a how-to book on improving Sunday school programs. “The child who sees that for every million spent for secular training less than a thousand is spent for spiritual training, cannot help but compare the adequacy

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<sup>50</sup> Editorial, “Less Bible in the Bible School?” *Moody Monthly* (April 1928), 355-56. See also Advertisement, “Your Children: What Do They Study in Sunday School?” *ibid.* (Feb. 1929), 302; and Advertisement, “Shall We Give the Whole Gospel to Children?” *ibid.*, 303. On Sunday schools in the United States, see Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

of the secular program with the inadequacy of the religious program,” an article in the *Christian Herald* added. “The Sunday schools today, in order to hold the respect and allegiance of boys and girls, have to compete with secular schools where there are trained teachers,” warned Florence Chaffee, director of Christian education at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. “The stained-glass windows and the soft carpet are given to the men and women; the children take the left-overs,” worried Horton. “[T]he churches are still devoting most of their resources to adults,” wrote Clarence Benson, director of Moody Bible Institute’s religious education program and associate editor of the *Moody Monthly*. When compared with improvements seen in the public school, the Sunday school felt inadequate.<sup>51</sup>

Fundamentalists also worried that modernism had infected Sunday school curriculum. In 1872, the American Sunday School Union adopted a system of uniform lessons, under which children and adults studied the same lesson material regardless of age or grade level. In the early twentieth century a growing number of voices called for “graded lessons,” in which the material covered would vary by children’s age, in keeping with growing understanding of child development. However, as these much-anticipated new Sunday school materials arrived, fundamentalist educators expressed dismay at their inclusion of extra-biblical material and lesson helps that they felt skewed liberal or modernist. Added to this, the new Sunday school materials were more experience-centered, under the influence of the progressive school of educational

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<sup>51</sup> Excerpt from Frank E. Duddy, *A New Way to Solve Old Problems*, in Andrew J. Johnson, “The Sunday School Problem,” *King’s Business* (Sept. 1921), 874-75. “Christian Preachers but Pagan Teachers,” *Christian Herald*, in *Moody Monthly* (March 1931), 356-257. Florence M. Chaffee, “The Need of Teacher Training,” *King’s Business* (July 1928), 412. “The Sunday School Problem,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1921), 874-75. Clarence H. Benson, “Robert Raikes and His Work,” *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1930), 59-60. J. W. Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?” *ibid.* (June 1929), 473. See also A. M. Vollmer, “Why Standards,” *Western Recorder*, in *ibid.* (Dec. 1930), 194-195; “A Waiting List,” *Evangelical Visitor*, in *ibid.* (Dec. 1930), 195; “The Lagging Sunday School,” *Presbyterian of the South*, in *ibid.* (Dec. 1930), 196-197.

reform pioneered by philosopher John Dewey. Concerned that new Sunday school materials lacked sound biblical instruction, some fundamentalists returned to the older uniform lessons, which, while not tailored to children's developmental needs, were more fully centered on biblical material. In this sense, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy played itself out in the nation's Sunday school curriculum. As it did so, fundamentalist educators worried about children's religious instruction and the future of the church.<sup>52</sup>

For fundamentalists, Sunday schools had to do more than communicate morals, provide a godly atmosphere, or even teach the Bible—they had to be evangelistic. “Care must be taken that young people be not encouraged to think that they can be trained into becoming Christians,” read a *Watchman-Examiner* article republished in the *Moody Monthly* in 1929. “Great emphasis must be put on the necessity for the new birth.” This focus on conversion was so strong that some fundamentalists worried a formalized program of religious education itself might run at cross purposes with evangelism and the importance of conversion. In an attempt to quell these concerns, Albert H. Gage, author of *A Bigger and Better Sunday School*, assured readers that “[i]t is entirely possible to have a strong educational program of religious training and at the same time a spiritual and evangelistic atmosphere.” Other authors and Sunday school advocates condemned Sunday school programs that focused on building character at the expense of the gospel: “If . . . the Sunday school is not evangelistic, it is not really the Sunday-school after all,” wrote Biederwolf, founder of the Family Altar League. Sunday schools enjoyed wide support throughout American culture; many Americans believed that Sunday schools were the natural antidote to juvenile crime. But fundamentalists wanted more: They sought to combine traditional

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<sup>52</sup> Clarence Benson, *A Popular History of Christian Education* (Chicago, 1943), 210-34.

evangelism geared toward conversion with the robust religious instruction they believed was needed to replace the decline of religious education in other areas of life.<sup>53</sup>

In one area fundamentalists were in broad agreement: that the instruction provided in Sunday schools should be centered fully on the Bible. In 1928, a *Moody Monthly* editorial raised concern about the International Council of Religious Education's recommendation that Sunday school material be "broadened to include literature on prohibition, law observance, world peace, social hygiene, and other kindred subjects." Stating that the Bible was taught less in the home and school than ever before, the editorial worried that the church, too, was now being "petitioned to reduce its only too limited instruction in that holy book."<sup>54</sup>

Fundamentalist educators worried that the Sunday school had become centered on fun at the expense of Bible knowledge or religious training. Writing in the *King's Business*, Chaffee condemned calls for making Sunday school programs more interesting to young pupils by adding material from outside the Bible. "[M]erely to interest or even to interest them in things that are good" was inadequate, she wrote. "We must interest them in fundamental and eternal things." Chaffee was not alone. "[I]n the Sunday Schools teachers have sought to entertain their pupils when they should have used every precious minute to teach the Word of God," Leora Blanchard wrote with concern in the *Moody Monthly*. Fundamentalists rejected the idea that the Bible was over children's heads and decried Sunday school programs that focused on "mere good social

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<sup>53</sup> "Sound Educational Directors," *Watchman-Examiner*, in "Moody Monthly (March 1929), 348. Albert H. Gage, *A Bigger and Better Sunday School* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1927), 106. W. E. Biederwolf, "Are You Winning Your Sunday-School Scholars to Christ?" *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1921), 513-514.

<sup>54</sup> Editorial, "Less Bible in the Bible School?" *Moody Monthly* (April 1928), 355-56. O Advertisement, "Your Children: What Do They Study in Sunday School?" *ibid.* (Feb. 1929), 302; and Advertisement, "Shall We Give the Whole Gospel to Children?" *ibid.*, 303.

times” rather than on “the great truths and principles of Christ our Saviour.” Sunday schools, they argued, should be firmly grounded in the Bible.<sup>55</sup>

In other areas, fundamentalist voices could sound a cacophony of disagreement. Some argued for an understanding of child psychology and more effective teacher training, including training in pedagogy. “[T]he study of the psychology of youth has brought us face to face with many facts that must be taken into consideration if the approach [of the Sunday school] is to be an intelligent one,” argued Biederwolf. Others associated child psychology with modernism. Christopher Hazard, a New York pastor, derided “pedagogical rubbish,” arguing that “a loving heart, quickened by the eternal Spirit” was the most important trait for Sunday school teachers. Still, most fundamentalists agreed that children needed better organized programs of religious study with a solid emphasis on the Bible, and were generally in favor of copying specific aspects of the public schools (cheery rooms, better trained teachers, more organization) in order to improve the quality of the Sunday school and the respect it received.<sup>56</sup>

During the 1920s, fundamentalists participated in a variety of programs designed to reach children in rural areas with the gospel and with Bible teaching. In 1921, William Norton, director of the Bible Institute Colportage Association, founded a book fund to raise money to send Bibles and other Christian materials to impoverished Appalachian children. This program coordinated

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<sup>55</sup> Florence M. Chaffee, “What About ‘Saving the Sunday School?’” *King’s Business* (Nov. 1928), 658. Leora M. Blanchard, “Young People and the Christian Faith,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 209-210. On “mere good social times,” see “Sunday-Schools of Today,” *The Presbyterian*, in J. H. Ralston, “What Other Editors Are Saying, *ibid.* (April 1921), 361. Biederwolf, “Are You Winning Your Sunday-School Scholars to Christ?” George H. Downkontt, “The School-Bag Gospel League,” *ibid.* (Jan. 1934), 222.

<sup>56</sup> Hugh Cork, “Sunday-school Needs, Methods, Appliances, and Questions,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1921), 329-331; Biederwolf, “Are You Winning Your Sunday-School Scholars to Christ?” Christopher G. Hazard, “Who Makes the Best Sunday-school Teacher?” *ibid.* (March 1922), 850-51. On agreement, see “Tasteful to Youth,” in Grant Stroh, “Practical and Perplexing Questions,” *ibid.* (Nov. 1931), 132.

with public school teachers willing to distribute these materials among their students and to hold scripture memorization programs in their classrooms. A 1924 report described this program as “a remarkable opportunity to transform lives for time and eternity.” Other efforts took place outside of the public schools. “When I found that there were at least 30,000 people on this field who live too far away from church or Sunday-school to ever attend, and that many of the children were growing to manhood and womanhood without even seeing a Bible or ever attending a Christian service, I felt that something more must be done at once,” wrote J. Lloyd Hunter of the Sunday School Union on his mission work in northern Minnesota, as reported in the *Moody Monthly*. Such work generally focused on the children and often centered on Bible memorization. “We promised the children that if they would learn the entire Gospel of John we would take them to some lake for several days for an outing,” Hunter noted. His article was accompanied with a picture of two dozen children, mostly girls in white dresses, vacationing at Lake Esquagama. “We know 20,000 Bible verses,” the inscription read.<sup>57</sup>

Other programs relied on children’s individual outreach to their classmates. During the 1920s, these programs had titles like the “Pocket Testament League” or the “School Bag Gospel League.” The idea was simple—a child who signed up for the program would receive a free Gospel of John, and if they read it through they would receive additional gospels and, eventually, an attractively bound copy of the New Testament. The churches and Bible institutes that ran these programs encouraged children to become recruiters, passing on copies of the Gospel of John and bringing other children into the program, which would eventually involve memorization as well as Bible reading. These programs treated schools as places of dissemination; brochures urged students to carry copies of the Gospel of John in their school

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<sup>57</sup> On the Colportage Association and the book funds, see Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 150-155. J. D. Hall, “Soul Stirring Home Missionary Work,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1921), 710.

backpacks, ready to hand out at any time.<sup>58</sup> But if the public schools could serve as places where children could spread the gospel, they could also facilitate the spread of modernism. What good was even the best Sunday school program, if the religious beliefs taught there were deliberately undermined every time a child passed through the schoolroom door?

### **“The Right to Protest”**

By the 1920s, the public school had come to play an increasingly significant role in children’s lives. Every state had a compulsory attendance statute, school terms were lengthening, and the number of years children were expected to spend in school was growing. Schools were also standardizing. In 1919, in the midst of anti-German fervor, lawmakers in Nebraska banned any school in the state from teaching a subject in a foreign language, or teaching foreign languages as a subject before the completion of eighth grade. Four years later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), that the restriction interfered with “the power of parents to control the education of their own.” Two years after this, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), the Court struck down an Oregon law that required children to attend public school, effectively banning private schooling. “The fundamental theory of liberty ... excludes any general power of the State to standardize its children by forcing them to accept instruction from public teachers only,” the Court found in *Pierce*. “The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.” These cases represented the Supreme Court’s first foray into parent’s rights—and school issues.<sup>59</sup>

Fundamentalist reaction to *Meyer* and *Pierce* was mixed. On the one hand, theologian J. Gresham Machen, an intellectual giant of the fundamentalist movement, praised the decisions as

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<sup>58</sup> Andrew J. Johnson, “The Sunday School Problem,” *King’s Business* (Sept. 1921), 874-75.

<sup>59</sup> *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923); *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925).

an affirmation of what they saw as parents' God-given rights. On the other hand, fundamentalist circles overlapped with conservative political ideologies that tended to view Catholic schools, the target of Oregon's school law, as a barrier to integration and Americanization. "Educators cannot compel school children to attend sessions for religious instruction unless the parents so request," he wrote in 1926, addressing released-time education programs that allowed students to receive religious education in school. "The supreme court decision in the Oregon case recognizes that the parent rather than the school must determine whether or not the child is to have religious training." Benson understood that by ruling that parents had the right to guide their children's education, the Supreme Court also opened the door for parents to opt their children out of religious education entirely, leaving their children unevangelized.<sup>60</sup>

Despite some ambivalence over *Meyer* and *Pierce*, fundamentalists were adamant in their support of their own rights as parents. In 1920, three years before *Meyer* and five years before *Pierce*, Horton wrote about a family that refused to allow their children to participate in a "Folk Dance" exercise in their local public school. According to Horton, the children were expelled from school after a judge ruled "that parents could not create religious beliefs of their own and hold the school authorities to such beliefs." This question—whether parents could exempt their child from a school exercise or textbook to which they objected on religious grounds—would come up repeatedly over the course of the twentieth century. "It is not a question of religious beliefs," wrote Horton. "It is a question of morals, and every honest father and mother possess the right to protest against school laws which would compel them to submit to a program for their children which might prove to be the prelude to a life of prostitution." Horton called on his

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<sup>60</sup> Clarence Benson, "The Home, the Church, the School—A Unified Program," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1926), 223-224. "

readers to “rise in protest” against “the attitude of the educators toward the Bible and morality” and warned that if they did not, the public schools would soon become the shame of the nation.<sup>61</sup>

As the fundamentalist-modernist conflict raged within the denominations, many fundamentalists worried that modernist professors and teachers were undermining the Bible in university and public school classrooms. “No man or woman has any right to take advantage of their position in our public schools to cast any slight upon God’s word,” wrote Horton in 1923. “We are paying professors and teachers who delight in undermining the faith of the students.” Two years later, the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association released a statement: “The citadel of the false teaching of this hour, as would be expected, is in our educational institutions; not only in institutions of higher learning but in the public grade schools.” Writing in the *Moody Monthly* in 1929, Wheaton College professor J. W. Leedy warned that “there are many high schools and even grade schools where the instruction is outlined with the deliberate purpose of breaking down any home or church instruction which the child may have had.” Throughout the decade, fundamentalist periodicals printed stories of teachers telling children that what they had learned from their pastors was wrong. In some cases, they quoted teacher’s manuals they argued offered guidance on how to go about breaking down children’s traditional beliefs.<sup>62</sup>

Horton urged parents to monitor what their children were taught and to be ready to stand up for their rights as parents. In one area in particular they did just this: the antievolution crusades. Fundamentalists argued that teaching children evolution suggested that they were mere

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<sup>61</sup> T. C. H., “Demanding the Dance” *King’s Business* (Jan. 1921), 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> T. C. H., “Have a Heart,” *King’s Business* (April 1923), 340. World’s Christian Fundamentals Association. “A Divided House,” *Seventh Annual Convention statement* (May 1925), in *ibid.* (Aug. 1925), 315. Editorial, “The Pied Piper of Pedagogy,” *ibid.* (May 1926), 251. J. W. Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?” *Moody Monthly* (June 1929), 473. See also T. T. Martin, *Hell and the High School* (n.p.: 1922); Milo F. Jamison, “The Bible and the University,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1930), 458-459; and J. W. Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?” *Moody Monthly* (June 1929), 473.

animals and could behave as such and undermined children's belief in the Bible. Evolution could not be reconciled with the Bible, fundamentalists argued; to teach children evolution, then, was to provide them with blatantly anti-Christian teaching. Viewing any one section of the Bible as religious mythology rather than historical fact, fundamentalists argued, would lead to questioning every part of it, and ultimately to the collapse of the book as a whole. In over a dozen states across the country, fundamentalists introduced bills barring the teaching of evolution in publicly funded schools and universities.<sup>63</sup>

The anti-evolution crusades of the 1920s were not merely about evolution; they were also about whether teachers in schools supported by tax dollars should be permitted to teach materials fundamentalists argued actively undermined students' faith. These concerns came at a time when modernists increasingly questioned the historicity of doctrines as varied as the virgin birth and the resurrection. The authors of *The Fundamentals*, a collection of theological essays published between 1910 and 1915 and widely seen as the de facto manifesto of the fundamentalist movement, spent as much time defending the miracles of Jesus than they did addressing evolution. The anti-evolution crusades were also not only about elementary and secondary schools; if anything, colleges and universities came in for more attention. Notably, anti-evolution legislation introduced during this decade frequently prohibited *any* teaching that contradicted the Bible, not just evolution, and applied to *all* tax-supported schools, including state-supported colleges or universities. "If it is not permitted to be taught, it must not be permitted to be denied," wrote Horton in 1923, referring to the removal of Bible reading and other forms of direct religious instruction from some public schools.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See Edward J. Larson, *Trial and Error: The American Controversy over Creation and Evolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> T. C. H., "Have a Heart."

In 1925, a high school teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, was put on trial for teaching the evolution of man in a public high school biology class. John Scopes had been selected by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to test the Butler Act, a state law limiting the teaching of evolution in publicly funded schools. Despite a vigorous defense by Clarence Darrow, Scopes was convicted and fined. The presence of both Darrow, a well-known defense lawyer, and William Jennings Bryan, a former presidential candidate turned anti-evolution activist, turned the trial into a media sensation.<sup>65</sup> After the Scopes Trial, opponents of evolution found themselves on the defensive, lampooned in the media, bereft of much of their credibility, and burdened with an anti-intellectual, hillbilly image that ultimately shaped the public understanding of the term “fundamentalist.” Anti-evolution activists continued to introduce school bills, but met with less success. Despite facing increased legislative opposition, anti-evolution activists succeeded in other ways. In a detailed study of high school science curriculum, historian Edward J. Larson found that many textbook publishers, more interested in profit than in controversy, deemphasized evolution in science textbooks after the 1920s, sometimes omitting it altogether. By being vocal, evangelical anti-evolution activists had effected change similar to that won by the Catholic and Jewish parents whose complaints led many public schools to voluntarily phase out religious devotionals in the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

### **Bible Reading Campaigns**

During the 1920s, legislatures in states across the country considered legislation mandating Bible reading. Unlike anti-evolution legislation, these bills typically had widespread support from those who would be known as “mainline” Protestants. Many Americans worried

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 99-100, 103-104. Larson, *Trial or Error*, 84-86.

that youth had become morally unmoored; mandatory Bible reading seemed a simple way to insert morality into the curriculum and ensure that children were exposed to a framework for judging right and wrong. A variety of Protestant denominations, the Ku Klux Klan, and the National Reform Association worked together during this period to promote Bible reading in the public schools. These groups had some success—eleven states passed mandatory Bible reading laws—but they were ultimately unable to replicate their success nationwide.<sup>67</sup>

Many fundamentalists supported efforts to mandate Bible reading in the public schools. Some argued that Bible reading and other devotional exercises in the public schools created a spiritual atmosphere that instilled children with respect for God and the Bible. Writing in the *King's Business* in 1924, Boston pastor Cortland Myers described watching a religious exercise at a boys' school in New York City and being impressed by the "dignity and solemnity" of the ceremony. "That scene fastened itself in memory and has been the fountainhead of a desire that I might see the day when the same religious atmosphere should be created in every school in the land," he wrote. "One of the greatest influences in all my boyhood life was the daily reading of the Bible and prayer in the old country schoolhouse." Myers acknowledged that it was not the schools' role to teach religion, but insisted that "there ought to be something in the atmosphere to have a permanent effect on the great things of the soul." For Myers, religious exercises in the public schools were less about providing students with religious content than about creating an atmosphere where God and the Bible were honored.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Historian Adam Laats has argued that the Scopes Trial needs to be seen in the context of a larger fundamentalist attempt to control public education during the 1920s, which ultimately failed but did have some temporary success. See Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 141.

<sup>68</sup> Cortland Myers, "The Crime of Our Godless Schools," *King's Business* (May 1924), 271. See also Editorial, "Shall We Bury the Bible?" *ibid.* (Nov. 1926), 621.

Some fundamentalists, too, argued that including Bible in the schoolroom promoted morality. Writing at the same time as Myers, Charles Calvert Ellis, education professor at a Christian college, contended that while teachers could try to impress on children the importance of not lying or cheating, “admonitions of this nature never rise above the law of the school room” because “they are not given as Biblical authority.” Ellis argued that students should learn directly from the Bible “that truth is moral and sacred” and pointed with concern to the changing moral standards of the younger generation. “This system of Godless, Bible-less education is paving a broad road to yet further moral downgrade of the nation,” he warned. Fundamentalists were not alone in worrying about changing moral standards and juvenile crime rates, and it was largely due to concerns about the morality of the nation’s youth that bills legislating Bible reading found widespread support outside their circles.<sup>69</sup>

Still other fundamentalists contended that devotional exercises in the public schools could provide children with well-needed exposure to biblical content. “We may as well be honest and face the fact that millions of the boys and girls growing up in this country will never know the Bible unless it is read to them in the public school,” John Murdock MacInnis, dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, wrote in a 1926 *King’s Business* article. The United States was a Christian nation, he argued; “[t]he people who established the school system of America certainly had no idea of divorcing religion and the Bible from our school curriculum.” The Bible was, he said, “the greatest source of moral influence known to us”; young people could not be blamed for failing to live up to the ideals of a book they were never taught. “What we are pleading for is not an interpretation of the Book or the introduction of any sectarian theology but the reading of the Book itself,” MacInnis insisted, “We are pleading for the filling of the minds

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<sup>69</sup> S. M. Ellis, “Secularized Public Schools—the Nation’s Menace,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1924), 622-23.

of the boys and girls with the teachings and ideas of the prophets, of Jesus, and the Apostles.” Merely hearing the book read aloud had the power to change children’s lives.<sup>70</sup>

Still, fundamentalists were not monolithic in their approach to Bible reading in the public schools. While the *King’s Business* published numerous articles decrying the secular nature of the nation’s public schools and declaring the United States a “Christian nation,” articles published in the *Moody Monthly* were more resigned. Benson argued repeatedly that it was not possible to insert religion into the public schools in a diverse society. While Myers argued that in a democracy a Christian majority had the right to impose its will upon an objecting minority, Benson disagreed, writing in 1926 that it was not possible “for the school to assume the function of the church in a government that provides for the separation of church and state.” Benson argued that the religious instruction no longer present in the nation’s public schools should instead be replaced through a vigorous Sunday school program.<sup>71</sup>

Fundamentalists were not alone in worrying about what the increasingly secular nature of the public schools meant for children’s moral development. Policymakers and educators scrambled to find new ways to provide moral education. Schools were expected to do more than ever before; to teach not only academics but also civics, hygiene, and morality. Historian B. Edward McClellan outlined three approaches to moral education, two held by public educators and one by religious educators. The first group of public educators promoted character education programs that emphasized nineteenth-century values such as honesty and hard work; the second

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<sup>70</sup> John Murdoch MacInnis, “We Are Debtors to the Boys and Girls of America,” *King’s Business* (April 1926), 187. See also T. C. Horton, “Making the Country Safe for Children,” *ibid.* (Dec. 1920), 1111.

<sup>71</sup> Cortland Myers, “The Crime of Our Godless Schools,” *King’s Business* (May 1924), 270-71, 322-23; S. H. Ellis, “Secularized Public Schools—the Nation’s Menace,” *ibid.* (Oct. 1924), 622-23. Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 141. Clarence Benson, “The Home, the Church, the School—A Unified Program,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1926), 223-224.

group sought to forge a wholly new approach to morality for a new era. Religious educators, in contrast, emphasized connections between moral principles and religious faith and supported the inclusion of Bible reading and religious education programs in the nation's public schools.<sup>72</sup>

If there was one area where fundamentalists agreed across the board, it was on the potential of the weekday church school, sometimes called "released time" education. These programs tended to have the support of mainline Protestants as well. The "Gary Plan," which originated in 1913 in Gary, Indiana, involved releasing students from school for religious instruction during school hours, and was more prevalent in the North. The "Chattanooga Plan," which was first developed in 1922 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, involved offering Bible classes in the public schools, and was more popular in the South. The Gary Plan allowed greater space for religious difference; separate classes were provided for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish children, typically taught by local pastors, priests, and rabbis. The Chattanooga Plan reflected the greater prominence of conservative religious views in the South; only one Bible class was taught for all interested students, typically by a local Protestant minister.<sup>73</sup> In 1926, Benson endorsed released-time education programs, arguing that "[t]he school should co-operate with the home and church" by excusing children for "a minimum of one hour a week to attend a church school of religious education." Students would gain access to additional religious teaching, he noted, but they would also learn "that the school clearly recognizes the importance of religious training."<sup>74</sup>

### **Christian Schools**

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<sup>72</sup> McClellan, *Moral Education*, 48.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 135.

<sup>74</sup> Benson, "The Home, the Church, the School." For additional praise, see Bert D. McAnlis, "Bible Proves a Most Popular Elective in High School," *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1937), 14, 20; and "We Must Do Something," *The United Presbyterian*, reprinted in *ibid.* (Jan. 1937), 259-260.

Despite their concerns about the public schools, 1920s fundamentalists did not found Christian schools. In fact, Christian elementary and secondary schools were so far from their frame of reference that articles published in the *Moody Monthly* and the *King's Business* used the term "Christian schools" to refer to denominational colleges and "church schools" to refer to Sunday school programs. In a 1922 *King's Business* article, Horton asked who was to blame for the nation's social decline. "Had our Christian schools and churches been faithful in their trust could these words have been truthful written?" he asked, referring to denominational colleges. "Nay, verily."<sup>75</sup> The coupling of laments for the decline of denominational colleges (and the need for Bible institutes) with a relative absence of any meaningful discussion of creating Christian grade schools and secondary schools can seem curious. The author of a 1928 *Western Recorder* article reprinted in the *Moody Monthly* told readers that "if State schools send out keen and trained minds filled with arguments of infidelity" it is the duty of "Christian people to maintain colleges that will send out keen and trained minds" to argue for the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Christ. But if the public elementary and secondary schools were as anti-

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<sup>75</sup> T. C. Horton, "What of America?" *King's Business* (Sept. 1922), 885-87. See also T. C. Horton, "Christian Schools," *ibid.* (Oct. 1922), 985-86. For additional examples, see W. Edward Raffety, "Reach in Order to Teach," *Lookout*, in "*Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1928), 233; "Wanted: A Father," *Religious Education*, in *ibid.* (Nov. 1927), 114; and "Christian Education," *The Baptist Record*, in *ibid.* (April 1929), 398-99. For an image illustrating the twin criticism of churches and denominational colleges, see Image, *Moody Monthly* (July 1922), 642. During this period, religious elementary and secondary schools were generally referred to as "parochial schools." This term had become associated with Catholic schools, which fundamentalists tended to view negatively. In 1921, Robert H. Bender, superintendent of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles' Spanish work, described a boy's experience in a Catholic school and decried the "baneful influence of the parochial schools." See Robert H. Bender, "Spanish Work," in "Evangelistic Department," *King's Business* (Aug. 1921), 785.

Christian as fundamentalists like Horton insisted they were, would it not also be their duty to maintain private Christian elementary and secondary schools?<sup>76</sup>

In a 1929 *Moody Monthly* article, Leedy, the Wheaton college professor, came close to calling for the creation of Christian elementary and secondary schools. “The second factor in producing the modern college is the surrender by the church of its God-given commission to instruct its children before they reach the college age,” he wrote. “The rapid growth of the city high school and consolidated schools of the rural districts has led us to the conclusion that the education of the children is a public function, so we have turned the children over to the high schools. ‘Let the state do it’ seems to be the universal idea. ‘It is much easier to pay taxes than to assume the responsibility and the expense of church schools.’” Providing children with religious instruction in the Sunday school, Leedy said, was not enough: “We must not think that the services on Sunday and the annual revival will in any real degree offset the steady influence of the thirty hours a week in the public school room.” Yet Leedy’s concerns did not result in the creation of Christian schools.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Christian Education Is Essential,” *Western Recorder*, in “*Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1928), 233. When writing of the family that objected to their children participating in a folk dance exercise in their public school, Horton warned that “those of us who prize the honor of our children may be compelled to resort to the parish school system, where our little ones may receive an education which shall be sweetened with the wisdom of God’s holy Word.” Horton did not clarify, and despite his many editorials decrying the secular nature of the nation’s public elementary and secondary schools, this appears to be the only time he mentioned the idea of a parish school system. T. C. H., “Demanding the Dance,” *King’s Business* (Jan. 1921), 5-6.

<sup>77</sup> J. W. Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?” *Moody Monthly* (June 1929), 473. “Science Profs Leedy and Mack Follow in Fathers’ Footsteps,” *Wheaton Alumni* (Oct. 1968), 16. J. W. Leedy noted differences in quality among public schools, writing that some public high schools simply lacked “the essential of spiritual and religious instruction which the church school alone can give” while “there are many high schools and even grade schools where the instruction is outlined with the deliberate purpose of breaking down any home or church instruction which the child may have had.” Leedy quoted from the outline of a high school biology course which he said encouraged teachers to “undermine any dogmatic views pupils may have entertained pervasively.” Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?”

There is one exception to the general rule that fundamentalists did not found Christian schools during the 1920s: Stony Brook School for Boys, a Christian boarding school founded in 1922. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, theologically conservative Protestants organized a series of loosely connected Bible conferences, often held in the summer, which united individuals across denominations and often focused on prophesy and revivalism. In 1907, Pastor John F. Carson of Central Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn founded the Stony Brook Assembly on Long Island as a location for holding summer Bible conferences. As the conferences became popular and widely attended, drawing large audiences from New York City, Carson tossed around the idea of founding a Christian college preparatory school in an effort to make year-long use of the assembly's property and buildings. All Carson needed was someone to take on the project and serve as the school's headmaster. Carson recruited Frank Gaebelein, the son of well-known fundamentalist pastor, speaker, and author Arno Gaebelein and a recent Harvard graduate. The younger Gaebelien was only twenty-two when he became the school's headmaster in September 1921. He spent the next year making preparations and securing faculty members; the school opened its doors in the fall of 1922 with twenty-seven students.<sup>78</sup>

From the beginning, Gaebelein focused on teaching Christian character and maintaining high academic standards. Throughout the decade, the school remained a lone example of fundamentalist secondary education. "In these days, true Christian fathers and mothers are greatly concerned regarding the spiritual influence under which their children are to develop," wrote Horton in 1924. "The Stony Brook School for Boys, being strongly evangelical in principle and definitely Christian in its atmosphere, points the way to a conception of education which will give the Bible its rightful place in the education of our youth." Despite his praise,

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<sup>78</sup> Robert G. Slater, "A 'Christian America' Restored: The Rise of the Evangelical Christian School Movement in America, 1920-1952" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 2012), 87-96.

Horton did not make an organized call for a nationwide system of Christian schools. The school was highly praised, but did not serve as a model for the creation of additional schools. Gaebelein would serve as headmaster of the Stony Brook School for Boys for over four decades and later become instrumental in promoting Christian elementary and secondary education.<sup>79</sup>

Mark Fakkema entered Christian education around the same time as Gaebelein. Slightly older than the youthful Gaebelein, Fakkema was born in 1890 and grew up in a devout Calvinist home. He attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and went on to obtain a master's degree from the University of Michigan and pursue graduate studies at the University of Chicago. In 1918, Fakkema accepted a position as principal of Chicago Christian High School, one of a loose network of Dutch Calvinist schools concentrated in the Midwest, echoing patterns of Dutch immigration. Leaders in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), a Dutch Calvinist denomination that emphasized separation from the world, promoted parochial education as essential to children's spiritual and cultural well-being; these schools had much in common with Catholic or Lutheran parochial systems, particularly early on. At the turn of the century, Dutch Calvinist schools moved from Dutch instruction to English instruction and were increasingly governed by local parent associations rather than by individual CRC churches or via top-down denominational control. Despite these changes, the schools remained solidly Calvinist and closely tied to their Dutch Calvinist heritage, and to the CRC.<sup>80</sup>

In 1919, Fakkema convened a meeting with other educators in the CRC to discuss the possibility of creating "a national organization composed of all associations and all alliances" that "could more effectively cope with the problems of normal training, teacher needs, school

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<sup>79</sup> Editorial, "Stony Brook School for Boys," *King's Business* (Aug. 1924), 476.

<sup>80</sup> Slater, "'Christian America' Restored," 76-78. On Dutch Calvinism and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), see James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1984).

board issues, Christian textbooks, and a publication for teachers and school board members.” Representatives from numerous parent associations and regional alliances met in Chicago in September 1920 to found the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS). The NUCS struggled financially; there would be no teacher training school or teacher pension system. Rather than creating its own textbooks, the union promoted materials created by parent associations and regional alliances. Still, the NUCS’ monthly bulletin provided member schools and regional alliances with information, ideas, and moral support. Fakkema was appointed General Secretary in 1926 and retained this position for over two decades.<sup>81</sup>

Members of the CRC held the fundamentalist movement at an arm’s length, in part due to their ethnic distinctiveness. There were theological disagreements as well, however. When CRC pastor Harry Bultema published a book endorsing dispensational premillennialism, he found himself defrocked. Still, as Bultema’s case makes clear, there was some flow of ideas between these groups. One bridge between the two was J. Gresham Machen, the influential Presbyterian theologian who contended against modernism during the fundamentalist-modernist controversies that beset Princeton Seminary and the northern Presbyterian Church during the 1920s. While Machen did not label himself a fundamentalist, he became popularly known as the preeminent theologian of the fundamentalist movement for his strident defenses of orthodoxy. The editors of the *Moody Monthly* and the *King’s Business* quoted Machen as an authority and published articles by him. At the same time, Dutch Calvinist leaders in the CRC followed the conflict in the northern Presbyterian Church with interest and championed Machen, who shared much of their Calvinist theology and confessional tradition. Machen was Presbyterian; his shared Reformed heritage meant that he held many ideas in common with the CRC, including his belief that

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<sup>81</sup> Slater, “‘Christian America’ Restored,” 78-84.

children's education was the responsibility of parents, and not to the state; his qualms about religious instruction in the public schools; and his support for Christian schools.<sup>82</sup>

Machen drew a bold line between church and state, arguing against both Bible reading in the public schools and experimental character education programs that centered patriotism. In a 1925 essay, he condemned a program of moral education that encouraged children to consider what Uncle Sam would have them do. In the same essay he that argued that “[t]he reading of selected passages from the Bible ... should not be encouraged, and still less should be required by law.” He explained his position as follows: “The real centre of the Bible is redemption; and to create the impression that other things in the Bible contain any hope for humanity apart from that is to contradict the Bible at its root.” Machen did not oppose released-time religious education programs, provided they were not mandated or assigned class credit, and he was in favor of teachers creating a “moral tone” in the classroom based on a strict distinction between right and wrong. For the state to do more than that, he asserted, would be for the state to overstep its boundaries. “If you give the bureaucrats the children, you might as well give them everything else as well,” he declared in 1926.<sup>83</sup>

Yet for Machen, even classrooms with a sound “moral tone” were not ideal. “Most important of all,” he wrote, “is the encouragement of private schools and Church schools; a secularized public education, though perhaps necessary, is a necessary evil; the true hope of any people lies in the kind of education in which learning and piety go hand in hand.” Despite his conviction of the need for Christian schools, Machen's northern Presbyterian church made no

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<sup>82</sup> On J. Gresham Machen, see “Understanding J. Gresham Machen,” in George M. Marsen, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 182-201. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism*, 96-97.

<sup>83</sup> John W. Robbins, ed., *Education, Christianity, and the State: Essays by J. Gresham Machen* (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 112, 115, 103, 106, 108.

attempt to return to its mid-1800s experiment in Christian schools under Charles Hodge. In the absence of a parochial system of his own, Machen became an admirer of the NUCS. His Calvinism and place within a wider confessional tradition likely gave Machen a feeling of familiarity with the NUCS that many fundamentalists would have lacked. The NUCS, moreover, restricted its membership to schools with Calvinist statements of faith, and, like the Catholic and Lutheran parochial systems, had grown up around a particular religious and ethnic community. Despite Machen's support for the idea, 1920s fundamentalists showed little interest in founding or enrolling their children in private Christian elementary and secondary schools.<sup>84</sup>

The cost and difficulty associated with founding private parochial schools likely played a role in fundamentalists' reticence. It is also probable that many fundamentalist laypeople, despite the sometimes provocative language employed in fundamentalist periodicals, did not find their local public schools all that objectionable. Even when they did have concerns, they may have stayed because they saw the public schools as theirs by right. Historical opposition to parochial schools, which were closely associated with Catholicism in the public mind, likely played a role in as well. In the end, fundamentalists responded to the loss of religious instruction in the public schools not by founding Christian schools but by focusing on the family altar and the Sunday school, and to the inclusion of teachings they viewed as anti-Christian—such as evolution—not by leaving but by fighting.

## **Conclusion**

During the 1920s, fundamentalists placed far less emphasis on the role of the school in the religious instruction of the young than they did on the role of the home and the church. Those most involved in child evangelism tended to position the Sunday school as their last stand. “The

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<sup>84</sup> Slater, “‘Christian America’ Restored,” 76-87.

days of religious education in the home and school are passed,” wrote Benson, director of Christian education at Moody Bible Institute, with some finality in 1923. “The responsibility of moral and spiritual development of the coming generation . . . is laid on the Sunday school.” “[T]he teaching work of the church is more important today than it has been in the past,” wrote Chaffee, who oversaw the Bible Institute of Los Angeles’ Christian education program, “because the Church now is the sole great agency to give systematic Christian training to our boys and girls.” The public schools, she added, “have become secularized and no longer to any extent educate in religion,” and the home, “partly through neglect, and partly through modern living conditions, seldom furnishes the Christian training that it should.” This left the church “alone in the field.” The Sunday school, Benson and Chaffee wrote, must take up the slack and compensate for the lack of religious training in the home and in the school.<sup>85</sup>

Fundamentalist pastors and theologians also emphasized the responsibility of the church in setting to rights the upended family altar. “The parents of today are the children neglected by the church in a former generation,” read a book review in the *Moody Monthly*, “and the homes of tomorrow will largely depend upon the activities of the church in reaching, teaching and saving the children of today.” The church shared responsibility for the decline of the family, but it also had a responsibility to reach children directly with the gospel. “Christian education of the young is the first duty of the church,” wrote Hazard. “What multitudes of children have come to an arid

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<sup>85</sup> Clarence H. Benson, “The Sunday-school Teacher’s Golden Hour,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1923), 178. Florence Chaffee, “Our New Course in Christian Education,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1926), 63. Florence M. Chaffee, “Christian Education—Its History,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1928), 84-85.

and fruitless maturity because the church failed to feed them in their time of helpless and dependent hunger for true ideals of God and life!”<sup>86</sup>

During the 1920s, fundamentalists feared that materialism and new forms of leisure were undermining the family. They watched with concern as the automobile took young people away from the home and as families chose amusement parks or the movies over Bible conferences and family worship. Fundamentalist concerns about youth were informed by the emphasis they placed on individual sin and personal conversion. Children needed to do more than learn to be moral citizens or engage in the life of the church. They needed individual salvation. If fundamentalists fought hard to prevent the public schools from teaching evolution and other beliefs they believed undermined children’s faith—and fight they did—they fought only harder to find ways to evangelize and win converts of children in an increasingly secular world.

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<sup>86</sup> Review of *Back to the Home*, by David William Ferry, in *Moody Monthly* (Feb. 1927), 314. Christopher G. Hazard, “Who Makes the Best Sunday-school Teacher?” *ibid.* (March 1922), 850-51.

## Chapter 2: 256 Hours of Bible Instruction

In 1931, the *Moody Monthly* published an image of a massive wooden wall holding back a torrent of water. The wall was labeled “Christian Restraint Against Evil Forces”; the homes and buildings protected by the wall were labeled “Civilization.” The wall was buttressed by a series of beams labeled “Vacation Bible School,” “Home Bible Instruction,” “Week Day Church School,” and “Sunday School.” During the 1930s, fundamentalists expressed grave concern about the nation’s youth. “[Young people] have the same heart, the same expressions, the same desires, the same loves and hates—and a thousand times more temptations,” wrote Ethel S. Low in the *King’s Business*. “[N]ever in the history of the world has Satan had all his cohorts massed against youth as he has today.” In their concern, fundamentalists turned to the bulwarks depicted, marshaling a collection of child outreach programs to hold back the torrent of evil forces. What the image did not include among the bulwarks is noteworthy: the public school. By the 1930s a minority of the nation’s public schools practiced Bible reading or school prayer, and an increased emphasis on academics had crowded out an earlier focus on moral instruction. During this decade, fundamentalists largely accepted the secularization of the nation’s public schools.<sup>87</sup>

During the 1930s, a number of prominent fundamentalist leaders expressed opposition to or ambivalence toward religious devotionals in the public schools, each for different reasons. Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen opposed public school devotionals out of a concern that these practices would suggest to unsaved children that they need do no more than live good lives. Fundamentalists, after all, held that salvation came only through personal conversion, which required individuals to first acknowledge that they were sinners. For his part, Clarence Benson, director of Moody Bible Institute’s Christian education program and a well-regarded

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<sup>87</sup> Clarence Benson, “How Parents Can Help the Sunday School,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1931), 6. Ethel S. Low, “How to Win and Hold Children,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 166-168, 174.

pioneer of child outreach programs, argued that religious devotionals in the public schools were inappropriate because they violated the separation of church and state. Texas evangelist John Rice questioned whether such devotionals could be effective when they might be led by non-Christian or modernist teachers. Machen, Benson, and Rice came from very different places, but were united their belief that it was not the public schools' role to provide religious instruction.

Each of these leaders offered a different solution. Machen argued that children should attend Christian schools where religion could be integrated into the curriculum. His belief that all education rested on some foundation and that secular education of necessity communicated anti-Christian values, however, was not shared by most fundamentalists; despite his urging, no Christian school movement sprang up during the 1930s. Benson's solution to the secularization of the public schools was to propose a comprehensive system of religious instruction that would operate parallel to the public schools, providing a robust curriculum that he argued was lacking in most churches' Sunday school programs. Finally, Rice emphasized the primacy of the family, downplaying the role played by the church. Despite such disagreement, 1930s fundamentalists worked together to build new child outreach programs and to expand existing ones.

Rather than retreating from the public sphere after the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s in defeat, as once thought, fundamentalists spent the decades following the 1920s building new organizations and networks. The 1930s were a period of unprecedented growth and innovation for fundamentalists. Nowhere is this truer than in child evangelism. The Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, two of the most prominent Bible institutes of this period, formed an association of Sunday school teacher training

programs, created new correspondence courses on child evangelism, published pioneering fundamentalist Sunday School curriculum, and experimented with new forms of child outreach.<sup>88</sup>

### **Child Outreach on the Street**

In a 1934 *Moody Monthly* article, William A. Rich, a layman in Lawrence, Massachusetts, wrote about his practice of gathering “surplus story papers and picture cards” and walking the streets. He approached every child he came upon, asked their grade and gave them a story to read. Lawrence was a community known for its substantial immigrant population. “A ten year Polish girl seems me coming from a distance, and waiting till I draw near, asks if I have any ‘story-books’ (as she calls them),” Rich told his readers, explaining what a typical afternoon given over to this work looked like. “An Italian girl, about twelve, followed me some distance, too shy to ask for a story,” he continued. The children learned to watch for him, he added, and learned where he lived. “Someone is knocking at my door,” he wrote. It was “a Greek, father of several children,” asking for stories in his own language. Rich urged readers to consider copying his methods in their own towns.<sup>89</sup>

Over the course of the 1930s, fundamentalists built and expanded programs for youth outreach. Some of these programs looked similar to the simple, one-person approach promoted by Rich; others were painstakingly organized and required more planning and manpower. While many of the country’s leaders promoted Sunday school attendance as a crime prevention measure, fundamentalists emphasized children’s ministries for their evangelistic potential—and refused to limit their ministries to children to Sunday mornings.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>89</sup> William A. Rich, “Reaching Children on the Street,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1934), 11.

<sup>90</sup> The September 1931 issue of the *Moody Monthly* included excerpts from three secular newspapers on the importance of the Sunday school in its “Our Monthly Potpourri” section.” See

Some of this evangelism took place in the public schools. The Moody Bible Institute's Bible Institute Colportage Association sent Bibles and Christian materials to public school teachers in Appalachia, who then distributed these materials to students. A 1930 advertisement included a picture of a rough, rundown cottage with four ragged children standing in front of it. "Over Half a Million Mountain Young Folks Can Now Be Reached Through the Public Schools!" the advertisement declared. These notices bore a sense of urgency: In 1931, an advertisement warned that readers should support the work while they still could, because the "broadening educational standards of the mountain states" meant that rural teachers were taking "special training in the state universities and colleges," which might predispose them against sharing biblical materials and books with their students.<sup>91</sup>

Other ministries took place within the public schools as well, such as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles's Euodia club for girls. "There are at the present time forty-five individual clubs among high schools and junior high schools in Los Angeles and vicinity," the *King's Business* exulted in 1936. "In one month, total attendance in Euodia meetings was 2,700." The club was designed "to lead unsaved girls to Christ and to enrich the spiritual life of every one present." An article about the club included a picture of four hundred girls seemed together at Pacific

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"Sunday School," *Chicago Daily News*, in *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1931), 24; *Toronto Globe*, "Training the Child," *ibid.*; and *Heidelberg Herald*, "The Influence of a Sunday School," *ibid.* For evangelistic potential, see "The Teacher's Influence," *Herald of Holiness*, in *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1931), 72. Growth in child outreach programs continued into the early 1940s. AWANA, a weekly Bible club that would spread to hundreds of fundamentalist churches, was founded in North Side Gospel Center 1941; the Children's Bible Hour, a weekly radio program made for and by children, premiered the following year and was soon picked up by hundreds of Christian radio stations. See "Our Boys and Girls," *Moody Monthly* (Feb. 1944), 316, 347.

<sup>91</sup> On the Colportage Association and the book funds, see Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 150-155. See also advertisement, "America's Greatest Open Door for the Gospel!" *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1930), 145. On "mountain schools," see Norman H. Camp, "A Great Need and Great Opportunity in Mountain Schools," *ibid.* (Nov. 1931), 119.

Palisades, attending the Euodia club's annual summer conference. The girls of the Euodia clubs, the *King's Business* reported, were encouraged to invite their friends or help expand the program by founding new clubs or through engagement in other outreach programs.<sup>92</sup>

Most child outreach programs, however, took place outside of the public schools—and outside of established churches. In the summer of 1931, students from the Bible Institute of Los Angeles set up tents on Manhattan Beach in California. They were testing a program first pioneered in England six decades prior—the Children's Special Service Mission. "As soon as the blue and white C.S.S.M. banner was seen on the beach, children came running," a *King's Business* editorial describing the program declared. In the mornings, Institute students lead singing, Scripture memorizing, and Bible study; in the afternoon they held contests and programs, including "the making of sand gardens, the telling of Bible stories, and the finding of 'hidden treasure'" along with a Scripture writing in the sand contest. That summer the program ran for four weeks; sixteen children made confessions of faith. Following this success, the Institute made the program a regular summer offering; the number of children reached and converted each summer grew.<sup>93</sup>

Bible Institute of Los Angeles students reached children in additional ways as well. "In the vicinity of the Institute, students are going out two by two to deal with children about their souls' salvation," Mildred M. Cook explained in a 1936 *King's Business* article. "Each week, at least forty children among those contacted in this way are brought to a definite decision for

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<sup>92</sup> Mildred M. Cook, "Biola Wins Children for Christ," *King's Business* (May 1936), 162-163. Anna Horton, wife of founder T. C. Horton, founded the first Euodia club for girls in Los Angeles High School sometime before 1911. See, "A Great Work Among Los Angeles School Girls," *ibid.* (June 1931), 247. See also Mrs. Lyman Stewart, "Stories of Increasing Harvest," *ibid.* (June 1937), 208, 215.

<sup>93</sup> Editorial, "Children's Special Service Mission," *King's Business* (Oct. 1931), 441. Mildred M. Cook, "Biola Wins Children for Christ," *ibid.* (May 1936), 162-163.

Christ.” Cook detailed Institute students’ work among children in “Sunday-school classes and week-day Bible clubs” and through Daily Vacation Bible School programs held “in their home churches or in neglected communities.” “While over half of the children of the United States receive no Christian education whatever, there remains a field ‘white already to harvest’,” Cook declared, encouraging readers to consider enrolling in one of the Institute’s many child evangelism courses and programs.<sup>94</sup>

Children could also play in evangelizing their playmates. In article published in the *Moody Monthly* in 1937, Ethel S. Low of Modesto, California, told the story of a young girl from a Christian home who successfully convinced her friend, whose father was an atheist, to attend Sunday school with her. This occurrence, Low noted, “should make us all think a little more seriously about young, very young children, and the possibility of their conversion, and also their possibilities in reaching other children.” The *King’s Business* frequently printed stories about teenage girls involved in Euodia; these girls brought their friends, started new clubs, and found ways to impact those who were not yet being reached. “Do you realize that one enthusiastic child can bring more children into your class than you can gather in any other way?” wrote Low, reflecting on her experience teaching Sunday school.<sup>95</sup>

Fundamentalist periodicals engaged children in other ways as well: Each issue the *King’s Business* included the names of children who had joined the Know Your Bible Club that month. “The following have read through the Gospel according to John and are now members of the Know Your Bible Club,” the section began in June 1937. “Donald Aistrup; Jessie and William

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<sup>94</sup> Mildred M. Cook, “Biola Wins Children for Christ,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 162-163.

<sup>95</sup> Ethel S. Low, “Reaching an Atheist,” in *Moody Monthly* (March 1937), 386. On Euodia clubs, see Mrs. Lyman Stewart, “Stories of Increasing Harvest,” *King’s Business* (June 1937), 208, 215; and Martha S. Hooker, “Junior King’s Business: One Girl’s Influence,” *ibid.* (Jan. 1933), 17. Ethel S. Low, “How to Win and Hold Children,” *ibid.* (May 1936), 166-168, 174.

Bennet; Irene Bird; Erma Blomster.” The list continued; over 200 names were printed. Features like this, along with regular features such as the “Junior King’s Business” and “Girls’ Query Corner,” sought to involve children in fundamentalist belief and practice.<sup>96</sup>

### **Unreached Children**

Fundamentalist child outreach during the 1930s should be understood within the context of grave concerns about the future of the nation’s young people. In 1931, the Bible Institute Colportage Association launched a drive to put the Bible in prisons. “In Your Christmas Giving Don’t Forget 200,000 Young Folks Behind the Bars!” ran an ad in the *Moody Monthly*, accompanied by an image of juvenile criminals in a cell. A 1937 advertisement for the Bible Institute of Los Angeles’ Child Evangelism Correspondence Course warned that “27,000,000 children do not attend Sunday school” and that “Of the 13,000,000 in our Sunday-schools, 10,000,000 have never been evangelized.” Fundamentalists’ concern about unreached children frequently went hand in hand with their concern about the breakdown of the family. “The old-fashioned God-honoring home is almost gone,” warned a *Moody Monthly* editorial in 1937. “Cocktail-drinking fathers, cigarette-smoking mothers, and movie-crazed children, and you have the environment of criminal youth.”<sup>97</sup>

Concern about changing family patterns and social mores pervaded fundamentalist publications throughout the 1930s. “Many women are seemingly more interested in their clubs and other social affairs than in training their children,” warned Leora Blanchard of Conway, Michigan, in a 1933 *Moody Monthly* article. “The interests of the mother are centered in clubs,

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<sup>96</sup> “New K. Y. B. C. Members,” *King’s Business* (June 1937), 214.

<sup>97</sup> Advertisement for the Bible Institute Colportage Association, “In Your Christmas Giving Don’t Forget 200,000 Young Folks Behind the Bars,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1931), 223. Advertisement for the Bible Institute of Los Angeles’ Child Evangelism Correspondence Course, “Child Evangelism Correspondence Course,” *King’s Business* (Feb. 1937), 60-61. Editorial, “Youth and Crime,” *Moody Monthly* (May, 1937), 451.

bridge, projects and social climbing,” declared an article in the same publication four years later. “As long as America’s homes were God-fearing, we had no need to fear national chastening, nor atheistic and communistic revolutions,” read an article in the *American Baptist* in 1935. Times had changed, the author wrote. “Father goes to his ‘hang-out’ downtown in the form of a club, lodge, gambling or drinking den; mother goes to the card social or some other equally useless gathering; son or daughter dashes away 60 per hour for the movies where they see ‘Yours for Tonight’ or ‘It Happened One Night,’ or else they are out parked along the roadside, and to say they are necking would be putting it mildly.”<sup>98</sup>

In many ways, fundamentalist proclamations of family breakdown were simply a continuation of earlier (and possibly timeless) concerns. In other ways, fundamentalist concern for children and youth took on a distinctly 1930s bent. Membership in the Communist Party grew rapidly in the 1930s; the influence of the “Popular Front” was felt throughout American culture. During this decade, many fundamentalists became increasingly worried about the spread of Communism within the U.S. These concerns extended to the schools. “I wonder how many of you know that right at the door of your public schools in many cities the young communists are giving out to children invitations to communistic meetings right at the school,” Low asked in her 1936 *King’s Business* article on child evangelism.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Leora M. Blanchard, “Young People and the Christian Faith,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 209-210. J. O. Kinsman, “Doomed,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1937), 15. See also M. S. Ruff, “Mother’s Day—By Whose Authority?” *ibid.* (May 1932), 437. For repetition of club/dance/movie in the 1930s, see “Christian Homes,” *American Baptist*, “in *ibid.* (Aug. 1935), 574-575.

<sup>99</sup> Ethel S. Low, “How to Win and Hold Children,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 166-168, 174. See also “Compulsory Sunday Schools Are Asked,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, in “*Moody Monthly* (March 1935), 335; and “Rainbow,” Florence Nye Whitwell, “Heart to Heart With Our Young Readers,” *King’s Business* (May 1931), 216-217. Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the 1930s* (New York: Verso, 1997).

In late 1931, the editors of the *Moody Monthly* offered an explanatory note for their increasing coverage of Communism. “A controlling reason for our occasional brief editorial notes on Communism is found in its activities among our youth, for it has adopted an intensive and extensive campaign to train American-born and American-speaking boys and girls in its principles and aims,” the editors wrote. “A necessity, this, because communists of this generation in our country are aliens for the most part, and know little of our history and government and speak our language very imperfectly.” The editorial pointed to the Young Pioneers of America and the Young Communist League, and warned of summer camps in the United States where children were being “educated in the tenets of Communism, and taught hatred and contempt for Christianity and all religion and the American government and institutions.” Throughout the 1930s, fundamentalist periodicals published stories about the repression of religion in the Soviet Union. These stories frequently focused on the effect of these campaigns on that nation’s youth, and warned that the same could happen here.<sup>100</sup>

In 1938, the *King’s Business* published an article titled “Deadly Poison Gas in Tax-Supported Schools,” in which radio evangelist Dan Gilbert of San Diego, California, warned that “while European nations hastily provide gas masks for their civilian populations, American school children and university students are left defenseless before the encroachment of a still more deadly poison on the classroom.” Gilbert informed readers that “one-half of the students who enter leading universities as professing Christians are converted into agnostics and atheists before they are graduated” and that “one out of every four is a Communist or a Socialist at graduation.” This language calls to mind a 1923 anti-evolution book in which evangelist T. T. Martin told readers that “the Germans who . . . fed little children poisoned candy were angels

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<sup>100</sup> Editorial, “Ensnaring Our Boys and Girls,” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1931), 104. Will R. Johnson, “Atheism,” *ibid.* (Nov. 1931), 111-112, 119.

compared to the teachers, paid by our taxes, who feed our children's minds with the deadly, soul-destroying poison of Evolution." In the late 1930s, earlier concern about atheism remained, augmented by fears of Communism.<sup>101</sup>

### **American Schools and Infidel Universities**

Concern about Communist infiltration among the nation's youth frequently centered on colleges and universities. It was in this context that some fundamentalists defended public elementary and high schools as bastions of Americanism. In 1934, the *Moody Monthly* published an article by Greta S. Deffenbaugh of Chicago that decried attempts to funnel state money to private schools. Deffenbaugh contended that should such measures go forward, there would be "schools for the different races of which our population is composed, for the different religions, and the different classes." She viewed such an outcome as disastrous, because if it should happen "the public schools, the nation's real melting pot, will be a thing of the past." Fundamentalists often associated Communism with immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; concern that such individuals might set up their own private schools and refuse to integrate fed fundamentalist opposition to private schools in the 1930s just as similar fears had fueled Protestant opposition to parochial schools in the face of Catholic immigration in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>102</sup>

Fundamentalists' comparative support for public elementary and secondary schools during the 1930s, in contrast to their heightened concern about colleges and universities, stemmed in part from a distinction they drew between the two: Elementary and secondary schools did not teach the Bible; colleges and universities actively undermined it. "In the homes

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<sup>101</sup> Dan Gilbert, "Deadly Poison Gas in Tax-Supported Schools," *King's Business* (Feb. 1938), 46-47.

<sup>102</sup> Greta S. Deffenbaugh, "Public versus Private Schools," *Moody Monthly* (July 1934), 500.

Christ has been left out, or pushed to one side; in the Sunday Schools teachers have sought to entertain their pupils when they should have used every precious minute to teach the Word of God,” Blanchard wrote in her 1933 *Moody Monthly* article on children and youth. “Then in later years we send our young people to college, and many of them return infidels or agnostics, their faith overthrown by modernistic teaching.” When they did note the lack of Bible reading in the nation’s public schools, fundamentalists tended to approach this issue as a separate problem from the Bible’s treatment in the nation’s colleges and universities. “How does America forget God?” asked Joseph T. Larson, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, in a 1932 *King’s Business* article. “By largely banishing the Bible from schools and by misinterpreting it in universities, criticizing it in theological seminaries and colleges, and scoffing at it among the infidels and atheists of the nation.” The universities misinterpreted the Bible and the theological seminaries and colleges criticized it, Larson contended; the public schools simply did not teach it.<sup>103</sup>

Warnings about the danger secular colleges and universities posed to youth were a staple of fundamentalist publications throughout the 1930s. An advertisement for the Million Testaments Campaign for Students, which sought to distribute New Testaments to college students, featured an image of blindfolded college professors leading blindfolded students over a cliff labeled “Utter Disbelief in God.” The advertisement warned of atheism on college campuses: “In a sorority in a prominent Southern college forty girls declared their disbelief in God. A person connected with a large boys’ college in the east stated that most of the boys in the college were infidels and atheists.” Even ostensibly Christian colleges were suspect. “Most of the larger colleges and universities that were founded by Christian funds for Christian education have become as thoroughly pagan as though the Lord Jesus Christ had never been heard of,”

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<sup>103</sup> Leora M. Blanchard, “Young People and the Christian Faith,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 209-210. Joseph T. Larson, “The Cure for Depression,” *King’s Business* (April 1932), 153, 160.

wrote George E. Guille, president of Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee, and a former professor at Moody Bible Institute. Fundamentalist leaders urged parents to consider having their children attend a Bible institute for a year or two before attending college.<sup>104</sup>

It was likely concern about secular colleges and universities that kept the Stony Brook School for Boys, the fundamentalist boarding school run by Frank Gaebelein, afloat during the Depression; the school maintained its enrollment numbers by advertising itself as a college preparatory school that paid special attention to students' spiritual preparedness. "Stony Brook parents rejoice that the school's program aims to prepare a boy for college mentally, physically, and spiritually," read one advertisement. "The school is fully accredited. Its boys enter any college in the country." The advertisement presented a list of colleges attended by Stony Brook graduates, including Dartmouth, Oberlin, Cornell, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Annapolis, and West Point, and specifically labeled Stony Brook a "prep" school.<sup>105</sup>

In the mid-1930s, Stony Brook School for Boys inspired the creation of a sister institution: Montrose School for Girls. Looking for a way to use their conference facilities during the off-season, representatives from the Montrose Bible Conference Association met with those from the Stony Brook School for Boys, which also used conference facilities as a campus. The association tapped Marian Wilberforce Stoughton, sister of the late evangelist R. A. Torrey, to be

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<sup>104</sup> Advertisement, "Will you help give the students the Word of God?" *Moody Monthly* (June 1931), 501. George E. Guille, "Teaching Genesis in Scopes' Classroom," *Sunday School Times*, in *ibid.* (Feb. 1931), 350. For more on George E. Guille, see Adam Laats, *Fundamentalist U: Keeping the Faith in American Higher Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). For more on atheism and disbelief, see Maud Howe, "Youth for Christ or Youth for Atheism," *King's Business* (Oct. 1933), 337-338; Ethel S. Low, "How to Win and Hold Children," *ibid.* (May 1936), 166-168, 174. For more on Christian colleges, see J. D. Eggleston, "What Makes a School Christian?" *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1930), 15; and Helen Miller Lehman, "What I Learned in a Class of College Girls," *ibid.* (Sept. 1931), 8-9.

<sup>105</sup> Advertisement for Stony Brook School, "Fully Accredited for College Entrance," *King's Business* (May 1937), 186.

headmistress of a boarding school for girls designed on the Stony Brook model. When the school opened, it advertised itself as a college-preparatory institution with a home-like atmosphere and a focus on both the intellectual and the spiritual. Attendance at a boarding school like Montrose, the advertisements promised, would prepare a girl for future attendance at a secular college or university, with due attention to her spiritual growth.<sup>106</sup>

When fundamentalists expressed concern about anti-Christian material taught in “tax-supported schools” they typically referred solely or primarily to state colleges and universities, and not to public elementary and secondary schools. A 1937 cartoon published in the *Moody Monthly* depicted a middle-aged man and woman sorting through a pile of pamphlets under the heading “Be Sure of Your School”; a caption warned parents to evaluate whether a school encouraged communism or atheism. The pamphlets, of course, were college brochures, and the words “safeguarding their children’s education” under the image referred to the college search. During the 1930s, fundamentalist periodicals were preoccupied with the question of where fundamentalist parents should send their children for college; where they should send their children for elementary and secondary school did not receive similar scrutiny. Fundamentalist children attended public schools as a matter of course.<sup>107</sup>

### **The Case Against Devotions**

Not all fundamentalists were so blasé about public elementary and secondary schools. Presbyterian theologian J. Gresham Machen, widely recognized as both an authority and a theological giant among fundamentalists, continued to endorse private Christian elementary and secondary schools as the ideal. The theologian had stood nearly alone among in making such a

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<sup>106</sup> John Herbert Bowman, “Montrose School for Girls,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1935), 325, 330.

<sup>107</sup> Image, “Be Sure Your School,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1937), 26.

call in the 1920s; in the 1930s he stood even more alone. In the absence of Christian elementary and secondary schools both in his native Presbyterian tradition and in fundamentalism, Machen built connections with the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), a loose coalition of Dutch Calvinist elementary and secondary schools maintained by congregations of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Originally founded as ethnic parochial schools, these schools initially taught in Dutch. By the 1930s they taught in English and enrolled students that were not from CRC backgrounds, but remained solidly Calvinist and retained connections to the CRC and to their ethnic heritage. Drawn to the organization by similarities between the CRC and his own Presbyterian heritage, Machen gave a speech at an NUCS convention in Chicago in 1933.<sup>108</sup>

In his speech, Machen focused primarily on critiquing proposed avenues for religious or moral instruction in the public schools. He first addressed character education programs, which he argued “base character upon human experience” and “the collective experience of the race.” Christians, he contended, must ground their systems of morality not on human experience but on the law of God. The theologian went further, arguing that any attempt to teach absolute morality in the classroom would be “radically opposed to the Christian doctrine of sin” because “a proclamation of morality which regards itself as all that is necessary . . . is very different from that true proclamation of the law of God which may be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.” Teaching morality separately from the gospel, Machen warned, risked denying children’s need for salvation. Teaching children right from wrong without also teaching them that they were

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<sup>108</sup> J. Gresham Machen, “The Necessity of the Christian School,” in *Education, Christianity, and the State: Essays by J. Gresham Machen*, ed. John W. Robbins (Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 66-83. Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 350-51. Several Dutch Calvinist theologians, including Cornelius Van Til, followed J. Gresham Machen from Princeton Seminary to Westminster Theological Seminary, which Machen founded in 1929.

sinners in need of salvation, he argued, hazarded giving children the idea that they could be good people apart from regeneration through Christ.<sup>109</sup>

Next, Machen declared himself “just about as strongly opposed to the reading of the Bible in state-controlled schools as any atheist could be.” He put forward several reasons for his position: “What could be more terrible,” he asked, “than the reading of the Lord’s prayer to non-Christian children, as though they could use it without becoming Christians, as though persons who have never been purchased by the blood of Christ could possibly say to God, ‘Our Father, which art in Heaven’?” The theologian warned that reading “the so-called ethical portions of the Bible apart from its great redemptive core,” in absence of any theological discussion of the gospel, might lead non-Christian children to believe that as long as they followed the Bible’s ethical prescriptions, they needed nothing more.<sup>110</sup>

Much of Machen’s analysis was built on an acceptance of the necessity of separation of church and state. He did not argue that the gospel could or should be presented in the nation’s public schools. Indeed, the theologian expressed a profound reluctance toward any extension of the role of the state in children’s religious formation. While allowing that “there is no harm in advocating the release of public-school children at convenient hours during the week for any religious instruction which their parents may provide,” he added that even here “danger lurks at the door.” Machen worried in particular about who might control the content of the instruction provided, and warned that awarding school credit for Bible instruction, as frequently occurred in schools in the South, would ultimately lead to state control of the programs’ content.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Machen, “The Necessity of the Christian School,” 76-78.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-79.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

The state, Machen warned, could not present the gospel in its public schools, and absent that any attempt to provide religious or moral instruction was counterproductive. The theologian called efforts to add religious exercises to otherwise secular instruction “miserable makeshifts” and argued that “a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian conviction underlies not a part, but all, of the curriculum of the school.” He further declared that he could “see little consistency in a type of Christian activity which preaches the gospel on the street corners and at the ends of the earth, but neglects the children of the covenant by abandoning them to a cold and unbelieving secularism.” Machen warned that secular education was producing “not a real human being but a horrible Frankenstein” and called on parents to send their children to schools founded on Christian, and not secular, values.<sup>112</sup>

Machen’s perspective was grounded in the covenantal theology he shared with individuals in the Dutch Calvinist tradition; this theology de-emphasized the role of the state in favor of the role of the family and the local church. Indeed, leading Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge had objected to the creation of public schools in the 1840s, warning that state intervention in children’s education posed a threat to the role of parents and the church. The vast body of Presbyterians had not heeded these calls, leaving Machen to make alliance with the CRC, with its system of Christian schools and its longstanding opposition to state education of “children of the covenant.” Machen died in 1937, only four years after speaking before the NUCS, and before seeing any change in fundamentalists’ overall ambivalence toward Christian elementary and secondary schools.<sup>113</sup>

### **Religion in the Public School**

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

<sup>113</sup> For more on J. Gresham Machen, see “Understanding J. Gresham Machen,” in George M. Marsen, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 182-201.

Machen's objections to religious instruction in the public schools are best understood in the context of mainline Protestant support for such instruction. W. S. Fleming is a case in point. A former Chicago minister, Fleming spent the 1920s and 1930s promoting religious exercises in the public schools on behalf of the National Reform Association. In a 1942 book summarizing two decades of work, Fleming laid out his case for religion in the public schools. His primary focus was crime. "All believers in God hold that when religion declines, crime grows, and that when religion flourishes, crime decreases," he wrote, calling for cooperation across religious lines. "Every religious group in America suffers—Protestant, Catholic, Jew," he explained. "All have numberless children in the public schools, getting no religion, growing up with no knowledge of God and His rules of conduct." Fleming's emphasis was not on individual salvation but on public morality.<sup>114</sup>

In contrast to fundamentalists, Fleming downplayed the effect of changing family patterns and the failure of the church to reach the nation's young, arguing that "the absence of religion from our public schools for nearly three-quarters of a century is the main cause of this uphill struggle of the churches and of the growth of crime." So, too, he brushed away the idea that the home or the church could make up for lost religious instruction at school, because a man could not be forced "to train his child aright or send him to church." He was likewise dismissive of parochial schools and released-time education programs, pointing out that both relied on

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<sup>114</sup> W. S. Fleming, *God in Our Public Schools* (Pittsburg: National Reform Association, 1942), 54, 229, 16-17. W. S. Fleming was the pastor of a Methodist Episcopal congregation in Chicago in 1919 when his denomination sent him to campaign for a Bible reading amendment to the Illinois state constitution. After his 1919 efforts, Fleming became an activist for the National Reform Association and spent two decades as an itinerant speaker on religion and public education across the country. See "Demands Law for Bible Instruction in Schools," *Global Jewish News Source*, Jan. 29, 1929, <http://www.jta.org/1929/01/29/archive/demands-law-for-bible-instruction-in-schools>. Fleming did not object to the teaching of evolution in the public schools, arguing only that it not be an avenue for atheism "when Darwin said otherwise."

voluntary attendance. The only solution to the nation's crime problem was to mandate religious instruction in the nation's public schools, Fleming argued. "The real aim of it all must be good citizenship, not to bolster the churches but to save the state," he concluded.<sup>115</sup>

In contrast to Machen's focus on the role of parents and the church, Fleming grounded his argument in the obligation of the state had to its children. "The child has a right to be educated religiously to save himself and the nation from atheism," he wrote. Fleming quoted from the 1930 children's charter, created at the 1930 White House Conference on Children—"For every child spiritual and moral training to help him stand firm under the pressure of life"—and from a 1939 speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt—"We are concerned about the children who are outside the reach of religious influences, and are denied help in attaining faith in an ordered universe and in the Fatherhood of God." In the early 1940s, the constitutionality of Bible reading and other religious exercises in the public schools was as yet unsettled. No U.S. Supreme Court ruling spoke to the issue, and state and local court decisions were divided. Indeed, the 1940 White House Conference on Children in a Democracy called for a study of churches and schools to examine "the problem of religious education in relation to public education" to determine how children could receive religious instruction "without in any way violating the principle of the separation of church and State." Fleming was writing within a greater milieu of concern about how children were to receive the religious instruction thought necessary to guard against crime.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Fleming, *God in Our Public Schools*, 67-69, 75, 77, 80, 177.

<sup>116</sup> Fleming, *God in Our Public Schools*, 125-135, esp. 128. 1930 Children's Charter, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, 1930, U.S. Children's Bureau Files, National Archives, College Park, Maryland, access online, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/124>. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy," April 23, 1939, accessible online at *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15747>. Recommendations of the White House

In 1932, New York City Commissioner of Police John P. Mulroony declared that of 4,000 boy criminals studied, “there had been practically no home influence and only three had ever attended Sunday school for more than three weeks.” A 1935 article in the *Atlanta Daily World* read that “the judges of our courts recommend the Sunday school” and that “the characters with which our courts have to deal are not from the Sunday School except in a few cases.” In 1940, a U.S. Congressman with past experience as a judge and prosecutor declared that “only 1 in 50 youngsters haled before him for crime had had any Sunday school or church affiliation.” Calls for Sunday school attendance as an antidote to crime rarely mentioned personal conversion or the gospel. These calls were not about evangelism; they were about crime prevention. Fleming argued that it did not matter whether a child was Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, provided that child received solid moral instruction in their respective tradition. This reasoning ran at cross-purposes to the very core of the fundamentalist belief system.<sup>117</sup>

Fleming was by no means alone in his mainline Christian call for religious education in the public schools. Luther A. Weigle, dean of Yale Divinity School and well known for his writings on religious education, penned the introduction to Fleming’s book. “We must keep sectarianism out of our public schools,” he wrote, “But that does not necessitate stripping the schools of religion.” He warned that excluding religion “would be to surrender these schools to the sectarianism of atheism and irreligion” and that “[t]o omit faith in God . . . is to convey to

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Conference on Children in a Democracy,” January 18-20, 1940, Maternal and Child Health Library, Georgetown University. For more, see Milton Gaither, *American Education History Revisited: A Critique of Progress* (Teacher’s College Press: New York, 2003), 132. On dictatorships, see Fleming, *God in Our Public Schools*, 206.

<sup>117</sup> “Fight Crime and Corruption through Children, Keigwin Urges, Holding Adult Reform Fails,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1932, p. 18. “The Sunday School and Crime,” *Atlanta Daily World*, Sept. 7, 1935, p. 3. “Rep. Gibbs Says Only Church Can Make Democracy Safe,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 14, 1940, p. 17. See also “Crime Is Laid to ‘Energies Misdirected’,” *ibid.*, May 14, 1938, p. X17; “Child Crime Laid to Lack of Sunday School,” *ibid.*, Sept. 17, 1945, p. 4.

children and youth a strong negative suggestion.” Weigle was likely influenced by his Lutheran roots, a similar confessional tradition to that embraced by Machen, but he was hardly marginal or alone among mainline clergy in arguing for the inclusion of religious exercises in the nation’s public schools. In fact, mainline Protestants arguably did more to support religious education in the public schools during the 1930s and early 1940s than did fundamentalists. Weekday religious education classes, promoted heavily by mainline clergy, made impressive gains during this period, and it was mainline clergy who often dictated the content of these classes.<sup>118</sup>

Fundamentalists occupied an uneasy space in discussions of the role of religion in the public schools: they were not worried merely about traditional morality or even about teaching students religious doctrine. Instead, fundamentalists were concerned with providing students with the gospel message and facilitating personal conversion. In 1932, a *Moody Monthly* editorial likely penned by Moody Bible Institute president James M. Gray addressed one university’s plan to give students “a solid foundation in religious philosophy” in order to combat crime. “A solid foundation in religious philosophy?” asked Gray. “Who knows of such a foundation except that which is laid in the gospel of redemption through the blood of Calvary?” This focus on conversion can also be seen in Gray’s response to a commencement speech that presented education as “the remedy for all the ills of modern civilization”: “There never was more education than today, and never better,” Gray argued. “That which civilization needs is not education but evangelism.” Fundamentalists believed that it was imperative for children to

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<sup>118</sup> Fleming, *God in Our Public Schools*, 11-12. On conflict over the content of religious education classes, see Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge, 2002), 135-59.

receive religious instruction, but not just *any* religious instruction. What children needed, they argued, was exposure to the gospel.<sup>119</sup>

In a 1934 *Moody Monthly* article, Raymond M. Hudson of Washington, D.C., wrote that many fundamentalists opposed Bible instruction of the public schools “because some teachers are Protestants, some are Jews, some Catholic, and some Greek Catholic.” Hudson disagreed, arguing that it was better to have the Bible taught in such circumstances than for children to receive no Bible instruction at all. “My own opinion of the Bible after years of study of it,” he explained, “is that if any boy reads and studies it, the Bible’s influence on that boy will be very beneficial and will mold his character and viewpoint of life for good to himself and others, regardless of how erroneous some of his instruction may be.” P. B. Fitzwater, a former public school teacher who spent years serving as a pastor before becoming a professor at Moody Bible Institute, disagreed with Hudson in turn. “Even where the Bible is recognized by giving it a place in the curriculum, it is taught from a modernistic standpoint,” Fitzwater warned in a 1936 *Moody Monthly* article. Fundamentalists agreed that children needed Bible instruction; how and where they should receive this instruction was a slightly more complicated matter.<sup>120</sup>

### **The Sunday School Solution**

In 1933, Benson wrote about a missionary who quizzed her African cook on a list of Bible questions only to find that he performed better than the average American high school student, based on a recent survey American students’ religious knowledge. “What is the matter

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<sup>119</sup> Editorials, “Religion vs. God,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1932), 147-48. “Good Advice to Youth,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1930), 3-4.

<sup>120</sup> Raymond M. Hudson, “Bible Instruction Alone Will Save Our Public Schools,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1934), 166-167. Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education*, 148. P. B. Fitzwater, “America’s Predicament—Why?” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1936), 108-110. Bernard R. DeRemer, “P. B. Fitzwater: Theologian and Teacher,” *Disciple Magazine*, <http://www.disciplemagazine.com/www/articles/209.1305>.

with the American Sunday School,” Benson asked, “and why do heathen children know so much more about the Bible than our boys and girls?” Concern about the lack of religious knowledge among American children and youth was a common theme in fundamentalist periodicals. “Often we are astonished at the lack of Bible knowledge of many people who have attended Sunday School for years,” worried Lyda Fulton Schoon of Gary, Indiana, in 1936.<sup>121</sup>

Children were learning about Jane Addams, Jacob Riis, and nature studies in Sunday school, fundamentalists worried, but not about Jesus. Benson became a leading critic of mainline Protestant efforts to enhance Sunday schools materials with content from outside of the Bible. “The mistake of many well meaning religious educators today is that they presuppose biblical instruction which has never been provided,” he wrote in a 1933 article. The Sunday school, he contended, should cover the entire Bible over the course of the years a child spent there. Given the decline in religious instruction in other areas of children’s lives, fundamentalists argued, the Sunday school should provide sound, thoroughly biblical training.<sup>122</sup>

“American Protestants pay forty-seven cents out of every public dollar that their children may have the best teachers in arithmetic, geography and history and not more than two cents out of every church dollar that they may have competent teachers in the Bible,” Benson wrote in a 1933 *Moody Monthly* article, comparing well-funded public schools with lackadaisical Sunday schools. Fundamentalists worried, too, about the small amount of time spent in the Sunday

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<sup>121</sup> Clarence Benson, “A New Departure Needed in Sunday School Teaching,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 206-207, 231. “An African and an American Boy—Which Is the Heathen?” *ibid.* (Jan. 1931), 251; Lyda Fulton Schoon, “Advice to Sunday School Teachers,” *ibid.* (March 1936), 346; “Are We Becoming A Pagan Country?” *Wesleyan Methodist*, in *ibid.* (Feb. 1931), 310.

<sup>122</sup> On Addams and Riis, see “A Modern Sunday School,” *Missionary Worker*, in “*Moody Monthly* (June 1935), 479. On nature studies, see George H. Downkontt, “The School-Bag Gospel League,” *ibid.* (Jan. 1934), 222. See also Mrs. Joseph E. Davison, “Our Present Day Sunday School Literature,” *ibid.* (May 1933), 409, 415; and Ethel S. Low, “How to Win and Hold Children,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 166-168, 174. Benson, “A New Departure.” Downkontt, “The School-Bag Gospel League.”

school when compared with that spent in the public school. “[I]f the children were to learn arithmetic at the same rate they learn the truths of God’s Word, it would take them fifty years to grasp the common branches of that subject,” warned Esther Wilson Turner of Oakland, California, in the *King’s Business* in 1936. “How long will the church of Jesus Christ devote most of its energy and spend thousands of dollars yearly in the almost hopeless task of trying to persuade men and women to be reconciled to God, when with comparatively little effort great numbers of boys and girls can be brought to know him?” asked Claire Weiermuller, Director of Christian Education at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pasadena, California. Other educators expressed concern that pastors did not place enough importance on the children in their congregations, neglecting these youth when they should be investing in them.<sup>123</sup>

Benson believed that the solution to secularizing public schools lay with the church and its mission to evangelize young people. After joining the Moody Bible Institute faculty in 1922, he became director of the school’s Christian education program, which he designed himself, in 1924. A strong promoter, he quickly became an educational pioneer; between 1925 and 1933 he developed a new Sunday school curriculum, and in 1930 he founded a new program for Sunday school teacher training. From 1926 to 1941, the prolific writer served as an associate editor for the *Moody Monthly*, gently nudging that magazine toward a focus on children’s education. Benson rejected the idea that religion could, or should, be inserted into the public school

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<sup>123</sup> Benson, “A New Departure.” Esther Wilson Turner, “When Two Parents Were Awakened,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 170-171, 175. On the number of hours, see J. W. Leedy, “Can Modern Education Save Our Nation?” *Moody Monthly* (June 1929), 473. Claire Weiermuller, “Looking Ahead with Boys and Girls,” *King’s Business* (May 1937), 163, 182-183. See also “Sunday School Perils,” *Watchman Examiner*, in *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1932), 71.

curriculum or school day. Instead, he sought to create a thorough program of Christian education outside the public school, through a concentrated work of the church.<sup>124</sup>

Benson was not the first to suggest cooperation between various avenues of religious instruction. Many of Benson's ideas were first pioneered by Walter Scott Athearn. Born in 1872, Athearn began his career as a teacher. He entered academia with a focus on character education in the public schools, but switched his field to religious education after concluding that morals were best imparted through Sunday school programs. An educational reformer, he first received acclaim for the publication of his seminal 1914 book, *The Church School*, and argued for cooperation between various denominational institutions and programs to create a comprehensive, unified system of religious education parallel to the public schools' secular education system. Despite their theological differences—Athearn endorsed theistic evolution and denied original sin—Benson would take Athearn's ideas and apply them to an fundamentalist world connected by overlapping Bible institutes and ministries.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> H. A. Whaley, "Benson, Clarence Herbert (1879-1954)," located in folder Benson, Clarence H., C. B. B474, Crowell Archives, Moody Bible Institute. For more on why Benson focused on the role of the church in children's religious education, see "The Minister and the Teacher: An Editorial Book Review," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 205.

<sup>125</sup> Walter Scott Athearn, *The Church School* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1914); Walter Scott Athearn, *The Minister and the Teacher: An Interpretation of Current Trends in Education* (New York: Century Co., 1932). For a biography, see "Walter Scott Athearn," Talbot School of Theology, [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/walter\\_athearn/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/walter_athearn/). Clarence Benson was deeply influenced by Athearn's promotion of a dual system of education through the creation of a system of Christian education to complement (but not replace) the existing public education system. He shared Athearn's criticism of the experience-centered project method of education promoted by philosopher John Dewey; his fear that "the Sunday School forces of America are now preparing to instill the virus of naturalistic humanism"; and his concern about the lack of teacher training for Sunday school educators. Benson agreed with Athearn on an additional point as well: "While we must look to the state universities to supervise the work of high schools, [Athearn] believes the church colleges should take a larger place in the supervision and standardization of the educational work of local churches," Benson wrote in 1933. "The Minister and the Teacher: An Editorial Book Review," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 205.

Benson founded the Evangelical Teacher Training Association in 1931, bringing together Bible institutes and seminaries to offer an alternative to the teacher training course provided by the mainline Protestant International Council of Religious Education. Fundamentalists had long objected that the Council's teacher training course required little in the way of direct Bible knowledge, focusing instead on pedagogy. "The International Council of Religious Education requires but 20 hours of Bible study and 100 hours in teaching methods to qualify for a teacher's diploma," a *Moody Monthly* editorial explained. In contrast, the course provided by the Evangelical Teacher Training Association would require for "144 hours of Bible study and 288 hours of extra-biblical material and pedagogic methods," the editorial promised. The extra-biblical material included subjects such as personal evangelism, child study, and missions. The coursework had to be completed at a cooperating institution of the Association. "Only instructors whose orthodoxy is unquestioned will be approved as teachers," the editors noted, "and only such textbooks will be studied as are in full accord with the teachings of the Bible." The Evangelical Teacher Training Association expanded quickly, growing from five participating schools to 106 in its first decade.<sup>126</sup>

In 1934, Benson published his Sunday school curriculum, the All Bible Graded Series, written to address concerns about "the drift away from the Bible" in existing curricula. Benson was already pushing for a unification of various forms of religious education, arguing that "it is evident that sooner or later the curricula of [the Vacation Bible School and the Week Day Church School] will have to be discarded for courses that will complement rather than parallel the Sunday School lessons." The new Sunday school curricula, he argued, was the first step in this process, restoring the Bible to its rightful place in "the chief educational agency of the

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<sup>126</sup> "An Evangelical Teacher Training Association," *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1931), 3-4. On growth, see Clarence Benson, *A Popular History of Christian Education* (Chicago, 1943), 258.

Church.” In contrast to extant Sunday school curriculum, Benson explained, the All Bible Graded Series covered every portion of the Bible without leaving any out. The curriculum was also incremental, with different lessons for each year, each year building on the previous years. “The All Bible Graded Series unfolds the Bible to the school boy with the same care as mathematics is developed in his elementary and high school training,” Benson explained. First came story, then biography, then doctrine, poetry, and prophecy. Benson hoped that including all portions of the Bible would increase Sunday school retention. The curriculum also included practical applications, aligned with religious holidays, and incorporated scripture memorization.<sup>127</sup>

The idea was simple. “Protestant children in the United States receive each year approximately one thousand hours of secular education, but those enrolled in Sunday School cannot possibly be credited with more than one hour a week,” Benson explained. “Untrained teachers, ungraded lessons and irregular attendance reduce this period to approximately seventeen hours of real religious instruction annually.” In an undated pamphlet, Benson illustrated the inadequacy of this seventeen hours of annual religious instruction by drawing a tiny Protestant church next to far larger Catholic and Jewish churches, representing the far greater attention those religious bodies offered children. Benson believed he had a solution, which he illustrated with an equation that added together the hours of religious instruction provided by an improved Sunday school, weekly youth group meetings, a summer Vacation Bible School program, and released time religious education programs. Through such an integrated effort, Benson argued, the typical church should be able to “increase its teaching and

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<sup>127</sup> Benson, “A New Departure.” See also C. H. Benson, “A Model Sunday-school Curriculum,” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1927), 108-109, 113; and pamphlet, “The All Bible Graded Series of Sunday School Lessons,” located in folder Benson, Clarence H., C. B. B474, Crowell Archives, Moody Bible Institute.

training ministry from 17 to 256 hours a year.” All that was required was a concentrated, integrated approach.<sup>128</sup>

Benson came down soundly against attempts to add religious instruction to the public schools. “Dr. Fleming contends, as many others have, that the only solution to the problem is to restore the Bible to the public school curriculum,” he wrote in 1943. “Undoubtedly he is not familiar with Carl Zollman’s *American Church Law*.” Benson quoted from Zollman and argued that the separation of church and state prevented the state from integrating any one religion’s teachings into the curriculum. “The sooner the Protestant Church recognizes that it is impractical, if not impossible, to legislate the Bible into its public school curriculum, the sooner can its energies be directed along more promising lines,” he wrote. Efforts to add religious instruction to the public schools, in other words, risked drawing fundamentalist energies away from creating a robust system of education parallel to the public schools.<sup>129</sup>

### **A Focus on the Family**

Not all fundamentalists shared Benson’s optimism regarding the Sunday school and other religious instruction programs organized by the church. In his 1946 book on family life and the home—and in his *Sword of the Lord* newsletter first published in 1934—Texas evangelist John Rice was dismissive of the instruction provided in Sunday schools. Much of Rice’s criticism of the Sunday school was similar to Benson’s: In his book, the evangelist noted that the program “gives not more than thirty minutes of time each week to the actual teaching of the Bible” and asked his readers how much arithmetic, reading, or English children would learn in only thirty minutes of instruction each week. Like Benson, he raised concerns about modernist Sunday

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<sup>128</sup> Benson, *Popular History*, 291.

<sup>129</sup> Benson, *Popular History*, 340-344, esp. 343-344. See also Clarence H. Benson, “Children—A Neglected Ministry,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1934), 5-7.

school materials and unprepared teachers, and while he wrote approvingly of Vacation Bible School programs, he expressed concern about their brevity.<sup>130</sup>

Rice was equally dismissive of the role of the public school might play in providing children with religious content. While he wrote that “[i]t would be good for the Word of God to be read in public schools daily,” he expressed concern about the practicality of such a system. He questioned teacher preparedness and pointed to divisions between Catholics, Protestants, Jews, “modernistic infidels,” and atheists. Rice gave a nod to programs that offered Bible instruction for credit—these programs were more common in the South, where Rice lived, than in the North, where Benson was located—but was not satisfied even with these programs, which he argued were both too brief and often watered down theologically, if not actually modernistic in content. “The public schools cannot do it,” he concluded with finality.<sup>131</sup>

While Benson sought to improve the religious instruction program offered by the Sunday school and the church, Rice shifted the responsibility for children’s religious education to the home. Perhaps alluding to *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, a 1925 Supreme Court ruling which found that “the child is not the mere creature of the state,” Rice wrote that “The child does not belong to the school. He belongs to the home.” While he was far from alone in emphasizing the importance of the family on children’s spiritual and moral development, Rice went further than others. “Prayerful, intelligent, Christian discipline in the home is absolutely essential to the growing of good men and women,” the evangelist wrote. “The home is the best place in the world to teach the Bible. That is where God puts the responsibility.” Rice treated the home as

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<sup>130</sup> John Rice, *The Home: Courtship, Marriage, and Children* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord, 1946), 278-279.

<sup>131</sup> Rice, *The Home*, 280.

neither a last bulwark against evil or a fallback in times of declining religious instruction in other areas, but as the natural and ideal sphere for religious instruction.<sup>132</sup>

Throughout the 1930s, fundamentalist periodicals were filled with articles about the importance of home life to children's development. In 1933, Blanchard wrote in the *Moody Monthly* that "the Christian faith of our young people has a background of influence in the home, the life that father and mother have led before them, the family altar, the pictures on our walls, the books on our shelves, the magazines on our tables, and the place the Bible occupies." Many fundamentalists believed, as Grant Stroh, the editor of the *Moody Monthly*'s "Practical and Perplexing Questions" section put it in 1936, "children are chiefly molded by the home life and home influences." Reflecting on his childhood, a student at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles wrote in 1934 that "that wholesome home atmosphere and the constant realization of God's presence have helped me put God first." Children needed not religious instruction alone, but also the influence of godly parents who modeled true Christian living.<sup>133</sup>

Even Benson, with his emphasis on the Sunday school, acknowledged the importance of the home. "The three fields of religious education are the home, the school, and the church," he wrote in 1931, "and the greatest of these is the home." He went on: "It is in the home the children get their first and more enduring ideas of God. Not so much in the street as in the family; not so much in school as from the mother; not so what they hear in church but what they

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<sup>132</sup> Rice, *The Home*, 334, 276. See also John Rice, "Bringing Up Children," *Sword of the Lord*, Aug. 21, 1936, p. 1-4; and John Rice, "Joshua and Abraham Recognized Their Responsibility for Their Children," *ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1936, p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> Leora M. Blanchard, "Young People and the Christian Faith," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1933), 209-210. Grant Stroh, "Wrong Homes," *ibid.* (Dec. 1936), 204. For the Bible Institute of Los Angeles student, see Louis T. Talbot, "Around the King's Table: The Christian Home and Youth and the Family Altar," *King's Business* (May 1934), 171. See also Carl G. Westerdahl, "The Christian Home: Our Country's Greatest Need," *ibid.* (May 1934), 172-173; Paul W. Rood, "Around the King's Table: Is It Well with the Child?" *ibid.* (May 1936), 164; and Paul W. Rood, "Around the King's Table: When Present-Day Youth Captures the World," *ibid.* (Jan. 1938), 4.

see in their father.” Benson called on parents to “observe family worship” and urged them to support the work of the Sunday school through religious instruction at home, and by requiring their children to attend Sunday school, helping with any homework, and backing up the Sunday school teacher where needed. “If parents are as concerned about the child getting his lesson from the Sunday School teacher as they are for the public school instructor, all will be well,” he wrote, contrasting parents’ willingness to support their children’s attendance and discipline in public school with an unwillingness to do the same for the Sunday school.<sup>134</sup>

By the mid-1930s, some fundamentalists were using the form and language of the increasingly popular family meeting as a model for Christian home life and the family altar. Writing in the *King’s Business* in 1936, Esther Wilson Turner, who published a magazine titled *Christian Home Builder*, used a fictional dialogue between a father and mother to take the reader through a tour of the family’s home life over the years. While their children were still young Turner’s fictional couple devised a system of daily religious instruction in the home, with a weekly theme and a quiz every Saturday morning. As the children grew they held family meetings on Saturdays, naming one of the children treasurer and another secretary. At one meeting, illustrated in Turner’s article, family members voted on where to donate charity money they had raised and the children reported on a Bible club they ran in their neighborhood. Turner measured the success of the program using modern conceptions of the ideal childhood and family life: “Don’t you notice how the children love their home and always want their friends to come here?” the fictional mother asks toward the end of the sketch. The family altar was not a static thing. It could be—and was—adjusted to fit cultural shifts and changing ideas.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Benson, “How Parents Can Help.”

<sup>135</sup> Esther Wilson Turner, “When Two Parents Were Awakened,” *King’s Business* (May 1936), 170-171, 175. In her book on family life in mainline Protestant denominations, Margaret

To be sure, Rice encouraged parents to attend church and to ensure that their children attended Sunday school. However, his emphasis on the primacy of the family was at play even here. He warned that churches were full of humans and often given to insincerity. Still, he added, “the fact yet remains that any child will be better in the church than in the tavern, and any child will be better influenced on the whole by a church where the Gospel is preached and the Bible is believed than he will be in the public school or by his playmates.” Rice urged parents to “[p]ut the church before the school” and to ensure that children attended Sunday night services, week night revival services, Bible conferences, and prayer services, rather than letting them stay home to do homework. “Let the church, after the home, be first in the heart and mind of the child,” he wrote. “What they will get by the gospel preaching, the sweet singing, and by seeing souls saved in the church will be worth more to them than anything they would learn in school.”<sup>136</sup>

Rice was often critical of the public schools, but sent his own children to public schools nevertheless. In his newsletter, he condemned the dances held at local public schools, drawing a connection between dancing and drunkenness, sexual immorality, and venereal disease. The evangelist preached a sermon against school dances and wrote approvingly of a letter to the superintendent of public schools to condemn such dances. In his book on family life, he instructed parents to “take a stand against unchristian activities and teaching in the schools.” This meant school dances—he advised parents to hold alternative social events on evenings when dances were held—and evolutionary teaching—he detailed how he prepared his own daughter for high school science classes by providing her with creationist literature and books and going

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Bendroth dedicated a chapter to the transition from “Christian home” to “Christian family.” This transition was present in fundamentalist periodicals as well. See Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

<sup>136</sup> Rice, *The Home*, 328.

over major points. The goal, Rice wrote, was for parents to “see that their [children’s] faith in the Bible is not broken down.” If children were prepared and given the opportunity to stand up for their beliefs in public school, Rice wrote, they might come out “not only with a good education, but with a stronger faith in God than before.”<sup>137</sup>

The emphasis on the primacy of the parents present in Rice’s writing may stem from a heightened focus on separatism and doctrinal purity. Fundamentalists spent the 1930s building new institutions and networks outside of the mainline Protestant denominations. Having once left mainline churches over doctrinal purity, however, some fundamentalists remained wary of putting too much faith in any church or organization. The family-centered approach championed by Rice allowed these individuals to maintain doctrinal purity on the most individual level. Particularly for those who might still leave a congregation over doctrinal disputes, a focus on the primacy of the family could lend continuity to the upbringing and spiritual development of their children.<sup>138</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The approach of World War II heightened concerns about the state of the nation’s youth. In a sermon in 1939, Harold Ockenga, pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, warned that “[t]he coming generation is rapidly developing into a lawless, self-willed race.” Ockenga offered a list of dangers the nation faced—Japanese Imperialism, Communism, Nazi Germany, rising crime rates at home—and questioned whether American youth were up to the task. In his 1943 book, Benson argued that “crime today is a more dangerous enemy than Germany, Italy and Japan.” The mobilization of the armed forces led to concerns about venereal disease and the movement of mothers into the wartime jobs led to increased concerns about juvenile delinquency. “Some of

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<sup>137</sup> John Rice, “The Dance!” *Sword of the Lord*, June 7, 1935, p. 1. Rice, *The Home*, 332-335.

<sup>138</sup> Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*.

the cities near army and naval training centers present sins as sordid and sensual as ever graced, or disgraced, cities of ancient infamy,” warned a 1944 *Moody Monthly*. Writing in 1946, soon after the end WWII, Rice lamented that “juvenile delinquents fill the jails,” and that “homes for fallen girls are crowded” and “prostitutes throng every city and run after soldiers.” Rice did not mince words: “Smoking, drinking, immoral, criminal youth has become the greatest moral problem in America,” he told readers.<sup>139</sup>

“Of what profit is it to our nation to win the war and lose the peace?” queried the same 1944 *Moody Monthly* editorial. “The answer is obvious and definite. But there is but one question even more persistent: “What shall it profit America to win the war and lose its soul? And children are the soul of the nation.” The editors of the *Moody Monthly* warned readers that “America’s number one social problem is juvenile delinquency” and that “Child murderers and child prostitutes are so many, the problem is forcing itself on every section of the country, particularly industrial and war training areas.” The root of the problem, the editors explained, was not “juvenile delinquency” as “parental delinquency”—particularly in families where fathers had been drafted and the mothers entered the wartime labor force. “We doubt if it is any mother’s duty to check her child to fill a war job,” the editors explained.<sup>140</sup>

During the early 1940s, child outreach efforts continued apace as fundamentalists demonstrated the acuity for organizing and building they had honed during the 1930s. After failing to gain control of the denominations during the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s, they instead created their own structures—their own Sunday school curriculum and

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<sup>139</sup> Harold J. Ockenga, “America Pay Attention or Beware!” *Emergency Sermons for the Nation* (Boston: John W. Shaeffer and Co., 1939), 48-55. Benson, *Popular History*. Rice, *The Home*, 197. “Sinning Children—An Editorial,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1944), 372.

<sup>140</sup> “Sinning Children—An Editorial.” See also Rev. Daniel Iverson, “As for Me and My House,” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1942), 697-698.

teacher training programs; their own child outreach programs and youth activities; their own colleges, annual meetings, and conferences. In a sense, fundamentalists treated the public schools in the same way that they had the denominations—having failed to mandate Bible reading in the public schools during their 1920s legislative campaigns, they accepted this defeat and set about instead replacing religious instruction once provided in the schools through parallel structures and programs elsewhere. The one thing they did not try to replace, of course, was the public schools themselves.

### Chapter 3. An Interrogation of Secular Education

In 1941, Paul Culley, a professor at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, called together a group of local parents to discuss the possibility of founding a Christian elementary school. The resources available to Culley were sparse. At the time, fundamentalists had not given much thought to founding separate Christian schools. Instead, by the end of the 1930s they had largely come to accept that public education should be secular, while working to ensure that public school materials did not include content they viewed as anti-Christian. While they expressed concern about the decline of religious instruction in the public schools, they focused primarily on replacing this instruction elsewhere, through Sunday school programs and other forms of youth outreach, rather than on restoring religious devotionals to the public schools. Against this backdrop, Culley's proposal was new and different. In fact, a 1951 *Chicago Tribune* article informed readers that the school Culley founded a decade before was "believed to be the first of its type in the country."<sup>141</sup>

Given the lack of fundamentalist resources for creating Christian schools, Culley had to look elsewhere for help. He found his model—and a source of advice and support—in the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS) maintained by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). The CRC rejected modernism and defended the fundamentals of the faith, but was also staunchly Calvinist and maintained a strong Dutch heritage. James D. Bratt, a professor of religious studies who has chronicled the history of Dutch Calvinism, identified 1930s and '40s Dutch America as "an ethnic parallel to Fundamentalism." Indeed, leaders of the CRC, regionally concentrated in the upper Midwest, were sufficiently worried about the inroads

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<sup>141</sup> Paul G. Culley, "The Roots of Christian Education," *Christian School*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1987; "Dedicate Wheaton Christian Grammar School Sunday," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Nov. 22, 1951), W6.

fundamentalism was making in their congregations that they founded the Reformed Bible Institute in Chicago in 1937 as an alternative to Moody Bible Institute. Culley, based in Chicago, would have likely been familiar with CRC churches and schools. Looking for guidance, he reached out to Mark Fakkema, the general secretary of the CRC and perhaps the most visible Christian school advocate of the time.<sup>142</sup>

Fakkema was happy to give Culley whatever assistance he needed in founding a Christian elementary school at Wheaton; it was during work like this that he was most in his element. In 1942, Wheaton Christian Grammar School opened its doors to 15 students in grades 1-6. Enrollment would grow to more than 100 by the end of the 1940s. Yet despite Fakkema's help founding the school, in 1945 the NUCS board rejected its petition for membership. While associated closely with the CRC, the NUCS did not formally limit membership to CRC schools. Nevertheless, the association did require member schools to be Calvinist, and the Wheaton Christian Grammar School, associated with Wheaton College, was not. A bigger problem, however, may have been the school's premillennialist statement of faith, and some accounts suggest that the NUCS did not find the school's curriculum to be sufficiently Christian. In denying the Wheaton Christian Grammar School membership, the NUCS would help launch a new Christian school association. While the CRC worried about fundamentalists making inroads in their congregations, the flow of ideas would soon move in the other direction.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> James D. Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America: A History of a Conservative Subculture* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1984), 133. On the Reformed Bible Institute, see Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago: A History of Hollanders in the Windy City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 286-289. On the National Union of Christian Schools and Mark Fakkema, see Robert G. Slater, "A 'Christian America' Restored: The Rise of the Evangelical Christian School Movement in America, 1920-1952" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 2012).

<sup>143</sup> On the National Union of Christian Schools' deliberations, see Slater, "'Christian America' Restored," 132-136, 139-140. For Fakkema's collaboration with Wheaton Christian Grammar School and the National Union of Christian Schools' response, see Albert R. Beck, "All Truth Is

## Creating a Network for Christian Schools

To say that Fakkema was disappointed by the NUCS board's decision to deny membership to the Wheaton Christian Grammar School would be an understatement. He had envisioned an ecumenical Christian school movement that extended far beyond the CRC. Not all of those within the CRC agreed with him, however. Indeed, the CRC had founded its first Christian schools in the second half of the nineteenth century partly in response to the generic pan-denominational evangelicalism then present in the nation's public schools, which Dutch Calvinist ministers and theologians regarded as an enemy on par with secularism. The CRC was not interested in overseeing an ecumenical Christian school movement.<sup>144</sup>

Fortunately for Fakkema, changes were taking place within fundamentalism that would give his vision a new venue. The loose network of pastors, theologians, and evangelists who spent the 1930s building theologically orthodox seminaries, Bible institutes, evangelistic organizations, and radio programs divided on whether it was acceptable to work with those in denominations that tolerated modernism, or whether such cooperation represented a compromise of doctrinal purity. Meanwhile, the bombastic and confrontational approach taken by some fundamentalist leaders, along with the fundamentalist anti-evolution crusades of the 1920s, had given fundamentalism a negative public image. Those who favored greater engagement with individuals outside of their circles found that a popular perception of fundamentalism as backwards and anti-intellectual got in the way of their efforts speak across the aisle. Some avoided the label fundamentalist, preferring "orthodox" or "evangelical," but found themselves lumped together with confrontational fundamentalist leaders nonetheless. When hardline New

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God's Truth: The Life and Ideas of Frank E. Gaebelin" (Ph.D. diss, Baylor University, 2008), 167; and Warren S. Benson, "A History of the National Association of Christian Schools During the Period of 1947-1972" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1975), 29-32.

<sup>144</sup> Beck, "All Truth Is God's Truth," 168-169.

Jersey fundamentalist Carl McIntire founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) as an alternative to the mainline Federal Council of Churches (FCC) in 1941, those who objected to his confrontational style moved to create their own umbrella organization, initiating a public split within the fundamentalist movement.

Will Houghton, president of the Moody Bible Institute, called an exploratory meeting in Chicago in 1941. The following year, nearly 150 ministers and theologians gathered in St. Louis to found the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The NAE was pan-denominational, held together by a statement of faith that began with a declaration that the Bible was “the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.” In doctrine, those who dispensed with the fundamentalist label and declared themselves “neo-evangelicals” differed little from those who retained the label. Where they differed was approach. The founding of Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947 bespoke neo-evangelicals’ desire to participate in intellectual work that would be taken seriously by those outside of their immediate circles—intellectual work that would contend with that of both secular philosophers and liberal theologians. Billy Graham’s popular evangelistic crusades, which were frequently organized in partnership with local mainline pastors and churches, demonstrated neo-evangelicals’ desire to reach across denominational and doctrinal lines. Soon referred to simply as “evangelicals,” the movement’s more positive image and outlook enabled it to engage with American culture and religion more effectively than had been possible under the fundamentalist label during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>145</sup>

The NAE took interest in education from the very beginning. While most of the NAE’s early work in the field centered on Sunday schools, Bible institutes, and Christian colleges and seminaries, Harold Ockenga, the NAE’s founding president, wrote of the possibility of creating

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<sup>145</sup> Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 401, 138.

Christian schools as early as 1942 or 1943. Ockenga had been a student of the late J. Gresham Machen at Princeton Theological Seminary, and had followed Machen to the newly formed Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1931. In 1936, Ockenga took the pulpit at historic Park Street Church in Boston. Three years later, he delivered a series of sermons in which he decried the state of the nation's public schools, which he argued had been taken over by a naturalistic and materialistic philosophy. Ockenga's ideas about education were likely influenced by his years studying under Machen, who had been a lone promoter of Christian elementary and secondary schools during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>146</sup>

The CRC was an early affiliate of the NAE; the denomination joined the pan-evangelical organization only briefly, leaving several years later over concerns about doctrinal purity. This membership, short as it was, was enough to gain Fakkema access to the NAE's publication and conventions. In 1945 and 1946, the organization's newsletter, *United Evangelical Action* published Fakkema's articles promoting private Christian day schools. Several committees within the NAE spent time discussing Christian day schools. Other trends also point to changing feelings toward Christian day schools. In 1945, the *Moody Monthly* published an article by Edwin H. Rian, one of the founders of the breakaway Westminster Theological Seminary and a close associate of the late Machen, urging the creation of Christian day schools. This was the first time the *Moody Monthly* had published an article on this topic.<sup>147</sup>

When the NUCS declined Wheaton Christian Grammar School's petition for membership, the board told Fakkema in no uncertain terms that the union would not shed its Dutch Calvinist ties to become the pan-denominational Christian school association he wanted it

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<sup>146</sup> Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 420-21. Slater, "'Christian America' Restored," 113.

<sup>147</sup> Benson, "A History," 32. Edwin H. Rian, "The Plight of Protestantism in Education," *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1945), 76, 110-111.

to be. If such an organization should exist, they told him, it ought to be created under the umbrella of the nascent NAE. Still serving as general secretary of the NUCS, Fakkema took the board's advice, and gained their approval to approach the NAE with his vision. At the organization's fifth annual meeting in 1947, Fakkema proposed that the NAE create a national association of Christian schools. Fakkema found a staunch ally in Frank Gaebelein, who had served as headmaster of the Stony Brook School for Boys, a Christian boarding school, since its founding in 1921. Twenty-five years of emersion in Christian secondary education made Gaebelein, the son of well-known fundamentalist revivalist Arno Gaebelein, well positioned to speak as an expert on Christian education. With this support, the NAE approved Fakkema's proposal and established the National Association of Christian Schools (NACS).<sup>148</sup>

Hoping to tap his expertise, the NAE asked Fakkema to organize the NACS and oversee its early years. The NUCS agreed to free up some of his time for that purpose, but Fakkema never returned to his former organization. His primary skills were as a promoter, and the NUCS was interested in moving toward curriculum development and comprehensive educational philosophy, areas where he lacked formal training. When the NUCS hired an educational secretary to handle these new operations, Fakkema felt that he had been demoted. Furthermore, he had begun to chafe under what he saw as a narrowness of vision. Four months after the founding of the NACS, Fakkema resigned from his position with the NUCS. Under his direction, the NACS became an affiliate of the NAE, which gave the new Christian school association a

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<sup>148</sup> On the creation of a Christian school association, see Slater, "'Christian America' Restored," 1-3; John Graham Reid, "The Christian Schools of Evangelical Persuasion in the United States" (MA thesis., University of Southern California, 1952), 19-20; and Benson, "A History," 28-41.

measure of independence and its own board of directors. Despite its denominational transcendence, many of the association's original board members had CRC backgrounds.<sup>149</sup>

In addition to creating the NACS, the NAE established a three-year committee to create a comprehensive Christian philosophy of education and to outline the problems besetting elementary and secondary education. Fakkema served as a member of this committee; Gaebelein was named chair. Other committee members included Robert L. Cooke, chairman of Wheaton's Department of Education; Carl F. H. Henry, a Northern Baptist Theological Seminary graduate who would soon join the faculty at the newly founded Fuller Theological Seminary; and Harold L. Kuhn of Asbury Theological Seminary. These nascent evangelicals would address public education in a more head-on, unified way than had those in the fundamentalist movement a decade before. The neo-evangelical moment created a sense of newness and possibility. Openness to cooperation also encouraged collaboration with individuals who had shared fundamentalism's theological conservatism but had never been part of its narrower coalition, including both (for a short time) the CRC and Wesleyan and holiness traditions.<sup>150</sup>

### **New Supreme Court Directions**

A U.S. Supreme Court case decided in 1948 provided an additional catalyst for consideration of private Christian schooling. In *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948), the Court struck down a released-time education program that had allowed clergy members to provide 30-45 minutes of voluntary religious education in public school classrooms in Champaign, Illinois. The decision generated a buzz in neo-evangelical circles and raised the

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<sup>149</sup> On the unwillingness of the National Union of Christian Schools to become a broad pan-denominational Christian school association, see Slater, "Christian America Restored," 140-141. On Fakkema being tapped by the NAE, see *ibid.*, 143-144.

<sup>150</sup> Slater, "Christian America Restored," 156-157. Frank E. Gaebelein, "Christian Education and the Home, part 1," *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1950), 149-151, 170.

profile of the NACS and the fledgling Christian school movement. Released-time education programs, first implemented in Gary, Indiana, in the 1910s, typically offered separate classes for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish children. The Court's decision in *McCullum* angered many and opened the door to more widespread discussion of the creation of Christian schools.<sup>151</sup>

Prior to the 1940s, the U.S. Supreme Court did address the role of religion in the nation's public schools. Instead, such questions were arbitrated at the state level. In 1890 the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the practice of reading from the King James Bible in the public schools violated the state's constitution; in 1910, the Illinois Supreme Court struck down religious exercises in the state's public schools on similar grounds. These decisions applied only to affected states, and were based on provisions in state constitutions. At the time, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which bars the establishment of religion, was applied only to the federal government, and not the states. This began to change when the Supreme Court applied the First Amendment to the states for the first time in *Gitlow v. New York* (1925), using a theory known as incorporation. In a series of cases that spanned the 1940s through early 1950s, the Court labored over how the First Amendment's establishment clause should apply to states—and to public schools.

In a pair of cases in the early 1940s, the Supreme Court applied the First Amendment to the public schools for the first time. In *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940), the Court ruled against two Jehovah's Witness children who had been expelled from school because they refused to say the pledge due to their religious beliefs. "The mere possession of religious convictions which contradict the relevant concerns of a political society does not relieve the citizen from the discharge of political responsibilities," Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote in the

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<sup>151</sup> Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Battle over School Prayer: How Engel v. Vitale Changed America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 56-58.

Court's majority opinion. This decision touched off a wave of violence against Jehovah's Witnesses. Three years later, in the midst of World War II, the Supreme Court reversed course, this time ruling in favor of two Jehovah's Witness children in *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943). In the majority opinion in that case, Justice Robert Jackson wrote that "no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." In his decision, Jackson stated decisively that religious freedom was within the purview of the courts, and not of state legislatures.<sup>152</sup>

The Supreme Court next addressed New Jersey's practice of providing public funds for bussing children to nonpublic schools (primarily Catholic parochial schools). In *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the state. Justice Hugo Black wrote the majority opinion, finding that the transportation payments were "separate and so indisputably marked off from the religious function" as to be constitutional. *Everson* was the first time the Supreme Court applied the establishment clause to the states, but it provoked consternation for a different reason. During the nineteenth century, Protestants had repeatedly opposed Catholic efforts to secure public funding for Catholic parochial schools. Many had not lost their antipathy toward Catholics—or their opposition to public funding for parochial schools—and viewed *Everson* as a handout to Catholic parochial schools.<sup>153</sup>

*McCullum* would follow *Everson* the next year. In 1945, Vashti McCollum challenged Illinois' released-time education program on behalf of her son, Terry. Her case worked its way through the courts and came before the Supreme Court in 1948. In an 8-1 ruling, the justices

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<sup>152</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 42-45. *Minersville School Dist. v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586 (1940). *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

<sup>153</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 46-52. *Everson v. Board of Ed. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947).

struck down released-time education classes which took place during school hours and on school property as unconstitutional. “The state,” Justice Black wrote in the Court’s majority decision, “affords sectarian groups an invaluable aid in that it helps to provide pupils for their religious classes through use of the State’s compulsory public school machinery.” While *Everson* had affirmed a public funding program that primarily benefited Catholics, *McCullum* had struck down a program most Protestants, including neo-evangelicals, supported.<sup>154</sup>

In a 1948 report a month after *McCullum*, the editors of the *Moody Monthly* drew a connection to the Christian school movement, declaring that “[i]n communities where there has been a satisfactory and evangelical Bible-teaching program, which must now be abandoned, Christians may find it advantageous ... to begin plans for their own Christian schools. An article in *United Evangelical Action* a month later warned that “evangelicals can no longer look to the public schools for the type of education that will make Christian citizens” and added that “the decision is therefore a challenge to all Christian Americans to build Christian day schools.”<sup>155</sup> Fakkema responded to *McCullum* by declaring, “if we want our children to be religious, we must not send them to the public school.” The Supreme Court decision featured heavily in NACS promotional literature in the following years. For many, *McCullum* reinforced existing concerns about the nation's public schools by serving as a decisive, visible national rejection of a religious education program most saw as innocuous and uncontroversial.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 52-56. *Illinois ex rel. McCullum v. Board of Education of School District*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948).

<sup>155</sup> “News Report: Where Do We Go From Here?” *Moody Monthly* (April 1948), 554, 608-610. “Christian Education Report,” *United Evangelical Action*, 7, No. 7, (May 15, 1948): 21. On efforts to provide children with religious instruction through a combination of various means, see Clarence Benson, *A Popular History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1943).

<sup>156</sup> Slater, ““Christian America’ Restored,” 120-121.

The response to *McCollum*, however, did come with some nuance. The *Moody Monthly*'s report on the decision began with a strong defense of the separation of church and state; without this principle, the editors warned, they might use the school system to teach the gospel in some communities, but "other religious groups would gain control for the teaching of false doctrines" in other communities. The editors did not question the separation of church and state. Instead, they questioned the idea that released-time education programs, which were voluntary and offered parents a variety of religious options, violated that separation.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, the *Moody Monthly*'s report pointed to a divide between "many evangelical Christians," who were disappointed with the McCollum decision, and "some fundamentalists," who thought the decision a good one.<sup>158</sup> Fundamentalist support for *McCollum* stemmed in part from opposition to *Everson*, and a hope that *McCollum*—which returned to "a historical position from which the bus bill decision seemed to be an aberration"—might lead to the overturning of *Everson*. Fundamentalists, the report stated, were also critical of the content of released-time education programs, warning that "the religious education system is controlled by the theologically liberal ministerial council, so that the pure gospel in many cases has no chance of being presented."<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, some evangelicals saw a silver lining to *McCollum*. The NAE's aforementioned committee on a Christian philosophy of education was meeting at Wheaton College when the decision came down; those gathered took the time to pen a statement. "If

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<sup>157</sup> "News Report: Where Do We Go From Here?"

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* "While the founders of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) went by "evangelical" rather than "fundamentalist," the older label did not entirely fall out of use. Those who rejected the NAE's embrace of cooperation with and with modern culture in favor of separation from the world continued using the term.

<sup>159</sup> Historian Jonathan Zimmerman has traced conflict between theological conservatives and mainline Christians over the content of Protestant released-time education during the 1940s and 1950s. See Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 135-59.

religious instruction on a voluntary basis violates the rights of the atheist who is free to absent himself from such instruction,” the statement declared, “none can deny that the teachings of naturalism and materialism, with their atheistic implications, given in classes Christians are required to attend, violate religious freedom and constitute governmental interference with matters of faith.” Fundamentalists of the 1920s argued that if the Bible could not be read in school, evolution should not be taught in school either; teaching evolution, the argument went, was as much teaching religion as reading from the Bible. In this same vein, the committee called for “a nationwide protest against antichristian teaching in grade schools, high schools, state colleges, and state universities, supported by the logic of this Supreme Court decision.” Taking the statement as its marching orders, the *Moody Monthly* report described *McCullum* as “a basis for a vigorous protest against atheistic and antichristian teaching in public schools.”<sup>160</sup>

As *McCullum* sunk in, some evangelicals cast about for ways to make up for the loss of released time education. The NAE committee’s statement expressed hope that the decision would “awaken Christians to their tremendous opportunity and obligation in opening homes, churches, purses, and minds to reap the harvest.” The *Moody Monthly* report called for renewed child evangelism efforts, including outreach programs that would meet “after school in private homes.” Child evangelism programs would continue to expand in the 1950s. “Many communities may find that they can reach children for Christ more effectively through the child evangelism program than through their present Bible-teaching program in the schools,” the *Moody Monthly* report concluded hopefully. The report also noted that the Court had not yet

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<sup>160</sup> “News Report: Where Do We Go From Here?”

found unconstitutional released-time education classes that met during school hours but off of school grounds; these programs, therefore, could continue unchanged.<sup>161</sup>

### **Building a Philosophy of Christian Education**

In June 1948, a *Moody Monthly* news report titled “Schools for Christians” declared the nascent Christian school movement “the only permanent answer to the recent Supreme Court verdict.” The editors warned that McCollum had “pointed the way toward a complete paganization of the schools.” They noted something else, however—a change among parents: “Parents are asking the question, Why must we send our children to public schools to have all their Christian training negated by anti-Christian, or at best purely secular, teaching?” Fundamentalists had voiced concerns about the public schools for decades. An exploration of alternatives to public education, however was new. “Christian elementary schools are springing up here and there all over America,” the *Moody Monthly* report announced with enthusiasm.<sup>162</sup>

Most evangelical parents still needed convincing before they would be willing to send their children to Christian schools, however; the bulk of the *Moody Monthly*’s news report on Christian schools was spent answering parents’ objections to private Christian education. The editors defended the academic potential of Christian schools by pointing to the well-regarded, established Christian schools associated with the NUCS in Chicago. The report also sought to ground private Christian education in other ways. “Dr. J. Gresham Machen twenty years ago characterized the Sunday school, part-time week-day religious instruction, and vacation Bible schools as ‘woefully inadequate’,” the editors wrote, adding that Gresham had described “the establishment of Christian schools” as the only “real remedy.” This appeal to Machen belied the novelty of the Christian school movement. Grounding the movement in the late Machen’s

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> “News Report: Schools for Christians,” *Moody Monthly* (June 1948), 718-754.

comments gave it gravitas—even if Machen had stood nearly alone in calling for Christian schools during his lifetime.<sup>163</sup>

The *Moody Monthly* report spent ample room promoting the NACS, then barely a year old, and amply praised Fakkema’s leadership. The editors encouraged interested readers to contact Fakkema, and printed his full address and contact information. The NACS, the report informed readers, “exists to help Christian people get started.” When Culley set out to create a Christian school at Wheaton in the early 1940s, he had been without a support system; in the late 1940s, pastors and parents wishing to found Christian schools had access to resources and information Culley had not.<sup>164</sup>

It is unclear how many Christian schools were founded during the 1940s and 1950s. The *Moody Monthly* report, published in 1948, claimed that there were 25,000 children already enrolled in Christian schools, but this number must have included students enrolled in schools associated with the NUCS. The report referenced new Christian schools founded in Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, California—“more than two dozen such schools in all on the West Coast”—and declared that Christian schools were in the planning stages in New Jersey, Cincinnati, and Kansas City. These were likely schools associated with the NACS and not the NUCS, as the CRC did not have a strong presence on the West Coast or in New Jersey, Ohio, or Kansas. By 1964, the NACS boasted 215 member schools, which works out to an average of 12 new Christian schools opening each year between 1947 and 1964.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* J. Gresham Machen died in 1937.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.* “On 215 member schools, see John F. Blanchard Jr., “Yes, You Can Have a Christian School!” *Moody Monthly* (May 1964), 34-35, 55. As of September 1959, the National Association of Christian Schools had over 170 member schools. See Violet Trato Pearson, “The Plus in Christian Schools,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1959), 21-22.

In the late 1940s, some worried that the Christian school movement was moving too fast, and without a sufficient philosophical foundation. “Secular education won’t do,” read the headline of a *Moody Monthly* article by Wheaton professor Merrill C. Tenney in June 1948. “And yet nineteen centuries of Christian thought have failed to produce a distinctive Christian philosophy.” Tenney urged Christian leaders and pastors to create a comprehensive philosophy of Christian education.<sup>166</sup>

Tenney posed a question that would become central to evangelical critique of public education during the 1950s: Was secular education actually neutral? Tenney began by setting up what had long been the dominant view among evangelicals and their antecedents: “Is not the educational technique the same for all religious backgrounds, whether Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Christian?” he asked. “Is not the learning process the same for all races and individuals? The sky is blue, the ocean wet, and the grass green regardless of any man’s brand of religion. Why then should religious opinion affect one way or another the learning of these facts?” Those who held this view, sometimes referred to as “Scottish common sense realism,” believed subjects could be taught neutrally, apart from religious ideas or assumptions. Tenney, however, was not ready to accept the claim that education could be neutral.<sup>167</sup>

Describing Christianity as a mode of life rather than an opinion or matter of taste, Tenney argued that if Christianity were “a complete philosophy of life,” then “it must explain the origin, organization, and significance of existing facts, whether they be rocks in the backyard or the personal intellectual and emotional experiences of men.” Education could not properly take place separate from a Christian philosophy, Tenney concluded. “Christian education must train the

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<sup>166</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, “Secular Education Won’t Do,” *Moody Monthly* (June 1948), 719-720, 773-774.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

whole man in the truth revealed in Christ,” he explained. “It must not consist solely of multiplying mental concepts, nor of developing manual skills, nor of creating polished manners, but of the integration of the entire personality around the Lord Jesus Christ.” Over the next decade, other writers and scholars would try their hands at answering Tenney’s question and come to the same conclusion.<sup>168</sup>

With the creation of the NACS and the Supreme Court's decision in *McCullum*, concern about the role of religion in the nation's public schools ran high. In September 1949, the editors of the *Moody Monthly* expressed concern that many children starting school that year would “find themselves in classrooms where the things of Christ are thrust far into the background.” The following year, another editorial called attention to the secular nature of the public schools, urging readers to supplement children's “secular education” with church, the Sunday school, and the home. “Schools cannot be vacuums,” declared a third editorial in 1951.<sup>169</sup>

That same year, the NAE’s committee on a Christian philosophy of education published *Christian Education in a Democracy*, written primarily by Gaebelein, the committee’s chair. Gaebelein’s book became a seminal work for promoters of Christian schools, and was considered required reading for teachers at Christian schools for many decades. “Today we see the spectacle of a drowned civilization,” Gaebelein wrote, painting a vivid picture of “a culture which, originally owing much to Christianity, has now been thoroughly inundated by the deluge of secularism.” Gaebelein wrote of Western civilization “bowing at the alter of materialism” and warned that even the typical American home had become “a secular institution.” Gaebelein’s dour emphasis on the secularization of American society, the family, and the public schools

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> “Education for Christians,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1949), p. 9. “Supplement to Secular Education,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1950), p. 7. “Schools Cannot Be Vacuums,” *ibid.* (Nov. 1951), 148.

would be reiterated in neo-evangelical writing throughout the 1950s—a decade that, perhaps ironically, also saw the highest church attendance in the history of the United States.<sup>170</sup>

### **Cold War Religiosity Under Scrutiny**

As the United States entered the Cold War, the nation embraced a broad “Judeo-Christian” consensus as a form of civil religion—a sort of “faith in faith”—in opposition to “atheistic Communism.” In 1954, Congress added the words “under God” to the pledge of allegiance; two years later, Congress made “In God We Trust” the nation's official motto. As historian Jonathan Zimmerman has described, “in the late 1940s and 1950s, a powerful consensus about religion—a ‘faith in faith’—seized American culture and politics.” It was in this context that, in 1951, the New York Board of Regents adopted a simple prayer, composed by a committee of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish clergy, for recitation in New York public schools.<sup>171</sup>

Religious education benefited from the Cold War rapprochement with religion in other ways as well. Just as the arrival of WWII and a deeper understanding of the horrors of fascism affected the Supreme Court’s view of making the pledge of allegiance compulsory in *Barnette*, so too the onset of the Cold War affected the Court’s approach to religion in the public school. In *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952), the Supreme Court upheld New York City’s released time education program, which took place during school hours but, unlike in *McCollum*, off school grounds. The Court ruled that the practice was constitutional because “the public schools do no more than

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<sup>170</sup> On the NAE’s committee, see Slater, “‘Christian America’ Restored,” 156-157. Frank E. Gaebelien, “Christian Education and the Home, part 1,” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1950), 149-151, 170. Frank E. Gaebelien, *Christian Education in a Democracy: Report of the NAE Committee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 6, 8.

<sup>171</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle for School Prayer*, 66; Zimmerman, *Whose America?* 138. Slater, “‘Christian America’ Restored,” 119. Dierenfield, *Battle for School Prayer*, 52.

accommodate their schedules to a program of outside religious instruction.” In the context of the Cold War, religious instruction of the nation’s young had taken on an increased importance.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the furor, released-time religious education programs saw only a slight decline after *McCollum*; most either defied the ruling or moved off of school premises. After *Zorach*, the number of released-time programs increased. By 1959, some four million students were involved in released-time education programs in their local public schools, and by 1960 nearly one third of all public schools offered some form of released time education—a significant increase from the mid-1940s, when only ten percent of the population had had access to such programs. The amount of religion in the public schools increased in other areas as well. According to historian Bruce Dierenfield, 42 percent of public schools nationwide practiced Bible reading in 1960, making the Cold War years a time when “prayer and Bible reading became part of the school day in districts where such practices had been unknown or rare.”<sup>173</sup>

Not all were pleased with the growing religiosity that accompanied the Cold War. In an April 1952 editorial in the *King’s Business*, Louis T. Talbot, president of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, which tended to lean more fundamentalist than neo-evangelical, decried New York’s “Regent’s prayer.” “On the outside this would seem like a notable thing to do and the recognition of God at the beginning of a school day ought to be an attainment in itself,” he began. “On the other hand, prayer is not a subjective exercise but rather a petition addressed to the God of the universe.” Talbot questioned the prayer’s ecumenical creation: “The real question before us is whether or not the prayer is acceptable to [God], not whether it is a compromise prayer pleasing Protestants, Catholics and Jews,” he wrote. For Talbot, the central problem was

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<sup>172</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle for School Prayer*, 60-62. *Zorach v. Clauston*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952).

<sup>173</sup> For more on the battles over released-time education, see Zimmerman, *Whose America?* Dierenfield, *Battle for School Prayer*, 2, 66.

that the prayer did not reference Jesus. “Just before the cross, the Lord added a new note to the doctrine of prayer by stating that henceforth all prayer was to be made in His name,” explained. “There is no reason at all to believe that God will either hear or answer prayer which does not come to Him on the basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross. . . . If an intercessor either consciously or unconsciously circumvents the sacrifice of Calvary, he might just as well save his breath, for the prayer has no value whatsoever.”<sup>174</sup>

A Cold War emphasis on religion was only one reason for Americans’ growing concern about the religious instruction of the nation’s young. The 1950s was also a time of growing fears about juvenile delinquency. “Day after day I see examples of boys and girls who, for the lack of moral training, have drifted into the pathways of crime,” FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover warned in 1955. “Let’s face it, our teenagers are out of control,” declared *Newsweek* in 1956. As concern about juvenile delinquency grew—and stories of teens beating old men and children robbing gas stations spread—Americans searched for answers. In *Seduction of the Innocent*, published in 1954, psychiatrist Frederic Wertham placed the blame for juvenile delinquency on comic books, setting off a nationwide comic book scare. Regardless of where they placed the blame, many Americans viewed Sunday school attendance and released-time religious education programs as a potential solution to juvenile crime.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Editorial, “Prayer in the Public School,” *King’s Business* (April 1952), 5. Louis T. Talbot was the pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles and until 1952 served as president of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, an institution that reveals the fluidity between fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals. Samuel H. Sutherland, the institute’s president from 1952 to 1970, wrote in defense of the fundamentalist label, arguing that it was not shameful to be associated with stalwarts of the faith like Moody, Machen, Riley, and Torrey. In spite of this, articles published in the institute’s periodical, the *King’s Business*, used the term evangelical more frequently than fundamentalist throughout the 1950s. Furthermore, the institute maintained ties with prominent evangelical Billy Graham; Graham raised money for the institute in 1955.

<sup>175</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, “We Must Defend America,” *Moody Monthly* (July 1955), 13-15, 70, esp. 15. Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Ma.: Belknap

Neo-evangelicals, too, shared mainstream concerns about juvenile delinquency. In his 1951 book, Gaebelein drew attention to the youth crime rate. “The plain record, not only of juvenile but also of adult delinquency, cries aloud the failure of secularized education to do its part in developing character,” he wrote, warning that our democracy itself was at risk because American youth of character were necessary to its survival. In 1952, Torrey M. Johnson, a Chicago area pastor and cofounder of Youth for Christ, published an article titled “What Has Happened to Our Young People?” in the *Moody Monthly*. He discussed teenage suicide, cheating, crime, and drug use, writing that “young people in increasing numbers everywhere across our land are going wrong today.” First and foremost, Johnson blamed the home, arguing that “the primary responsibility for governing boys and girls is placed squarely in the home and upon the parents” and taking parents to task for too busy or “pleasure mad” and for not using corporal punishment. Second, Johnson blamed the church for its failure to invest in and influence young people, calling for “churches that are spiritually alive and warm.” And finally, Johnson blamed the education system, indicting its assumption that man is essentially good and its underlying materialism. “The error that is fundamental,” he wrote, “is the lack of a theology of any kind in many of our schools. God is left out to the extent that they are not merely secular, but anti-God.”<sup>176</sup>

Outside of released-time education programs, moral instruction in the public schools often remained only in the form of civics education, which focused increasingly on promoting democracy and loyalty to country. While most neo-evangelicals embraced the fight against Communism and many even intertwined democracy with their religious ideals, some worried

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Press, 2006), 291-93. See also James Burkhard Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>176</sup> Gaebelein, *Christian Education in a Democracy*. Torrey M. Johnson, “What Has Happened to Our Young People?” *Moody Monthly* (March 1956), 458-60.

that religion might be overshadowed by an emphasis on patriotism that put man before God. Writing in the *Moody Monthly* in 1959, Brooke Walker, a graduate of Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary then seeking ordination in the United Lutheran Church, warned that the nation's public schools were "teaching the religion of democracy, or the religion of science, or the religion of life adjustment." Gaebelein made a similar argument in 1954, writing that "the climate of opinion in American education today" had become "secularistic, naturalistic, man-centered, not God-centered, taking for its dynamic an almost religious idealization of democracy." Democracy was not a sufficient foundation for moral and civic education.<sup>177</sup>

### **Holistic Critiques of Public Education**

Concerns about public education were increasingly holistic and comprehensive. "The present tendency in education to add religion to courses of study is comparable to attaching a garage to a home," wrote Rian in 1949. "What the building of knowledge needs is not a new garage but a new foundation." Gaebelein made a similar argument in his 1951 book: If all truth was God's truth, he asked, how could one learn any truth apart from God? Adding God to the public schools the way one might add salt to peas—by having schools open with prayer and Bible reading, or even by released-time education—was not enough. Such programs placed God at the margins of education, rather than at the center.<sup>178</sup>

Beginning in the late 1940s, Ockenga, by then president of the neo-evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary, held an annual Christian Education Conference at Park Street Church, the influential Boston pulpit he had filled since 1936. In 1953, the editors of the *Moody Monthly*

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<sup>177</sup> Edward B. McClellan, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 73-74. Brooke Walter, "The Case for Christian Day Schools," *Christianity Today* (Aug. 31, 1959), 12. Beck, "All Truth Is God's Truth," 179-180.

<sup>178</sup> Edwin H. Rian, *Christianity and American Education* (San Antonio, Texas: Naylor Company, 1949). "Education for Christians"; Gaebelein, *Christian Education in a Democracy*, 10.

asked him to write about the issues covered during his latest conference. He chronicled the debate over a crucial question: “Can moral education be grounded in naturalism?” Ockenga invited William H. Kilpatrick of Columbia University’s Teacher College and Jerome Nathanson of the New York Ethical Culture Society to make the case “that moral education can be accomplished without belief in God.” Opposing Kilpatrick and Nathanson and arguing that “belief in God is essential to a moral education” were Gordon H. Clark of Butler University, a Christian university in Indiana, and Cornelius Jaarsma of the Dutch Calvinist Calvin College.<sup>179</sup>

Ockenga used the term “naturalism” to refer to the assumption that the natural world is all that exists and that the supernatural does not exist. In practice, the term functioned as a synonym for atheism. During the 1950s, neo-evangelicals frequently used the terms “secularism” and “naturalism” interchangeably even though the two were technically not identical. In his article, Ockenga conflated the terms, discussing “naturalism” but describing Kilpatrick and Nathanson as “secular educators.” Increasingly, individuals like Ockenga would argue that secular education could not be distinguished from an education based in naturalism (i.e. practical atheism). An education devoid of religion, they argued, de facto suggested to children that God did not matter and that the supernatural was, at best, irrelevant.<sup>180</sup>

“Dr. Nathanson insisted that the rotten things in human nature can be explained by the insecurity people feel in their emotional, social, economic and natural life,” Ockenga wrote in his report on the conference. “What Christians think of as sin, the secular educators regard as the natural outcome of fear.” He continued: “The problem therefore from the naturalist point of view

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<sup>179</sup> Harold J. Ockenga, “Shall We Leave God Out of Education?” *Moody Monthly* (April 1953), pp. 572-573, 626.

<sup>180</sup> Ockenga, “Shall We Leave God Out of Education?” Landon E. Bayer, “William Heard Kilpatrick,” *PROSPECTS: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, vol. XXVII, no. 3 (Sept. 1997), 470-85.

is not one of man's original nature or his relation to God, but simply how to teach people to get along with one another." Clark and Jaarsma, of course, disagreed with this perspective. "A philosophy which sets up human experience as the only standard of right and wrong and denies revelation rests its choices of action on personal taste and preference," Ockenga wrote, summarizing their arguments. The theologian argued that crime, violence, and delinquency had increased "in about the same degree that naturalism has been extended in the education provided by our Western culture," thus disproving Kilpatrick and Nathanson's claims that moral education could be provided successfully apart from God. Kilpatrick and Nathanson would have disagreed, but Ockenga did not include their response.<sup>181</sup>

"Dewey for thirty or forty years has been the greatest influence in educational ideas, and yet he was an atheist who held that everything supernatural is a hindrance to the progress of mankind," Gerald B. Stanton, a professor at Talbot Theological Seminary, declared in during a convocation at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles in 1953. John Dewey, a philosopher and progressive education pioneer of the early twentieth century, came in for increasing criticism at the hands of fundamentalist and neo-evangelical writers and speakers during this decade. In 1957, Carl F. H. Henry, a former professor at Fuller Theological Seminary whose new role as editor of *Christianity Today* would soon make him one of the nation's foremost evangelical thinkers, wrote in that publication that "John Dewey set the intellectual spirit of the new century" with his statement that "faith in the divine authority [and] fixed revelations" was "impossible for the cultivated mind of the western world." Henry went on: "Although naturalism has not won the enthusiasm of the majority of the people, the enterprise of education in America ... came to cast its weight against the theology and ethics of revealed religion." Philosophical antagonism toward

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<sup>181</sup> Ockenga, "Shall We Leave God Out of Education?"

religion was not limited to the university, Henry warned: naturalism had entered the public schools “through the infiltration of Dewey’s educational philosophy.”<sup>182</sup>

During the three decades he spent at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College at the beginning of the twentieth century, philosopher John Dewey cast a long shadow. In their objections, fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals frequently honed in on his work on moral education: Dewey argued that educators must accept a certain degree of relativity—that what was right in one situation or time might not be right in another. Children who were taught how to work out morality for themselves, he argued, rather than being taught traditional absolutes about right and wrong, would be better prepared for the fast-changing modern world. Yet even Dewey’s emphasis on hands-on, experimental learning came in for criticism. In 1957, *Christianity Today* published an excerpt from a book by Cecil De Boer, late professor at Calvin College. “Professor Dewey’s theory of learning by doing has, of course, its uses, and no one has denied this,” wrote De Boer. “But it also has its limitation. There is an old saying that only fools must learn by experience—the implication being, of course, that the wide awake pupil will be able to learn both from books and from the sad experience of others.” De Boer emphasized the

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<sup>182</sup> Talbot Theological Seminary was founded by Bible Institute of Los Angeles president Louis T. Talbot in 1952. Gerald B. Stanton, “War Against the Truth,” *King’s Business* (May 1953), 8, 29; Carl F. H. Henry, “Christian Responsibility in Education,” *Christianity Today*, May 27, 1957, 11-14. For references to John Dewey, see Wallace Emerson, “The Christian Movement in Education,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1952), 7-9; Albert C. Norton, “Christianity and Our Schools,” *Christianity Today*, May 12, 1958, 8-10; George H. Moore, “Higher Education,” *King’s Business* (June 1926), 17-20; Cecil De Boer, “John Dewey and the American Spirit,” *Christianity Today*, May 27, 1957, 8-10; James O. Henry, “American v. Soviet Education,” *King’s Business* (Jan. 1958); Mark Fakemma, “Modern Education,” *ibid.* (June 1958), 17; and Brooke Walker, “The Case for Christian Day Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Aug. 31, 1959, 11-12.

importance of teaching children revealed knowledge—of giving them an established body of settled facts rather than encouraging them to work out facts for themselves.<sup>183</sup>

Dewey was an atheist, and a signer of the 1933 Humanist Manifesto. “Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement,” the document read.<sup>184</sup> Torrey M. Johnson, pastor of Midwest Bible Church in Chicago, took aim at this idea in a 1952 article in the *Moody Monthly*: “A false psychology pervades the motives and energies of our schools,” he wrote. “This psychology crystalizes around the error that man is essentially good.” Kenneth N. Taylor, director of Moody Press, agreed in an article a year later. “Secular education of this and the preceding generation have emphasized facts as the basis of true knowledge,” wrote Taylor. “They have despised and rejected efforts to teach right and wrong.” The problem with secular education, Taylor warned, was that it assumed that man was “inherently good” when he was not, and that children needed only facts and information when they actually needed the gospel and salvation. For those concerned that the philosophical underpinnings of the public education system had become antagonistic toward religion, Dewey offered a cogent explanation.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 175; McClellan, *Moral Education in America*, 55-57. De Boer, “John Dewey and the American Spirit.”

<sup>184</sup> In his book on mid-century conservative education activists, historian Adam Laats wrote that “[i]n the field of education, conservatives often developed a virulent antipathy toward a perceived hostile elite” and that “[i]n many cases, conservatives personified this danger in the increasing influence of philosopher John Dewey.” Adam Laats, *The Other School Reformers: Conservative Activism in American Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 17. See also Andrew Jewett, *Science, Democracy, and the American University* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6. Humanist Manifesto I, *American Humanist Association*, <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto1/>. “Wallace Emerson, “The Christian Movement in Education,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1952), 7-9.

<sup>185</sup> Kenneth N. Taylor, “Teaching the Bible Is Not Enough—Your Children Should Fear God!” *Moody Monthly* (March 1953), 490-491, 550. Torrey M. Johnson, “What Has Happened to Our Young People?” *ibid.* (March 1952), 459.

Ockenga raised fears of totalitarianism and Communism. Any moral theory that did not include “punishment for violation of divine law,” he wrote, could not condemn murder, adultery, or theft or establish a universal right and wrong. If morality is based on human experience, he wrote, “Communism can easily justify its murders and brutalities,” and if morality is based on what is best for society, “then Fascism, Nazism and Communism are justified.” Edward W. Greenfield, lately pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Princeton, Indiana, wrote in *Christianity Today* that by “throwing together of students in a common curriculum and system of instruction irrespective of individual ability and talent” public schools valued conformity over individual achievement, and by presenting “a hodge-podge of facts and a variety of subjects without relating them to an over-all philosophy of life” they left students open to “become the victims of every whim of doctrine and every puff of propaganda.” Henry similarly invoked fears of communism: “The world still outside the communist orbit has cause to ponder the perils of education gone wholly secular and godless,” he wrote. Ockenga, Greenfield, and Henry argued that the nation’s secular public schools did not have the ability to effectively fortify students against Communist indoctrination.<sup>186</sup>

While 1920s fundamentalists had worried primarily about the presence of specific teachings in the public schools—most prominently or evolution—in the 1950s neo-evangelical writers increasingly worried about absences. What did a secular education with no mention of God teach children? Ockenga and Henry argued that secular education could not be neutral or separated from underlying values. By leaving out religion, they argued, public schools were philosophically based in atheism, scientism, and naturalism. At best, they wrote, public

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<sup>186</sup> Ockenga, “Shall We Leave God Out of Education?” Edward W. Greenfield, “The Educational Imperative,” *Christianity Today*, May 12, 1958, 10-12; Henry, “Christian Responsibility,” 11.

education provided children with a jumble of facts without offering a meaningful framework for understanding these facts, or a foundation for a coherent philosophy of life.<sup>187</sup>

### **Searching for Public School Solutions**

“We do not deny the secularists the right to found and support secular schools,” Henry wrote in 1957, “but we do challenge their right to capture the public schools of the nation for their partisan ends.” Henry urged his readers to be vocal and take a stand “in the school districts in which we pay taxes” for “it is to the people, and not the educators alone, that our public schools are answerable.” Others made similar calls: “Let us swell the ranks of the teaching profession, of state and national organizations,” wrote Albert C. Norton, a Harvard-trained hymn writer from Philadelphia, in a 1958 article in *Christianity Today*. As they grappled with secular education, Henry, Norton, and others proffered a number of solutions.<sup>188</sup>

Where they could, both neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists found ways to bring religious programs into public schools. In a 1951 *Moody Monthly* article, Sue Christianson wrote about outreach programs in the South that used the public schools as conduits for scripture memory. According to the report, Scripture Memory Mountain Mission reached 40,000 students in Kentucky; Tennessee Mountain Mission served children in sixteen Tennessee counties; and the Colportage Department reached 216,000 children in thirty-nine states, all through the public schools. Such programs were introduced in the classroom with the permission of the teacher and included a system of rewards for students who reached certain scripture memory thresholds. “As

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<sup>187</sup> Brooke Walker, “The Case for Christian Day Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Aug. 31, 1959, 11-12; Boer, “John Dewey and the American Spirit.” Greenfield, “Educational Imperative”; Henry, “Christian Responsibility,” 11. Torrey M. Johnson, “What Has Happened to Our Young People?” *Moody Monthly* (March 1952), 459. Henry Zylstra, “Tradition in Education Today,” *Christianity Today*, May 12, 1958, 3-5, esp. 4, 5.

<sup>188</sup> Henry, “Christian Responsibility,” 14; Albert C. Norton, “Christianity and Our Schools,” *Christianity Today* (May 12, 1958), 10.

children learn Scripture passages, teachers usually note improvement in behavior,” Christianson wrote, adding stories of conversions by both children and parents, and of children who had stopped smoking or swearing.<sup>189</sup>

Under the hopeful heading “North Carolina Solves Bible-in-School Issue,” a 1955 *Moody Monthly* news item highlighted a program of elective Bible classes in public high schools sponsored, funded, and staffed by local churches. Such programs were held on school property, and arguably may have violated *McCollum*, but *Zorach* had muddied the waters. Besides, in many areas, especially in the South, people were willing to look the other way. *McCollum* had not meant the end of released-time education programs held in schools; in many areas of the country, support for these programs was so high that they had simply gone on as before.<sup>190</sup>

Christian teachers sought to witness to children in public schools in other ways as well. Writing in the *King’s Business* in 1954, Clyde Narremore, a Christian psychologist on the staff of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, quoted evangelical teachers and school administrators in California on the various ways they influenced both students and school policy. “Students come to me after class to ask about Christianity,” one teacher said, “and I am happy that I can help them and tell them what Christ means to me.” Other teachers spoke of “the example of living” and of their “personal testimony” in the lives of students. A music teacher told Narremore that she selected Christian songs for Christmas and Easter and used discussion of the lyrics to walk her students through “the entire plan of salvation.” One district school superintendent spoke openly with Narremore of the “opportunities we have to witness” to

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<sup>189</sup> Sue Christianson, “They Learn by Heart,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1951), 11-13.

<sup>190</sup> “North Carolina Solves Bible-in-School Issue,” *Moody Monthly* (April 1955), 7.

students, adding that “parents who are not Christians definitely respect my stand.” The public schools, Narremore wrote, were “the greatest mission field.”<sup>191</sup>

In 1953, Narremore met with Ben Weiss, “an influential man in the Los Angeles City School system,” to speak about their shared interests and experiences. The pair left their meeting determined to find a way to encourage Christian teachers in their work in the public schools. Later that year, Narremore and Weiss founded the Educators’ Fellowship of Southern California, “an organization of born-again professional people who are employed by the public schools.” Within five months, the fellowship had over 400 members. When asked about the Christian day school movement, Narremore responded that the fellowship was limited to those who worked in the public school because “the overwhelming majority of children attend public schools” and “if we as Christians are going to reach their minds and hearts, we must go where they are—to the public schools.” Narremore and Weiss urged parents to encourage their children to become teachers in the public schools, just as they might become missionaries abroad. The organization, the *King’s Business* reported, hoped to “recruit several hundred evangelical Christians for the teaching profession in the near future.”<sup>192</sup>

But for Henry, the problem with the public schools was holistic and foundational and could not be solved in such a piecemeal fashion: Christian teachers and released-time education programs could not effectively counter a secular curriculum. Henry argued that public schools left out basic facts of religion and morality, and inevitably produced irreligious students. Taxpayers, he wrote, had the right to a say in what took place in the schools. Henry urged readers to oppose the forces of secularism and lay claim to their local schools, not to serve a

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<sup>191</sup> Clyde Narremore, “Our Greatest Mission Field,” *King’s Business* (June 1954), 15.

<sup>192</sup> Stanley Taylor, “Witness for Christ,” *King’s Business* (June 1954), 20-21.

specific denomination but to expose children to the basic facts of religion and morality, and to return a search for truth and a sense of purpose to public education.<sup>193</sup>

### **Founding Christian Schools**

Henry allowed for the possibility of founding Christian day schools, but offered caveats. “We must not surrender our public schools needlessly to the spirit of the age,” he wrote. “If we establish parochial schools, it will be as Protestants, not because public education free of ecclesiastical control is to be condemned, but because education with no concept of enduring truth and of fixed goals perverts our children.” Henry recognized that the call for creating Christian day schools was new, and acknowledged longstanding opposition to parochial schools.

“There is a growing movement among evangelicals toward the establishment of Christian day schools on both elementary and secondary levels,” wrote Wallace Emerson, chair of the Department of Christian Education at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, in a 1952 *King’s Business* article affirming the Christian day school movement. Only one paragraph in, however, Emerson offered this acknowledgement: “Evangelical Christians traditionally have been vigorous and loyal supporters of the public school system.” Emerson pointed to immigration as one reason for this support: “The public schools have done a most commendable job ... in their Americanization program,” he wrote. “The children of foreign-born have been received without antagonism [and] have been educated in the American way of thinking in so far as that is possible in one generation.” Furthermore, “the American school has been a training ground for native-born in patriotism and the democratic way of life.” But things had changed, he wrote, and parents could no longer be sure that the public schools represented their values and beliefs.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Henry, “Christian Responsibility,” 14.

<sup>194</sup> Wallace Emerson, “The Christian Movement in Education,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1952), 7-9.

“When the public school movement began,” Emerson explained, “since there was no established church and America, rightly we think, became committed to a policy of separation of church and state, there was a tacit compromise relating to the public schools.” That compromise, he wrote, was the understanding that while schools would be secular, they would not promote irreligion, either directly or by implication. “A secularization of the schools seemed to be necessary,” he wrote, “but a bias against religion was neither advocated nor thought of.” That compromise, Emerson argued, had not been upheld: “Through the dominance of the John Dewey philosophy, which is the philosophy of secularism, we are committed to a type of curriculum which in no way can emphasize spiritual truths.” Emerson wrote of “infiltration by radicals, fellow travelers, so-called liberals, into educational leadership,” drawing a connection between John Dewey and Communism. Many parents, he wrote, had come to feel that “in many public schools there is a deliberate attempt to prepare the minds of their children in a way of thinking that is completely antagonistic to Christian doctrine and life.”<sup>195</sup>

Still, Emerson felt the need to justify the existence of Christian day schools. “It is frequently expressed by Christian teachers in public schools that we do a disservice to the child himself and to other children by this segregation of children from evangelical homes into such schools,” he wrote. “It is conceded that this is true. But adolescent and pre-adolescent children do not exist primarily as missionaries under conditions where the odds are overwhelmingly against them.” Emerson was not done addressing objections. “Another criticism which possesses undoubted validity is that the Christian day school attracts the type of teacher most needed in the

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

public school,” he wrote. “There is no answer to this except to say that in many communities the truly Christian teacher finds it difficult to make her greatest contribution in the public school.”<sup>196</sup>

In a 1958 article in the *Moody Monthly*, Faith Coxe Bailey profiled Sunshine Bible Academy, a Christian boarding school in South Dakota, emphasizing the school’s strong academics. The school opened in 1952 with 32 students, founded by rural ranchers worried about sending their children away to secular boarding schools. By 1958, the school had 200 students. Bailey boasted that the school was “fully accredited by the state of South Dakota” and that “not one student has reached the close of the spring term without having professed Christ as Lord.” She presented the school’s wholesome Christian atmosphere as an antidote to juvenile delinquency, claiming that the school had turned numerous troubled students away from a life of crime. “The accredited four-year course covers all required high school subjects,” she added, pointing to strong academic standards. In fact, Bailey wrote, the school boasted a ratio of one teacher to every ten students.<sup>197</sup>

The following year, Violet Trato Pearson described the creation of Phoenix Christian High School in an article in the *Moody Monthly*. The school opened in 1949 with the help of the NACS, and initially enrolled only twenty-seven students. Following the NACS model, the school had a board of directors and a school association made up of parents. Initially housed at a local church, Phoenix Christian High School boasted an enrollment of over 300 in the fall of 1959. By then, the school itself had grown, adding classroom buildings and a full gymnasium and auditorium. “The present structures house executive offices, classrooms, library, cafeteria, music

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Faith Coxe Bailey, “High School on the Prairie,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1958), 27-31.

and athletic departments and chapel, furnishings of which are compatible to those of any modern school,” Pearson wrote.<sup>198</sup>

In his 1959 *Moody Monthly* article on Christian day schools, Walker asked a simple question: Who had the right to educate children? He answered that the parent, the church, and the state *all* had the right to educate children, but that each had this right only if “such education presupposes and points to God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.” By failing in this duty, Walker asserted, the state had lost its right to educate children. Walker called upon parents to form, attend, and support private Christian schools. Yet he understood that his call would face opposition: “Some will say that [Christian day schools] are divisive in respect to the community at large, and that they only hurt the public school,” he acknowledged.<sup>199</sup>

It is significant that Christian school supporters from Emerson to Henry to Walker spent so much of their time responding to objections parents might raise to Christian day schools. In a second article in 1954, Emerson argued that the increasing number of evangelical children leaving the public schools was made more significant by the reality of past evangelical support for the public schools. Yet even in this article, Emerson felt the need to forestall any argument that the growth of Christian day schools might come at the expense of public schools, writing that “vigorous, well-run Christian day schools might help the public schools to a reevaluation of their procedures.” Bailey and Pearson’s emphasis on the academic prowess and comparable facilities of the Christian schools they profiled, too, points to concern about the quality of Christian day schools. Emerson was correct in noting the significance of the rise of the Christian

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<sup>198</sup> Pearson, “The Plus in Christian Schools.”

<sup>199</sup> Walker, “The Case for Christian Day Schools.”

school movement, given past support for public schools, but he perhaps overestimated the extent to which parents had truly turned their backs on the public schools.<sup>200</sup>

### **Preparing Children at Home**

In 1949, a *Moody Monthly* editorial endorsed Christian grade schools but noted that many families “may feel led to continue relying on secular institutions.” The editors urged these parents to set aside time for religious instruction at home. “As Moses' mother seized upon the days before her son was called to the palace of Pharaoh, instilling in him a love for God,” the editors urged, “so parents of today may earnestly and prayerfully prepare their children in the home to withstand the storms of unbelief which sweep non-Christian schools and colleges.” Parents should ensure that their children would be ready to defend their beliefs when enrolled in public schools.<sup>201</sup>

Raising a child with strong faith required more than ensuring that the child attended Sunday school. “The Sunday School, the church, the young people's societies along with various other Christian groups are fine and they are needed,” noted the editors of the *Moody Monthly* in 1950. “But they alone are not enough. The task of rounding out a *Christian* education rests with the home.” “One hour in Sunday school is not sufficient to make any substantial impression,” Arvid F. Carlson wrote in the *Moody Monthly* in 1957. “Johnny must see this Christ-life lived in front of him.” During the 1950s, fundamentalist and neo-evangelical periodicals published numerous articles offering suggestions for family worship.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Wallace Emerson, “The Christian School,” *King's Business* (June 1954), 12-13.

<sup>201</sup> “Education for Christians.”

<sup>202</sup> Arvid F. Carlson, “Who's Responsible for Johnny?” *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1957). Editorial, “Supplement to Secular Education,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1950), p. 7. For other examples, see Norman V. Williams, “Vital Values of a Family Alter,” *ibid.* (Dec. 1949); Frank E. Gaebelein, “Christian Education and the Home, part I,” *ibid.* (Nov. 1950); Frank E. Gaebelein, “Christian Education and the Home, part II,” *ibid.* (Dec. 1950); Emmet Russell, “Everlastingly at It: A Talk with

In his *Christian Education in a Democracy*, Gaebelein wrote about the Christian family. “Few thoughtful observers can fail to recognize that something has been happening to the American home during the first half of this century,” he wrote. “Not that the home is in danger of changing; it has changed, and we are now faced with a *fait accompli* in that the home built upon spiritual and moral ideals, the center of life for parents and children, is no longer characteristic of America.” What had changed the home? “A plethora of amusements from movies to radio and television; greatly increased leisure with insufficient inner resources to use it well; automobiles for almost everyone; alcohol intemperance; divorce so prevalent that only two out of three marriages endure.” Gaebelein warned that with “the waning influence of the American home,” many of the home’s former functions had been transferred to the school, and that the school was now expected to do more than ever before.<sup>203</sup>

The nationwide panic over juvenile delinquency that swept the country during the 1950s served as a backdrop to this emphasis on the family and the home. In 1955 and 1956, the *Moody Monthly* published a five-part series on juvenile delinquency. *Christianity Today* also ran articles on the topic. “Young people need the stabilizing influence of parents who have Christian convictions and the courage to make them stick in their own homes,” wrote L. Nelson Bell, Billy Graham’s father-in-law, in an article in *Christianity Today* in 1960. Numerous articles placed the

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Christian Parents,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1952); Lionel A. Hunt, “Despising God's Little Ones,” *ibid.* (June 1955); D. M. Allowa, “Get Acquainted with Your Family,” *ibid.* (June 1958); Bruce D. Cummons, “For Me and My House,” *ibid.* (Aug. 1958); Ruth C. Clark, “Homes That Make Christians,” *ibid.* (April 1960); Elizabeth Walker Strachan, “How to Have a Family Altar,” *King’s Business* (Jan. 1956), 43-44; Edward L. Hayes, “Christianity Is Family Business,” *ibid.* (Oct. 1957), 43-46; Merv Rosell, “Your Home and How to Secure It,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1958), 14-16; Tom Watson, Jr., “Teach Them Thy Sons,” *ibid.* (Oct. 1958), 13-15; Constance I. Tuttle, “A Message to Mothers,” *ibid.* (May 1959), 11; Henry Jacobson, “We Need Christian Parents,” *ibid.* (June 1959), 25; Paul Bayles, “The Christian Home,” *ibid.* (June 1959), 28; and L. Nelson Bell, “A Layman and His Faith: The Golden Years,” *Christianity Today*, October 27, 1961, 17.

<sup>203</sup> Gaebelein, “Christian Education and the Home, part I.”

blame for juvenile delinquency on parents. “Juvenile delinquency or adult delinquency?” ran a 1959 headline in *King’s Business*. The article’s author, Conrad S. Jenson, a captain in the New York City Police Department, informed readers that delinquent children were simply the natural result of absent, pleasure-seeking parents.<sup>204</sup>

The family altar was presented as an antidote to juvenile delinquency. “In raising our own family of six children,” Scott T. Clark of Friends Bible College in Haviland, Kansas, wrote in 1952, “[we] have held to ... the old family altar; now, we are glad that the children are all living clean Christian lives.” Pastors and theologians offered parents tips on maintaining family Bible reading, prayer, and spiritual conversations. “No other influence can strengthen faith, resolve difficult problems and bind precious home ties like the family altar,” wrote Bruce D. Cummons, graduate of Bible Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and pastor of Massillon Baptist Temple in Massillon, Ohio, in 1958. “The church must initiate an aggressive program to enlist and instruct the family in true Christian living,” suggested Edward L. Hayes, who would become professor of Christian Education at Denver Seminary in 1960.<sup>205</sup>

Maintaining a family altar required pushing back against the demands of modern family life. “Do you ever have trouble in getting your phone together?” a Mrs. D. M. Alloway asked in a 1958 *Moody Monthly* article, pointing to the large number of commitments made by many

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<sup>204</sup> For the *Moody Monthly* series, see “Preparing Your Child for School,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1954); “Juvenile Delinquency and Our Complex World,” *ibid.* (Nov. 1955); “Juvenile Delinquency and the Home,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1956); “Juvenile Delinquency and the Church,” *ibid.* (May 1956); and “Juvenile Delinquency and Christ,” *ibid.* (Oct. 1956). Bell, “Layman and His Faith,” 19. See also Mary E. Lebar, “Guiding the Preschool Child,” *Christianity Today*, August 29, 1960, 11-12; “The Greatest Educational Force,” *ibid.*, August 28, 1964, pp. 28-29; editorial, “Time to Quit Playing at Sunday School,” *ibid.*, Aug. 29, 1960, 27-28; and “Can the Sunday School Bridle the Juvenile Crime Rate?” *ibid.*, April 27, 1962, 26-27. Conrad S. Jenson, “Juvenile Delinquency or Adult Delinquency,” *King’s Business* (Nov. 1959), 20-21.

<sup>205</sup> Scott T. Clark, “Youth’s Moral Problems,” *King’s Business* (Sept. 1952), 14, 17. Bruce D. Cummons, “For Me and My House,” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1958), 13-14. Edward L. Hayes, “Christianity Is Family Business,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1957), 43-46.

families: “Home and School Club, prayer meeting, choir practice, Brownies, and on and on.” She recommended designating one night a week “Family Night.” This night should focus not simply on Bible reading but on individual attention. “When the children sense that the parental voice of authority is clothed in loving interest in him personally, divine truths spoken by the parent are more readily accepted,” Alloway explained. Proper training and preparation in the home did not just mean religious and spiritual education; it also meant building lasting family relationships. Emmet Russell, a pastor in Goshen, New Hampshire, urged parents to have conversations with their children about God and the Bible. “Such conversations will make it easier for your children to witness for Christ at school and at play,” he wrote.<sup>206</sup>

In 1954, the *Moody Monthly* published a symposium on preparing your child for school; four Christian fathers shared what they had learned and offered advice for other parents. Each of the fathers emphasized the importance of maintaining the family altar, engaging in spiritual conversations, building a close connection with their children, and communicating with teachers. “It seems to us, that since the Lord has given us these children to raise for Him, this is our main work,” wrote Arthur Anderson, Dean of Men at Oak Hills Christian Training School in Bemidji, Minnesota. Herbert J. Pugmire, pastor of Galilean Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, advised against sheltering children, “because the adjustment to the outside world may be his undoing later on.” In a side article, an H. W. Bailey advised parents to create small Christian libraries in their homes to correct “the lack of Christian food in the educational diet of the average Christian boy and girl.” In his section of the symposium, Pugmire concluded that “[i]f parents have their children's confidence, parental influence will not end at the schoolyard gate.” This hopeful note

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<sup>206</sup> Mrs. D. M. Alloway, “Get Acquainted with Your Family,” *Moody Monthly* (June 1958), 64-65. Emmet Russell, “A Talk with Christian Parents—Everlastingly at It,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1952), 9-11, 90.

aside, each of the fathers who participated in the symposium treated the public school as an antagonistic entity that would test and try their children.<sup>207</sup>

### **New Directions for Reaching Youth**

As pastors and theologians were quick to note, not all children grew up in Christian homes. “Eight years ago, the number of young people and children in the United States receiving no religious instruction was twenty-seven million, or a number equal to approximately one-fifth our national population,” warned Harold C. Mason, a professor of Christian theology at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, in an article published in the *Moody Monthly* in 1950. “Today,” he went on, “the number of those not receiving religious instruction is said to have increased to thirty-six million, or approximately one-fourth the population of the United States.” The need to reach these children, too, was colored by concerns about juvenile delinquency. A 1954 editorial in the *King’s Business* warned that “rising juvenile delinquency makes child-conversion acutely important.”<sup>208</sup>

In a 1959 article in *Christianity Today*, V. Raymond Edman, president of Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Illinois, declared that “young people are at the controls of the future.” Edman warned readers that “dictators of the past, including Communists of today, have captured nations through the minds and hearts of youth.” The importance of youth to the nation’s future made their evangelization crucial—even urgent. “Remembering that great Christian leaders like Charles Spurgeon, J. Hudson Taylor, John Calvin, D. L. Moody, and Billy Graham were

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<sup>207</sup> “Preparing Your Child for School,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1954); H. W. Bailey, “A Project for Parents,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1954), 14-15. The remaining two fathers profiled were Isaac J. Leonard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Kenneth N. Taylor of Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>208</sup> Harold C. Mason, “Claiming the Children,” *Moody Monthly* (April 1950), 529, 589. Editorial, “Our Children: For Christ or the World,” *King’s Business* (Nov. 1954), 19. See also Robert A. Cook, “The Nation’s Youth,” *Moody Monthly* (July 1955), 20-21, 58-59; Harold E. Garner, “Vacation Bible School Needs You,” *ibid.* (April 1950), 538-539, 560.

converted in their teen years,” Edman wrote. “I am prone to agree ... that ‘unless we win teenagers today, there may be no Church tomorrow!’” He was not alone in his focus on the teen years. “Thirteen is prime conversion age,” the author of the *King’s Business* regular column on youth issues declared in 1959.<sup>209</sup>

In a 1957 *Christianity Today* article, Lionel A. Hunt, a resident of Toronto and author of *Fruitful Child Evangelism*, was optimistic: “There is ... much evidence that the Holy Spirit is working in an unusual way among children,” he wrote with excitement. “The harvest field is thirty million unchurched children. It is a virgin mission field on our doorstep.” Hunt chided churches for focusing more on entertaining children than on evangelizing them. “It is time we realized that the child needs the same presentation of the passion of the Christ that reaches the adult,” he wrote, warning that eighty percent of Christian youth left the church in their teens. In seeking to appeal to young people, Hunt worried, Sunday school programs had sacrificed important content. “Modernists would have us believe that the child is incapable of assimilating Bible truth at an early age,” wrote S. L. Boehner, a Moody Bible Institute graduate and pastor of Calvary Church in Toronto, in an article published in the *Moody Monthly* in 1950. Children did not just need religious instruction; they needed *the right kind* of religious instruction.<sup>210</sup>

“Secular influences are at work in the Sunday Schools, robbing the pupils of the privilege of learning to know the Bible,” warned Milford Sholund, a Wheaton College graduate and Director of Biblical and Educational Research at Gospel Light Publications in Glendale,

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<sup>209</sup> V. Raymond Edman, “Has 'Youth for Christ' Grown Up?” *Christianity Today*, August 31, 1959, 13-14. Ken Poure, “Thirteen Is Prime Conversion Age,” *King’s Business* (Dec. 1959), 49. See also, “Youth and the Church School,” *Christianity Today*, February 29, 1960, 24-26. On the preschool years as “the formative years,” see Lebar, “Guiding the Preschool Child.”

<sup>210</sup> Lionel A. Hunt, “Operational Phenomenal,” *Christianity Today*, May 27, 1957, 22-23. S. L. Boehmer, “You Can Remake Your Sunday School,” *Moody Monthly* (April 1950), 534-535, 590, 592.

California, in a 1959 *Christianity Today* article. “A child can go through Sunday School with honors for perfect attendance for 10 years and still not be able to use the Bible effectively for his daily life.” For his part, Boehner worried that Protestants had fallen behind other groups in the religious instruction of their young. He compared the instruction offered in Protestant churches—“at the most, one half hour a week”—with that provided by Jews and Catholics—“approximately one hour of religious instruction every day of the year.”<sup>211</sup>

Efforts to evangelize children were not limited to the Sunday school. The Children’s Gospel Crusade, a radio program that featured children who “read the Bible, sing and play instruments, and tell how their love for Christ has helped them live during the week” reached nearly two-million radio listeners in 1950. That same year, Lance Latham and Art Rorheim, senior pastor and youth director of North Side Gospel Center in Chicago, founded a national organization to promote their popular scripture memorization club, Awana; a decade later, 900 churches across the country ran Awana Bible clubs. These programs, which met on Wednesday nights, emphasized Bible knowledge and encouraged children to bring friends. Jesse Irvin Overholtzer founded Child Evangelism Fellowship in 1937 in Pacific Palisades, California; by the 1950s, it had grown into a national organization that oversaw 25,000 weekly Bible classes meeting in neighborhood homes. By the 1950s, Young Life, a program founded in 1940 to conduct outreach to high school students, featured high school clubs and summer camps for teens. Young Life staff and volunteers focused on building relationships with teens on their own turf in order to reach those “who would never have been reached through ordinary means.”<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Milford Sholund, “The Bible in the Sunday School,” *Christianity Today* (Aug. 31, 1959), 9. S. L. Boehmer, “You Can Remake Your Sunday School,” *Moody Monthly* (April 1950), 534-535, 590, 592.

<sup>212</sup> For the Children’s Gospel Crusade, see Faith Coxe Bailey, “The Children Crusade Again,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1950), 458-459, 480-481. On Awana, see Kate Shellnutt, “Died: ‘Mr.

The 1940s and 1950s also saw the emergence of Youth for Christ (soon renamed Youth for Christ International), a youth outreach program that grew out of popular youth rallies held in the U.S. and Canada during WWII. Chicago evangelist Torrey M. Johnson founded Youth for Christ in 1944 and hired a young Billy Graham as the organization's first full-time staff member. Youth for Christ sought to reach teens beyond the church through rally-style events typically run in cooperation with local pastors. "Of the eight million or more teens now in American high schools, more than 50 per cent are unchurched," wrote Ted W. Engstrom, executive director of Youth for Christ International, by then based in Wheaton, Illinois, in 1957. "These millions of young folks who by-pass the church are the special concern of Youth for Christ and target of its programs." Throughout the 1950s, Youth for Christ held large youth rallies in cities across the U.S. and around the world.<sup>213</sup>

Child evangelism did not always take place as part of an established program or under the purview of a national organization. In 1953, a woman contacted the *Moody Monthly* asking for advice on how to evangelize a nine-year-old neighbor child she had been getting to know. Frances L. Bennet, described as "a children's worker with many years' experience," answered her query; Bennet's response was then published in the *Moody Monthly*. "When helping a little child, there must be no confusion in the invitation," she wrote, offering a step-by-step process for leading the child through a recognition of God, a realization of her own sin, and an acceptance of

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Awana' Arthur Rorheim," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 8, 2018; and "History of Awana," *Awana.org*, <https://www.awana.org/about/history/>. On Child Evangelism Fellowship, see Franklin F. Ellis, "Reaching Children for Christ," *King's Business* (June 1952), 11-13; and "Reaching Our Children for Christ," *ibid.* (March 1954), 15-17. On Young Life, see "Young Life," *ibid.* (July 1953), 11-13; and James Rayburn, "The Teenager and Christ," *ibid.* (Aug. 1955), 40-41. See also Faith Coxe Bailey, "He Does It with a Club," *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1949); and Al Johnson, "Teenagers on the Mission Field," *King's Business* (July 1959), 17.  
<sup>213</sup> Ted W. Engstrom, "All Out for Youth!" *Moody Monthly* (July 1957), 22-23, 26. V. Raymond Edman, "Has Youth for Christ Grown Up?" *Christianity Today* (Aug. 31, 1959), 13-14.

salvation. “After the child has grasped the essential facts of her salvation and has assurance, be sure she has a simple word of guidance for her new life in Christ,” Bennett advised.<sup>214</sup>

## Conclusion

During the early years of the Cold War, as released-time religious education programs and religious devotionals came to be practiced in a growing number of public schools and church attendance reached an all-time high, a collection of pastors and theologians, including the influential Harold Ockenga and Carl F. H. Henry, began to question whether secular education could actually be neutral toward religion. In articles printed in the *Moody Monthly*, the *King’s Business*, and *Christianity Today*, these individuals broadcast their concerns. Louis T. Talbot, editor of the *King’s Business*, objected to school prayers that were ecumenical rather than evangelical; in an article published in *Christianity Today*, Brooke Walker worried that the character education programs in public schools had replaced religion with a secular deification of democracy; and Edwin Rian warned that efforts to bring religion to the public classroom, even if done well, could not make an otherwise secular curriculum cease to be secular.<sup>215</sup>

In part, these theologians’ shifting approach to public education was a product of the influence of the Christian Reformed Church and Dutch Calvinist ideas on the neo-evangelical

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<sup>214</sup> Frances L. Bennett, “How to Win a Child,” *Moody Monthly* (June 1952), 686-687; Lionel A. Hunt, “Winning the Children: Revival Calling,” *ibid.* (Aug. 1950), 814, 830-831. See also Lionel A. Hunt, “Revival Calling: Winning the Children,” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1950); “Christian Education Symposium,” *King’s Business* (Oct. 1957), 16-17; Margaret J. Hart, “Vacation Bible School Is Fun,” *ibid.* (May 1959), 8-10; Dale Evans Rogers, “The Sunday School and the Home,” *ibid.* (July 1959), 10; Norman S. Townsend, “Youth Work in the Local Church,” *ibid.* (Oct. 1959), 18-19; David W. Baker, “What They Get in Sunday School,” *Christianity Today*, Feb. 29, 1960, pp. 7-11; “Time to Quit Playing at Sunday School,” *ibid.*, Aug. 29, 1960, pp. 27-28; and “Can the Sunday School Bridle the Juvenile Crime Rate?” *ibid.*, April 27, 1962, pp. 26-27.

<sup>215</sup> Editorial, “Prayer in the Public School,” *King’s Business* (April 1952), 5. Brooke Walter, “The Case for Christian Day Schools,” *Christianity Today* (Aug. 31, 1959), 12. Beck, 179-180. Edwin H. Rian, *Christianity and American Education* (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1949), 53.

movement. Ockenga invited Cornelius Jaarsma to speak at the conference he held on Christian education; the editors of *Christianity Today* published an excerpt from Cecil De Boer's essay collection on the Christian's role in a secular society; and the editors of the *King's Business* reviewed the same book with positive acclaim. Both Jaarsma and De Boer taught at the CRC's flagship school, Calvin College, as did Henry Zylstra, who penned an article on education for *Christianity Today*. By the 1940s and 1950s, the Dutch immigrants who formed the core of the CRC—whose Christian elementary and secondary schools had taught in Dutch as late as WWI—had fully acculturated. Even as they sought to maintain certain doctrinal and ethnic distinctions, CRC students and theologians engaged with professors and pastors at Westminster Theological Seminary and, later, Fuller Theological Seminary. This familiarity exposed neo-evangelical leaders interested in doing new intellectual work and rethinking their engagement with the world to distinctive Dutch Calvinist ideas about education, secularism, and culture.<sup>216</sup>

At the same time, the emergence of the Christian school movement shaped ideas about public education by providing a viable alternative. Here, too, Dutch Calvinist influence was present: Mark Fakkema, formerly involved in organizing the CRC's schools, played a central role in the creation of the National Association of Christian Schools in 1947. The creation of the NAE in 1942 offered a ready avenue for the creation of the NACS, and the receptivity of prominent neo-evangelical leaders such as Ockenga, who had studied under Christian school promoter J. Gresham Machen, and Frank Gabelein, who combined sterling fundamentalist credentials with two decades of experience running a boarding school grounded in Christian principles, also contributed to the birth of the Christian school movement. While few children

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<sup>216</sup> Ockenga, "Shall We Leave God Out of Education?" De Boer, "John Dewey and the American Spirit." Arnold D. Ehlert, "Book Reviews: Responsible Protestantism; Essays on the Christian's Role in a Secular Society, by Cecil de Boer," *King's Business* (May 1958), 30-31. Henry Zylstra, "Tradition in Education Today," *Christianity Today* (May 12, 1958), 3-5.

attended schools associated with this fledgling movement at the end of the 1950s—many parents were likely satisfied with their local public schools regardless of the concerns being raised about secularization—the existence of these schools marked a point of departure.

*McCullum*, the 1948 U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down released-time education programs in Champaign, Illinois, also forced neo-evangelical theologians to reevaluate their understanding of public education. The decision appeared to represent a public rejection of the role of God in education, and gave early credibility to Christian schools. It also spurred intellectual work on the nature and legitimacy of secular education. To those who had supported the released-time education programs *McCullum* struck down, the decision felt like a personal rejection. On a more practical level, *McCullum* threatened efforts to create supplemental programs of religious instruction parallel to the public school systems. While *Zorach* legitimized certain types of released-time education programs in 1952 and many programs had never been discontinued, *McCullum* was not forgotten.

During the 1950s, neo-evangelical and fundamentalist pastors and theologians found themselves navigating a society that had taken on a Christian image amidst the Cold War, but without many of the changes these individuals felt should accompany a committed Christian life. The national religious conversation was frequently ecumenical without being evangelical, and church attendance coexisted with a worrying materialism.

## Chapter 4: School Prayer and Unrealized Optimism

On July 20, 1962, Carl F. H. Henry, editor of *Christianity Today*, praised *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), in which the U.S. Supreme Court struck down recitation of the Regent’s prayer in New York State’s public schools. Henry urged critics of the decision to consider “just where political approval or stipulation of prayer patterns in the public schools might lead” and argued that “public education does not really exist for the exercise of spiritual devotions.” He noted that the prayer made no mention of Jesus. “Biblical Christians therefore could have considered themselves discriminated against as much as atheists,” he wrote.<sup>217</sup>

Both and fundamentalist leaders offered a mixed response to *Engel*. In this chapter I will address both. During the 1960s and 1970s, those who retained the fundamentalist label and those evangelicals born out of the maturing neo-evangelical movement differed primarily in style. While both groups typically shared the same set of underlying beliefs, most fundamentalists did not approve of evangelicals’ willingness to work with those in mainline denominations. Furthermore, fundamentalist leaders tended to use more bellicose language than their evangelical counterparts. Evangelicals’ expression and approach, meanwhile, was moderated by their emphasis on communicating effectively with those outside of their group. While this chapter focuses primarily on evangelicals’ efforts to work out the role of religion in the public schools, fundamentalist perspectives never disappear from the narrative entirely.

Civil religion and ecumenicalism provided the context for the *Engel* decision—and Henry’s response to it. In Cold War America, civil religion existed as a patriotic elevation of democracy combined with a generic embrace of “faith” in opposition to godless Communism. As the Cold War intensified in the early 1950s, individual states and school boards required school

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<sup>217</sup> “Supreme Court Prayer Ban: Where Will It Lead?” *Christianity Today*, July 20, 1962, 25-26.

prayer and Bible reading, practices they in many cases had been discontinued decades before. National authorities added “In God We Trust” to our currency and “under God” to the pledge of allegiance. The nation’s generic Cold War era “faith in faith” meant that whether one had a religion was more important than whether one was Episcopalian or Baptist, Protestant or Catholic. In his seminal 1955 work, *Catholic, Protestant, Jew*, sociologist Will Herberg referred to the U.S. as a “triple melting pot.”<sup>218</sup>

In 1951, the New York Board of Regents called together a team of ministers, priests, and rabbis to compose the Regent’s prayer, which was designed to be acceptable to each group: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country,” it read. The Regent’s prayer set events in motion that doomed the public school devotional. When the prayer was implemented in Long Island’s Nassau County, a group of Jewish and agnostic parents, with the help of the ACLU, sued the school board in federal court. The petitioners argued that the prayer was a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. While the parents also argued that their children faced social stigma for declining to say the prayer, the Court found that the school board adequately addressed the potentially coercive nature of the prayer by allowing students to be excused and barring teachers and school authorities from commenting on students’ participation or non-participation. However, the Court ruled that the Establishment Clause “is violated by the

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<sup>218</sup> Civil religion, according to Catherine Albanese, “refers to a religious system that has existed alongside the churches, with a theology (creed), an ethic (code,) and a set of rituals and other identifiable symbols (cultus) related to the state.” Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, 4th ed. (Thomson Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, 2007), 265-66. Sydney E. Ahlstrom uses the term “patriotic piety” to describe the religious climate of the 1950s, noting that “personal religious faith” was considered “an essential element in proper patriotic commitment.” Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 954-55. Will Herberg, *Catholic, Protestant, Jew: An Essay on American Religious Sociology* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1955).

enactment of laws which establish an official religion whether those laws operate directly to coerce non-observing individuals or not.”<sup>219</sup>

On June 25, the Court struck down the Regent’s prayer in a 6-1 decision. Justice Hugo Black wrote in the majority opinion that “by using its public school system to encourage recitation of the Regents’ prayer, the State of New York has adopted a practice wholly inconsistent with the Establishment Clause.” The Court, in other words, found the prayer an establishment of religion. Black took umbrage at the idea that prohibiting religious exercises in the public schools might “indicate a hostility toward religion or toward prayer,” as the respondents had claimed, arguing instead that the separation of church and state was intended to protect religion from government establishment or coercion. In his lone dissent, Justice Potter Stewart disagreed, writing that “to deny the wish of these school children to join in reciting this prayer is to deny them the opportunity of sharing in the spiritual heritage of our Nation.”<sup>220</sup>

Many Americans, like Justice Stewart, saw the decision as a violation of the rights of those students who might choose to pray. Public reaction was swift and resoundingly negative—a Gallup poll found that as many as 85% of Americans disapproved of the ruling. As Henry’s comments suggest, however, the reaction among evangelical and fundamentalist leaders was not as one-sided as such numbers might suggest.<sup>221</sup>

## **The Pagan Prayer**

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<sup>219</sup>Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Battle over School Prayer: How Engel v. Vitale Changed America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 86-110, 111-136. *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962).

<sup>220</sup>*Engel v. Vitale*.

<sup>221</sup>According to historian Bruce J. Deirenfield, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Engel v. Vitale* “seemed to portend a full-scale attack on the civil religion of U.S. society.” Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 137-162. Historian Adam Laats argues that evangelicals, unlike most Americans, “largely approved of the court’s decision.” Adam Laats, “Our Schools, Our Country: American Evangelicals, Public Schools, and the Supreme Court Decisions of 1962 and 1963,” *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Sept. 2012), 319-334.

“This monstrous ruling of the highest court of our land is that prayer of any kind may not be offered in public schools,” wrote fundamentalist S. H. Sutherland, president of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. “By this decision, the Court has taken one more step downward in making the United States a completely godless nation.” Sutherland argued that “the immediate effect of this judgment will be to impress upon our children that their belief in God is of no practical significance—indeed, that God is not worthy of acknowledgement and that appeal to him is unavailing.” He viewed the decision in a Cold War context, writing that it “fits to perfection the communistic, atheistic Russian program for the exploitation and infiltration of the United States.”<sup>222</sup> Sutherland was not the only one to connect *Engel* with the advance of Communism. “It is one of the ironies of the American government and its people to be fighting atheistic communism within and without national boundaries while at the same time condoning a secularized educational system that banishes God from the universe he created,” read a letter to the editor printed in *Christianity Today*. A secularized system of education would “inculcate into the minds of American youth atheistic beliefs identical with Russian ideology attended by a laxity of morals and discipline of which the Russians would be ashamed.”<sup>223</sup>

In strong contrast to Sutherland, William Culbertson, editor of the Chicago-based *Moody Monthly*, told his readers that the Supreme Court had protected the American people from “the very real possibility that such a school prayer might in time become the means by which a majority might impose sectarian religious observations on a minority.” Still, Culbertson noted that the decision did not ban school prayer across the board—only government-authored school prayer—and warned that this might change. “[T]he case raised the ominous question of whether

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<sup>222</sup> S. H. Sutherland, “Reaping the Whirlwind,” *King’s Business* (Sept. 1962), 4-5, 37. Samuel H. Sutherland, *I Am a Fundamentalist: And Other Timely Messages* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, n.d.).

<sup>223</sup> Letter to the Editor, “Where God Is Banished,” *Christianity Today* (20 July 1962).

any kind of non-sectarian prayer or acknowledgement of dependence on God would be upheld by the Court,” Culbertson wrote. “[W]e trust that in subsequent decisions the Court will show its awareness that the liberties of minorities must be safeguarded without infringing on the right and necessity of national dependence on the God who is our hope.” Public prayer was important, Culbertson argued; it should simply not be composed by the government.<sup>224</sup>

Because the Regent's prayer was government-composed, the Southern Baptist Convention praised *Engel* as a victory for religious liberty. In its own statement, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) noted that “the prayer in question was ruled unconstitutional because it was written and sanctioned by an official government body” and suggested that the Court had intentionally limited its decision so as not to strike down school prayer entirely. Carl McIntire, New Jersey fundamentalist and founder of the American Council of Churches objected to the ecumenicalism of the Regent’s prayer. “Prayer itself without the name of Jesus Christ was not a non-denominational prayer,” he wrote after *Engel*. “It was a pagan prayer.” The content of the Regent’s prayer helps explain the hesitancy in such responses to *Engel*. After all, theologically conservative Protestants had long grappled with a liberal mainline ecumenical alliance many felt undermined the gospel and the centrality of salvation, and the Regent’s prayer was the product of this alliance. Their prayer was not, in other words, *their* prayer.<sup>225</sup>

In his July 20th editorial, Henry urged critics of the decision to consider “just where political approval or stipulation of prayer patterns in the public schools might lead.” While public education did not “exist for the exercise of spiritual devotions,” he wrote, the presentation

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<sup>224</sup> William Culbertson, “Editorial: The Supreme Court’s Crucial Choice,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1962), 16.

<sup>225</sup> Editorial, “The Supreme Court's Crucial Choice,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1962). News, “Groups Examine Supreme Court Prayer Decision,” *ibid.* (Sept 1962). Carl McIntire, “Supreme Court on School Prayer,” *Christian Beacon* (13 September 1962), 1, 8.

of “the whole body of truth” was the primary purpose of public education. “The Bible has a proper place in the curriculum,” Henry explained, “not simply as literature but in the dialogue about truth. If God is banished from the lecture periods, and survives only in some nebulous form of corporate prayer, then the inference is not remote that the notion of deity, while emotionally significant, is intellectually dispensable.”<sup>226</sup>

During the 1950s, Henry had been part of a loose collection of theologians and pastors who wrote with increasing concern about the secular nature of the curriculum in the nation’s public schools. These evangelical intellectuals worried that a secular curriculum that left out religious perspectives entirely communicated to children that religion was not relevant to their lives. Furthermore, they contended that in the absence of religion, public education was built upon a philosophy of naturalism, the idea that nothing existed beyond the physical. While many Americans viewed *Engel* as a blow to the role of religion in the public schools, Henry had long believed that opening devotionals only masked the profound secularization of the public schools that had already taken place.

Still, Henry did express some concern. “The nation’s highest judiciary must yet rule on important cases originating in Maryland and Pennsylvania,” he wrote, referring to *Abington v. Schempp*, a combination of two cases the Supreme Court would hear the following year. These cases dealt with reciting Lord’s Prayer and reading verses from the Bible as a form of morning devotionals in the public schools, and not with a government-scripted prayer. “Most imperative will be an enunciation by the Supreme Court of guiding principles that will prevent both anti-religious government and sectarian government,” Henry told his readers. “If the Supreme Court is unable to draw a consistent line between the wholly godless state and a state religion, then the

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<sup>226</sup> Henry, “Supreme Court Prayer Ban.”

nation needs a new team of umpires.” Henry was worried, in other words, that the Supreme Court might move from striking down a government-composed prayer to barring any expression or teaching of religion from the public schools completely.<sup>227</sup>

A *Christianity Today* news report published on August 3, 1962, described the reaction to *Engel*: “Evangelical opinions were mixed, their main agreement lying in expressed fear that the ruling indicates a trend toward secularization in society,” the report read. “Some were gratified that a blow had been struck at a least-common-denominator type of religion,” it continued. “As the days passed, however, support grew for the view that the position on church-state separation implicit in the Supreme Court action was—as *Christianity Today* had editorialized (July 20, 1962)—both defensible and commendable.” The report did raise a concern: “But would the ruling be improperly exploited by irreligious secularists? What would the Supreme Court say about Bible reading and recitation of the Lord’s Prayer in public schools?” Their eyes were already trained on *Schempp*, quickly working its way to the Supreme Court.<sup>228</sup>

### **It Turns on a Paragraph**

In the history of religion in public education, Bible reading looms far larger than teacher-led prayer. In the 1920s, fundamentalists lamented the decline of Bible reading in the public schools with little, if any, mention of prayer. Bible reading provided a means for exposing children to Christianity without navigating the denominational issues implicated in prayer; the practice was popular in the nation’s earliest public schools for this reason. During the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists frequently praised Bible reading as a way to expose unchurched children not only to good moral lessons, as other Protestants hoped, but also to the gospel. Bible reading avoided the church-state issues involved in state-written prayers like that addressed in *Engel*. If

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<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> “Repercussions of Supreme Court Prayer Ruling,” *Christianity Today* (August 3, 1962), 25.

the state was not involved in composing the religious material used, were public school devotionals still unconstitutional? This was the question before the Supreme Court in *Schempp*.

In 1949, as the Cold War began to heat up, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a law mandating that every public school day begin with the reading of ten Bible verses. In 1956, sixteen-year-old Ellory Schempp objected to this practice in his Philadelphia school based on his Unitarian beliefs and understanding of the Constitution, and wrote to the ACLU for help. The ACLU, impressed by the young man and looking for a case that would allow them to challenge Bible reading in the public schools, took the case. In 1960, Madelyn Murray, an atheist, filed suit against the required Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer that had been in place in Baltimore's public schools since 1905. The two cases—*Abington v. Schempp* and *Murray v. Curlett*—were consolidated and heard together when they reached the Supreme Court in 1963.<sup>229</sup>

Lawyers representing Schempp and Murray argued that Bible reading and prayer in the public schools amounted to a violation of the Establishment Clause, and that these practices were compulsory in the coercive pressure they placed on children. Edward Schempp expressed concern that his children's peers would view them as "oddballs" if they asked to be excused from religious exercises, and Murray's lawyer argued that facing the disapproval of teachers "will equal compulsion in many cases." Lawyers for the school districts argued that "the neutrality to religion required by the first Amendment means that the government cannot be forced by the religious or by the nonreligious to add to or subtract from the traditional and voluntary religious leaven that has always existed in our public life" and that "whether child or adult, atheist or agnostic, Buddhist or Jew, there is an almost indefinable quality of inspirational appeal inherent in these words [the Lord's Prayer and the Bible] which captures the spirit and imagination."

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<sup>229</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 163-177.

Allowing students to be excused from the exercises upon request, they argued, was sufficient to pass constitutional muster.<sup>230</sup>

On June 17, 1963, the Supreme Court ruled 8-1 in favor of *Schempp* and Murray. Justice Ramsey Clark, writing for the majority, dismissed the idea that the Bible was anything other than an “instrument of religion” and rejected the claim that excusing dissenting children was adequate to prevent an establishment of religion. “The fact that some pupils, or, theoretically, all pupils, might be excused from attendance at the exercises does not mitigate the obligatory nature of the ceremony,” Clark insisted.<sup>231</sup>

While *Schempp* was more wide-ranging, affecting all school devotions where *Engel* had only addressed state-composed prayers, public reaction to the decision was less acrimonious. For one thing, the decision was not sudden or unexpected. After *Engel*, many mainline denominations expected the Supreme Court to rule in favor of the petitioners in *Schempp*, and, after oral arguments took place for the case in February, made plans to accept the expected ruling. *Schempp* did rekindle some of the outrage that had followed *Engel*, and the decision renewed efforts to pass the school prayer amendments that had been introduced into Congress following *Engel*. Overall, however, public reaction was more muted. In some cases, this may have been because people did not believe the decision would impact their communities and their children. After *Engel*, many school districts, particularly in the South, went on opening the school day with prayer. At a time when state and local authorities resisted other Supreme Court

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<sup>230</sup> On “oddballs,” see Brief for Appellees, Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1962, No. 142. On “compulsion,” see Petitioners’ Brief, Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1962, No. 119. On “neutrality,” see Brief for Appellants, Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1962, No. 142. For “inspirational,” see Brief of Respondents, Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1962, No. 119

<sup>231</sup> *School Dist. Of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

rulings about schooling with relative impunity, some may have believed (often correctly) that the decisions were not relevant to their daily lives.<sup>232</sup>

While public reaction to *Schempp* was more muted than public reaction to *Engel*, the reaction among evangelical and fundamentalist leaders moved in the opposite direction. This shift from a positive response to *Engel* to a negative response to *Schempp* can be seen in Carl McIntire's complete change in position: While he spoke against attempts to amend the Constitution in the wake of *Engel*, after *Schempp* he testified before the United States Judiciary Committee in support of an amendment to restore school prayer.<sup>233</sup> "We did not take issue with the Court in their outlawing a prescribed prayer," wrote the editor of the *Baptist Bulletin*. "[W]e do take issue with them in doing away with it altogether."<sup>234</sup> Like McIntire, Culbertson praised *Engel* but wrote strongly against *Schempp*. "We are removing our nation's major deterrent to lawlessness and immorality in a day when national leaders are already shaking their heads over the highest juvenile delinquency rate in history," he warned in *Moody Monthly* editorial. "No nation can turn its back on God without tragic consequences."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 163-86. Laats, "Our Schools, Our Country." On mainline denominations preparing, see "Religion in the Schools: A Divisive Issue for the National Council," *Christianity Today* (July 5, 1963), 27-28. On the decision being expected, see "Court Weighs Religious Exercises," *ibid.* (March 15, 1963), 30-31. The extent to which states and districts followed or flouted the *Schempp* decision varied. See "The Schoolyard Becomes a Battleground," *ibid.* (Sept. 13, 1963), 29; and "Compliance, Defiance, and Confusion," *ibid.* (Oct. 11, 1963).

<sup>233</sup> Laats, "Our Schools, Our Country," 5.

<sup>234</sup> Wayne Ratzlaff, "Carl McIntire, the American Council of Christian Churches, and the Politics of Protestant Fundamentalism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2014), p. 227.

<sup>235</sup> "Editorials: Is the Supreme Court Right?" *Moody Monthly* (July/Aug. 1963), 16.

On July 5, 1963, *Christianity Today* published an editorial and a news article supportive of *Schempp*.<sup>236</sup> Both pointed to a specific aspect of the decision: “[I]t might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization,” Clark had written in the Court’s majority opinion. “It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.” To Henry, the influential editor of *Christianity Today*, *Schempp*’s direct affirmation of the importance of studying religion in schools as part of the curriculum looked more like an opening than a setback.<sup>237</sup>

In the weeks and months following the *Schempp* decision, a variety of articles in *Christianity Today* touched on how *Schempp* might be used to bring religious perspectives into the public school curriculum. A news item declared that “one immediate development will be the exploration of the larger scope the majority opinion allows to religion as content matter in the public school curriculum.” After addressing how this might be done, the piece concluded that “ideally the religious element would be injected throughout the curriculum wherever it is relevant.” In an editorial, Henry stated that “the ruling allows a role for the Bible and its religious teaching in the instructional program” and that “America's devout masses must now insist that the Bible and our Christian convictions be reflected accurately in the instructional program of our public schools.” In an additional editorial later in the summer, Henry wrote that religion

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<sup>236</sup> William G. Reitter, “Bible Reading in the Public Schools,” *Christianity Today*, March 1, 1963, 42-43. “The Meaning of the Supreme Court Decision,” *ibid.*, July 5, 1963, 29-30; “Compulsory Devotions Banned: Bible Retains Classroom Value,” *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>237</sup> “The Meaning of the Supreme Court Decision”; “Compulsory Devotions Banned.” *Abington v. Schempp*.

should be “a requisite component of the educational curriculum” and addressed the role the Christian teacher could play in bringing this about. In an article in the same issue, Joseph M. Hopkins, associate professor at Westminster College in Pennsylvania, discussed expanding released-time religious education programs but concluded that the best solution was to “let public schools add religion to the three R's and integrate religious education classes into their curriculum.”<sup>238</sup>

*Schempp* had cleared the way for religion to be added into the school curriculum as an academic study, Henry, Hopkins, and others at *Christianity Today* urged. It was up to them to work to implement it. Their goal was not the restoration of religious devotions but rethinking the curriculum entirely.<sup>239</sup>

Hopkins suggested allowing public school teachers to “relate belief in God to their subject matter” and argued that “religious material could be incorporated into such courses as history, literature, art, and music, so long as the common-denominator principle were carefully followed to avoid sectarian indoctrination.” He also advised teaching students about religious holidays: “Christians should not object to their children’s learning about Purim or Hanukkah if such teaching were to involve no indoctrination; many Jews have indicated a similar attitude toward Christmas and Easter,” he wrote. “In this plan, teaching *about* religion could be handled by the schools and teaching the *content* of religious faith reserved for teachers supplied by the churches,” through released-time programs or religious education classes.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> “The Meaning of the Supreme Court Decision”; “Compulsory Devotions Banned”; “Religion in the Public Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Aug. 30, 1963, pp. 30-31. Joseph M. Hopkins, “The Fourth ‘R’,” *ibid.*, Aug. 30, 1963, pp. 11-13.

<sup>239</sup> See Sarah Imhoff, “The Creation Story, or How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love *Schempp*,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (June 2016), 466-97.

<sup>240</sup> Hopkins, “The Fourth ‘R’.”

Hopkins' embrace of teaching children about other religions shows the inroads ecumenicalism had made even within evangelicalism, as well as the extent to which these individuals had come to view secularism as a threat. By recognizing religious perspectives in the curriculum—including those of other religions—Hopkins argued that schools would acknowledge to students that religion played an important part in people's lives and in society. Providing instruction about multiple religions was a far cry from presenting children with the gospel, but for individuals like Hopkins, the idea was better than a secular curriculum that left out religion entirely. "The showdown between the religious and the secular state is upon us," Hopkins wrote, drawing on the specter of Krushev's Russia.<sup>241</sup>

### **Has the Child Been Cut in Half?**

"To prevent the Supreme Court action from encouraging godlessness in education, America's devout masses must act at the community level," Henry wrote in a lengthy *Christianity Today* editorial in late summer, 1963. "They must insist that the instructional program of their public schools accurately reflect the teaching of the Bible and the significance of our historic Christian convictions." Henry brought up released-time education proposals only to reject them. "The truth of religion is not marginal but integral to academic concerns; the requirement of wholeness demands its inclusion as a requisite component of the educational curriculum, therefore, rather than an extracurricular adjunct." Henry also turned attention back to the home and the family. "Those who depended primarily upon the public schools to furnish the Christian ingredient for welding the elements of our American way of life certainly relied on the wrong source of supply," he wrote. He worried that the attention being placed on devotional

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<sup>241</sup> Hopkins, "The Fourth 'R'." Adam Laats argues that *Schempp* was a turning point for evangelicals, who had "long seen public schools as an institutional embodiment of their influence in American society." Laats, "Our Countries, Our Schools."

exercises in the public schools detracted from other things. “Needed in American education is not a return to the little red schoolhouse, but rather the return of the godly public school teacher,” he wrote. “Next to the local minister, the godly public schools teacher can be a leading force for both truth and righteousness at every American crossroads.”<sup>242</sup>

In an article published in the *Moody Monthly* in September, 1963, Joe Bayly, an evangelical publishing executive in Havertown, Pennsylvania, and regular columnist at *Eternity Magazine*, raised the specter of juvenile delinquency, writing with concern of “the continuing increase in cheating and resistance to authority within the schools, in pregnancies among unmarried girls and in juvenile delinquency.” Bayly worried that when confronted by “the vacuum created by removing religion from the public schools,” American educational philosophy had “responded by emphasizing democracy as a spiritual force.” This was not a sufficient foundation. Bayly offered a list of solutions: voluntary religious exercises in public schools; court challenges; the family altar; and Christian schools. “Perhaps our Bible societies and colportage agencies should embark upon a massive attempt to get every American home to read the Bible and pray daily,” he suggested.<sup>243</sup>

Others worried about the shrinking amount of time children had for the family and church, given the expanding role of the public school. Referencing concerns about pluralism, public schools not being churches, a disinclination toward societies “where religious doctrines are crammed into the minds of those who attend government schools,” and the potential for religious exercises to become “a mere routine with little vitality of religious devotion,” John M.

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<sup>242</sup> “Religion in the Public Schools.”

<sup>243</sup> Joe Bayly, “Taking the Bible from the Schools,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1963), 20-23, 84-85. *Eternity Magazine* was founded by Donald Barnhouse in 1931. Barnhouse was a Presbyterian minister and radio preacher located in Philadelphia. In 1949, Barnhouse founded Evangelical Ministries, which would later become the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

Stuart, a minister in Oak Park, Illinois, wrote in an article *Christianity Today* that “[t]here would be no disagreement on the part of a large segment of the Church on the arguments given for omitting Bible reading and prayer in the public school.” But Stuart, nonetheless, was concerned. “Today the family is not the center of life as it was in ancient times,” he wrote, warning that children’s time was being “devoured by the community and public school life.” Children no longer had the time for family or church that they had once had. “As a parent, give me my child back so that I can teach him in the manner of the Old Testament family,” he wrote.<sup>244</sup>

Stuart recommended that families set aside time for religious instruction in the home. This alone was not enough, to solve the problem of expanding presence of the public school in children’s lives, he wrote. “Who would plead on behalf of the parent and the church in the high courts of our land that even one hour of one day be given over to the home when it would be unlawful for the school to schedule events and activities?” he asked. While public school activities were voluntary, Stuart wrote, “[t]he higher authorities have already stated . . . that although pupils may abstain from the religious exercises, there is a tendency to put pressure on those who do not participate. The same argument certainly could be given for after-school extracurricular activities.” Stuart quoted from Justice Potter Stewart’s dissenting opinion in *Schempp* to buttress his position: “[A] compulsory state educational system so structures a child’s life,” Stewart wrote, “that if religious exercises are held to be an unpermissible activity in schools, religion is placed at an artificial and state-created disadvantage.”<sup>245</sup>

“It seems that the church,” Stuart wrote, “has allowed the child to be cut in half, or, more likely, that the church and the home will have only a fifth of the child.” By the early 1960s,

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<sup>244</sup> John M. Stuart, “Give Me Back My Child!” *Christianity Today* (Aug. 30, 1963), 9-10.

<sup>245</sup> Stuart, “Give Me Back My Child!” *School Dist. of Abington Tp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963) (Stewart, P., dissenting).

public schools had indeed greatly expanded their role in children's lives. School terms had lengthened and the age of compulsory attendance had increased. Schools brought children together in one place, spurred the growth of youth culture, and contributed to the birth of the "teenager." A century before, school terms had run for only a few months, and most children had only attended a few sessions; now, nearly all children ages 6 to 17 attended school for nine months of the year, often participating in a range of school-based extracurricular activities after school. The school, rather than the church, became the central institution around which children's lives were organized.<sup>246</sup> Bayly warned readers of "the apparent obsession of many professional educators with gaining complete control over the minds and lives of children." He told the story of a 1944 gathering that involved John Dewey and other professional educators. "What shall we do when the church people in America awaken to the fact that we are not neutral in the area of religion, but are attempting to replace the local church with the school as the center of community life?" queried one of Dewey's colleagues, in Bayly's telling.<sup>247</sup>

"When the Supreme Court gives its decision, the Church's task will only have begun," Henry warned in anticipation of *Schempp*. "The burden of the Christian community will be heavier, not lighter, than before." Hopkins, the Westminster College professor, touched on these themes when he described families he had encountered, during his tenure as minister, who wanted to have their children baptized and were nominal members of the church, but who never attended. "Let the church and the home teach religion, say advocates of the secular state," Hopkins wrote. "But what are the odds that parents reared in a religiously emasculated culture

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<sup>246</sup> Stuart, "Give Me Back My Child!"

<sup>247</sup> "Religion in the Public Schools." Bayly, "Taking the Bible from the Schools."

will devote themselves to this task?” The job of the home and church was greater, but Hopkins worried that both stood less equipped to meet that task than ever before.<sup>248</sup>

The response to *Schempp* also highlighted shifting perceptions of the nature of secular public education. “In a very real sense . . . public schools are already teaching religion in the classrooms,” Henry wrote. “Every complex of ideas has its hidden absolutes, and the public schoolroom may easily become a haven for invisible false gods,” he continued. “The fact that absolutes are not stated overtly but are conveyed secretly and without articulation indicates how subtly the adversaries of our inherited religion can promote their preferred alternatives.”<sup>249</sup>

### **To Amend or Not to Amend**

Frank Becker, a Catholic politician who represented Long Island’s Nassau County in Congress, lambasted *Engel* as “the most tragic decision in the history of the United States” and introduced a proposed Constitutional amendment into Congress. “Nothing in this Constitution shall be deemed to prohibit the offering, reading from, or listening to prayers or Biblical scriptures, if participation therein is on a voluntary basis, in any government or public school, institution or place,” read Section I of Becker’s amendment. While it was only one of 150 amendments introduced into Congress in the aftermath of *Engel* and *Schempp*, the Becker Amendment dominated the conversation when the House Judiciary Committee at last held a series of hearings on the proposals, beginning on April 22, 1964, after the Court’s ruling in *Schempp*. While 77% of the public supported the Becker Amendment, the hearing convened in April ultimately turned against Becker’s proposal.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> “Bible and Prayer Ruling a Signal to the Churches,” *Christianity Today* (June 21, 1963), 27. Hopkins, “The Fourth ‘R’.”

<sup>249</sup> “Religion in the Public Schools.”

<sup>250</sup> Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 147, 181.

Henry opposed the Becker Amendment in a 1964 *Christianity Today* editorial. “[B]y removing present limitations upon state-prescribed religious exercises, Section I is dangerous,” Henry wrote of the Becker Amendment. “There is nothing to prevent such practices as the devotional reading of the Bible and the Book of Mormon ... or the recitation of the ‘Hail Mary’,” he warned. The amendment, he concluded, “does not merit support.” Indeed, Henry added, “nothing in the present debate has changed our position respecting the unconstitutionality of state-prescribed devotions in public schools.”<sup>251</sup>

Fundamentalist Carl McIntire testified in support of the Becker Amendment. Even he, however, had qualms. McIntire urged lawmakers to edit the amendment’s language to prohibit state or local bodies from composing prayers or selecting which Bible passages would be used. “I find myself in agreement with the main point of the Court’s decision in the New York Regent’s case,” he told Congress. McIntire urged the lawmakers gathered at the hearing to undo *Schempp* but not *Engel*, and proposed adding the phrase “provided such prayers are not prepared by a State or any state Agency” to Section I of the amendment.<sup>252</sup> McIntire’s testimony surprised many of those present. “Here was the nation’s leading fundamentalist disagreeing with key provisions of the amendment,” writes Steven Green, professor of law at Willamette University. McIntire, says Green, “had raised a concern shared by many evangelicals: how to ensure voluntary and orderly religious exercises without the school administration becoming excessively involved in the direction and composition of the exercises.”<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Editorial, “What About the Becker Amendment,” *Christianity Today*, June 19, 1964, 20-22.

<sup>252</sup> Hearings on School Prayers before the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, 88th Cong., 2d Sess. (1964), 1513-19.

<sup>253</sup> Steven K. Green, “Evangelicals and the Becker Amendment: A Lesson In Church-State Moderation,” *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 541-567, esp. 561-63.

The Becker Amendment hearings were filled with testimony from individuals even more critical of the amendment, including both legal experts and religious leaders from mainline and conservative denominations. The leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention denounced any attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to restore school prayer as an infringement on the separation of church and state—and as a Trojan horse for public funding for Catholic parochial schools.<sup>254</sup> Seeing so many religious leaders object to the amendment, public opinion began to turn. The Becker Amendment was ultimately unable to reach the required two-thirds vote threshold in Congress. Henry worried that *Engel* and *Schempp* had been profoundly misunderstood. In a June 1964 editorial, he wrote that while the Court ruled “that no state agency has any business setting official forms of worship,” it did not “banish God from the schools.”<sup>255</sup>

Senate Minority Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen introduced a second proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1966. Dirksen’s amendment read: “Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the authority administering any school ... supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary participation by students or others in prayer.” In a nod to concerns raised by McIntire and others, the Dirksen Amendment stipulated that “nothing contained in this article shall authorize any such authority to describe the form or content of any prayer.” This time, the focus was solidly on *voluntary*, and not state proscribed, prayer.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> “The Debate on Devotions,” *Christianity Today* (May 22, 1964), 38-39. Laats, “Our Schools, Our Country.” Dierenfield, *Battle over School Prayer*, 182. Gallup found that 77% of Americans supported the Becker amendment. “In U.S., Support for Daily Prayer in Schools Dips Slightly,” *Gallup*, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/177401/support-daily-prayer-schools-dips-slightly.aspx>.

<sup>255</sup> Editorial, “What About the Becker Amendment?” Hearings before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 89th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1966), 1.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

In a 1967 *Moody Monthly* article, James V. Panoch, the executive secretary of the Religious Instruction Association, informed readers that the Dirkson amendment would do nothing but restate what the Supreme Court had already said. “The vociferous public reaction” to *Engel* and *Schempp* had “confused” both children and adults about what was permissible in the public schools and what was not, Panoch wrote. “[A]ny citizen who has taken the trouble to read the Supreme Court decisions on prayer in the public schools closely . . . may well wonder what all the fuss is about,” he went on. He told a story about a boy who left his classroom during a test to pray in a bathroom because he falsely believed he was not allowed to engage in silent prayer in his classroom. This confusion worried him. The Supreme Court had not barred all prayer in public schools, he wrote, only official prayer. Panoch urged readers to focus their energies on working within the confines of the Court’s decisions.<sup>257</sup>

### **No Simple Solutions**

In his 1964 editorial on the Becker Amendment, Henry called on parents to push for courses on the Bible as literature and history, working within the confines of what *Engel* and *Schempp* already allowed. He condemned “simplistic solutions, based upon emotional responses to partial knowledge.” A school prayer amendment would not solve the underlying challenges facing children’s religious education. Indeed, Henry warned, “the steady undertow of secular naturalism that is manifest in much educational philosophy and practice”—the term “secular naturalism” denoted a denial of the supernatural realm and an assumption that the natural world is all that exists—“may well violate the neutrality concept upon which the ruling in *Schempp* was in good part based.” Henry argued that public schools denied the supernatural as a matter of

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<sup>257</sup> James V. Panoch, “The Feud over School Prayer,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1967). See also, Ronald C. Doll, “Prayer, the Bible, and the Schools,” *ibid.* (May 8, 1964), 13-15.

course, and that this “secular naturalism” was a violation of parents’ right “to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”<sup>258</sup>

Henry’s framework, with its focus on the assumptions underlying education, reflected the influence of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) upon evangelicalism since the 1940s. “That atheism has taken over the schools is ... apparent in every subject which is taught—especially those subjects which are to be found under the natural sciences,” wrote Hank Herman in an article in *The Standard Bearer*, a Dutch Calvinist publication, in November, 1966. “A few prayers introduced into the schools are not going to change ... this.” This same contention was at the root of Henry’s approach toward attempts to restore school prayer.<sup>259</sup>

In an article published in the *Moody Monthly* in August 1963, evangelical publishing executive Joe Bayly wrote that Christian school enrollment was growing because an increasing number of parents saw “the importance of educating their children on the basis of biblical, Christian presuppositions, rather than the officially secular presuppositions of the public schools.” Theologians credit Dutch Calvinist philosopher Cornelius Van Til, who was born in the Netherlands in 1895 and emigrated at age ten, with developing the doctrine that beliefs are built on underlying “presuppositions” rather than on a shared base of agreed-upon facts. Van Til taught at Westminster Theological Seminary; Bayly may have been exposed to his ideas while attending Faith Theological Seminary, an offshoot of that school.<sup>260</sup> Bayly quoted Van Til, writing that the public schools exclude any material or practice that “seriously pretends to offer a Christian life-and-worldview that competes with the philosophy presupposed by the curriculum.” The philosophy presupposed by the public schools, Bayly explained, was that “man shall live by

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<sup>258</sup> Editorial, “What About the Becker Amendment?”

<sup>259</sup> Hank Herman, “Death of the Prayer Amendment,” *The Standard Bearer*, No. 43 Vol. 3 (November 1, 1966).

<sup>260</sup> “Religion in the Public Schools.” Bayly, “Taking the Bible from the Schools.”

bread alone.” This phrase is a reference to Matthew 4:4. ““Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,”” the passage reads. A philosophy that holds that “man shall live by bread alone” is one that excludes the words of God.<sup>261</sup>

Yet Bayly was not against public schools in theory. He praised the “evangelical conviction” that undergirded religion in the nation’s earliest public schools. There is some irony to the pairing of such praise with quotes from Van Til. The CRC, Van Til’s denomination, began establishing Christian schools in the late nineteenth century in part out of a concern about the very “evangelical conviction” Bayly references. The CRC emphasized church authority and historic creeds while American evangelicalism was revivalist and individualistic. Comprised of Dutch Calvinist immigrants, the CRC saw the pan-denominational evangelicalism present in the public schools as both sterile and a threat to their way of life. In the late nineteenth century, the Dutch Calvinists of the CRC sent their children to private Christian schools; evangelicals spent those same years as staunch supporters of the public schools.<sup>262</sup>

In his 1964 editorial, Henry reiterated his support for public education: “The Supreme Court decisions and the debate on the Becker amendment are a summons to responsible evangelical interest in and support of public schools, which remain a bulwark of democracy.” In contrast to Henry’s reaffirmation of the importance of public education, Herman wrote in his article in the Dutch Calvinist *Standard Bearer* that “we ought not to be asking the question of whether or not prayer should be permitted in the public schools; we ought rather to be asking the question whether the state has any business at all in the work of education when responsibility is parental.” In contrast, evangelicals’ disagreement with the public schools was situational, not foundational. Henry supported the idea of public education; he simply worried about the form

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<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> Bayly, “Taking the Bible from the Schools.”

public education had come to take. It was in this context that he allowed for the creation of Christian day schools. “What is needed is a renewal of educational commitment in home, church, and Christian elementary and secondary schools,” Henry concluded his editorial.<sup>263</sup>

### **Could It Be Desegregation?**

In 1947, Mark Fakkema left the CRC’s National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS) to found the National Association of Christian Schools (NACS) under the umbrella of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). This action marked the dawn of the Christian day school movement. While fundamentalists and evangelicals had long created their own colleges and Bible institutes, their foray into Christian elementary and secondary schools was new, and growth was initially slow. In 1959, the NACS had 170 member schools; by 1964, that number had grown to 215. By the 1980s, in marked contrast, estimates of the number of Christian day schools in the U.S. would range from 5,000 to 18,000.<sup>264</sup>

*Engel* and *Schempp* generated increased conversation about the nature of education. Many pastors and theologians, including Henry, pointed to Christian day schools as a possible direction, particularly should calls for the inclusion of religious perspectives in the public school curriculum fail. Duke K. McCall, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, argued that while the Supreme Court left room for “teaching about religion as one of the phenomenon of life,” if the public schools were “officially delivered to a secular,

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<sup>263</sup> Editorial, “What About the Becker Amendment.” Herman, “Death of the Prayer Amendment.”

<sup>264</sup> Violet Trato Pearson, “The Plus in Christian Schools,” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1959), 21-22; John F. Blanchard Jr., “Yes, You Can Have a Christian School!” *Moody Monthly* (May 1964), 34-35, 55. For estimates from the 1980s, see William J. Reese, “Soldiers for Christ in the Army of God: The Christian School Movement in America,” *Educational Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Spring 1985), 175; and Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter-Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 250.

godless philosophy” he would “have to abandon support of them and advocate a Baptist parochial-school system.” Some did just that.<sup>265</sup>

In 1967, *Christianity Today* published an article by Henry A. Buchanan, a chaplain at Central Baptist Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, and Bob W. Brown, the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, also in Lexington. Both were outspoken in their support for Christian day schools. Buchanan and Brown described the growth of Christian day schools as “the most exciting development in education today.” Estimating that 225 new Protestant schools were being founded each year, Buchanan and Brown profiled several examples. “Three years ago the Curtis Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia, concerned over removal of prayer and Bible reading from the public schools, opened its own school and now has over 400 pupils,” they informed readers. Lakeview Baptist School in San Antonio Texas opened, they wrote, in order to provide children with “a strong academic education in a controlled moral atmosphere where God and the Bible were honored by teachers and the curriculum.” Buchanan and Brown were upbeat and positive.<sup>266</sup>

Not everyone was so sanguine, however. Numerous subscribers wrote critical letters to the editor of *Christianity Today*, questioning the motives of those creating Christian schools. Buchanan and Brown’s article, however, was not the first time *Christianity Today* had run glowing descriptions of Christian day schools. Brook Walker’s 1959 article, “The Case for

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<sup>265</sup> Henry A. Buchanan and Bob W. Brown, “Will Protestant Church Schools Become a Third Force?” *Christianity Today*, May 12, 1967.

<sup>266</sup> Buchanan and Brown wrote that “Protestant reaction to the Supreme Court decisions on prayer and Bible reading in the public schools has been sharply divided.” Buchanan and Brown, “Will Protestant Church Schools Become a Third Force?”

Christian Day Schools,” did not generate the controversy Buchanan and Brown’s did. It was the context that had changed.<sup>267</sup>

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that state laws that created racially segregated public schools were unconstitutional. In a case the year later, the Court ordered that public schools be desegregated “with all deliberate speed.” In many states, progress was slow. Nine African American students integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Three years later, Ruby Bridges was the first African American child to attend a white elementary school in New Orleans. Some states, particularly in the South, embarked on a path of massive resistance. When faced with a federal order to desegregate in 1959, Prince Edward County, Virginia, shuttered its public schools rather than integrate. The schools did not reopen until 1964. Many states, particularly in the South, found ways to shift public money or resources to new all-white “segregationist academies.” Even when school districts did make moves to desegregate, the result was often token integration in an overall segregated system. Much of the South did not desegregate until the late 1960s, around the time of Buchanan and Brown’s 1967 article promoting Christian schools in *Christianity Today*.<sup>268</sup>

“As I read [Buchanan and Brown’s] article, one question kept nagging me,” wrote L. Carroll Yingling, Jr., of Baltimore, Maryland, in her letter to the editor. “Could one of the subtleties underlying this movement be another attempt on the part of white Protestants to avoid confrontation with the reality and necessity of racial inclusiveness in the public schools?” She was not alone in asking this question. William H. Anderson, Jr., of Richmond, Virginia, wondered “what would happen to many of these private schools if a Negro child, qualified and

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<sup>267</sup> Brooke Walker, “The Case for Christian Day Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Aug. 31, 1959, 11-12.

<sup>268</sup> Peter Irons, *Jim Crow’s Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

money in hand, showed up asking for the blessing of a Christian education.” Perhaps anticipating these reactions, John F. Blanchard, Jr., the executive director of the National Association of Christian Schools, wrote his own letter to the editor, expressing concern that “three-fourths of the quotations used [in the article] are made by Christian school men in the deep South” while “[t]he growth of Christian schools is a national phenomenon, not just a regional reaction.” Both reactions had merit.<sup>269</sup>

Some Christian day schools *were* segregationist academies. Jerry Falwell, a fundamentalist pastor in Lynchburg, Virginia, founded Lynchburg Christian Academy in 1967, the same year local desegregation orders went into effect, and initially limited enrollment to white students. In Mississippi, local churches offered their facilities for segregationist academies and, in some cases, played an organizing role in the creation of these schools. In the South, pastors frequently warned that integrated schools would lead to interracial marriage, a practice they argued was condemned in the Bible. In fact, when writers in the *King's Business* and the *Moody Monthly*, based in Los Angeles and Chicago, offered cautious support for desegregation, they preemptively assured readers that desegregation would not mean interracial marriage.<sup>270</sup>

While opposition to desegregation put wind in the sails of the Christian school movement, not every Christian day school was a segregationist academy. In his 1980 article, Bayly shared a story from when his children were attending a Christian school in Philadelphia in the early 1950s. “I recall a board meeting several years after the school’s founding where there appeared on the agenda an item concerning the application by black parents for the admission of

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<sup>269</sup> Letters to the editor, *Christianity Today*, June 9, 1967, pp. 15-16.

<sup>270</sup> Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 250. George R. Horner, “A Christian View of Race,” *Moody Monthly* (Aug. 1946), 734-35, 778; and Robert James St. Clair, “Segregation: Spiritual Frontier,” *King's Business* (Nov. 1957), 13-15. See also Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2010), 47.

their child,” he wrote. “The vote, when it came, was to admit any child, regardless of race, whose parents were convinced of the need for a Christ-centered education for their children.”<sup>271</sup> While a school could be both Christian school and segregationist academy, there were often distinct differences. Christian schools sought to include religious belief and practice in both curriculum and school day; segregationist academies tended to simply copy public schools in form and content. In his study of conservatism in Mississippi, historian Joseph Crespino writes of two distinct “waves” of private schools in the state: the first, established in the 1960s, were predominantly segregationist academies; the second, founded during the 1970s, were created on “the Christian school model” with distinctive organization and curriculum.<sup>272</sup>

#### **“Should churches buy into the education business?”**

Even outside of race, support for Christian schools varied. Some individuals expressed concern about the quality of newly founded Christian schools, which were frequently erected hastily, often in school basements. “It bothered me to see Christian grade and high schools without libraries, gymnasiums, cafeterias, science labs, and so on,” wrote Dick Crist in a letter published in *Christianity Today* in September, 1964, referencing his graduate study in Christian education. “All too often we see Christian schools sacrifice quality education for mere doctrinal training.” Crist encouraged Christian schools to hold themselves to high standards, with state certified administrators and teachers and adequate equipment.<sup>273</sup>

After readers’ strong criticism of Buchanan and Brown’s upbeat 1967 article about Christian schools, *Christianity Today* entered a period of relative silence on Christian schools. When the subject did come up, writers were often wary. “Should Churches Buy into the

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<sup>271</sup> Joseph Bayly, “Why I’m for Christian Schools,” *Christianity Today*, January 25, 1980, 24-27

<sup>272</sup> Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 248-250.

<sup>273</sup> Reese, “Soldiers for Christ in the Army of God,” 185. Letter to the Editor, Dick Crist, “Christian School and the Bagel,” *Christianity Today* (Sept. 11, 1964), 18.

Education Business?” asked William H. Willimon, professor at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, in a 1978 article. Willimon drew a direct line between the growth of Christian schools and school desegregation, excoriating the magazine for publishing Buchanan and Brown’s article without any mention of race. “As one now drives across the country and sees so-called Christian schools and academies springing up in church recreation halls, abandoned restaurants, and prefabricated housing, one can’t help but wonder if more than a desire for Christian education motivates those who are part of this new education phenomenon,” he wrote. “Admittedly, there are Christian schools worthy of the name, and there are shoddy, racist, superpatriotic pretenses unworthy of either the designation of Christian or of school.”<sup>274</sup>

Willimon’s objections to Christian schools went beyond his concerns about race and shoddy school facilities. “To whom do private Christian schools witness?” he asked. “What kind of society will we have if all Christians abandon the public schools?” Willimon called on his fellow Christians to support their local public schools by serving as school board members, teachers, coaches, and volunteers, and to remember that teaching their children to pray was their job and the job of the church, not the job of professional teachers.<sup>275</sup>

Articles published in the *Moody Monthly* were less skeptical of Christian schools. In 1970, the magazine published an interview with John Blanchard, by then the executive director of the National Association of Christian Schools. “A rarity three decades ago, Protestant schools are now being organized at the rate of 225 per year,” declared the article’s introduction.

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<sup>274</sup> William H. Willimon, “Should Churches Buy into the Education Business?” *Christianity Today*, May 5, 1978.

<sup>275</sup> Willimon, “Should Churches Buy into the Education Business?” For similar articles, see also Joyce L. Vedra, “Here’s What We’re Doing,” *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1977), 54-55; John T. Barton, “Teaching the Bible in Public Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 7, 1979, 18-22; “Minister’s Workshop: Parish Support for Public Schools,” *ibid.*, Sept. 7, 1979, 50-51; D. B. Capill, “Are Christian Teachers Different?” *ibid.*, July 5, 1974, 11-13.

Blanchard attributed this growth to “the impact of the Supreme Court decisions on prayer and Bible reading” and “the fact that Christian parents are unhappy about sex education that has no morality.” An accompanying article by Paul Kienel, executive director of the California Association of Christian Schools, informed readers that “many parents will send their children to the Christian school who would not send their children to the Sunday school” and argued that “the Christian teacher’s greatest freedom for evangelism lies in the Christian school, not the public school.”<sup>276</sup>

Other articles offered readers guidance on founding a Christian school. In a 1964 *Moody Monthly* article bearing the title “Yes, You Can Have a Christian School!” Blanchard outlined the steps for founding a Christian school. A decade later, Mildred Morningstar wrote about the Accelerated Christian Education, or ACE, a workbook program that promised to enable churches to found Christians schools without trained teachers. Critics like Crist or Willimon might question the academic rigor of programs that dispensed with science labs and teacher training and replaced classrooms with individual student cubicles, but to parents worried about the environment their children would experience in the local public schools, these schools could appear a welcome alternative.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> James W. Reapsome, “The Christian Day School: Does It Have a Future?” *Moody Monthly* (April 1970), 40-42; Paul Kienel, “Another Case for Christian Day Schools,” *ibid.*, 42. *See also* Mildred Vandenburg, “Today’s Two Worlds: Are Our Christian Schools Really Worth the Difference?” *ibid.* (Sept. 1972), p. 36-37, 77-81; and John F. Blanchard, Jr., “Can We Live with Public Education?” *ibid.* (Oct. 1971), 32-33, 88-91. Blanchard argues that education is “the responsibility of the parents,” not the state, echoing the Dutch Calvinist position.

<sup>277</sup> John F. Blanchard Jr., “Yes, You Can Have a Christian School!” *Moody Monthly* (May 1964); Mildred Morningstar, “What about the New Do-It-Yourself Approach to Christian Schools?” *ibid.* (Jan. 1975), 40-43. *See also* Eunice Dirks, “Christian School Hunting,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1978), p. 46; and Dave Raney, “Public School vs. Christian School: Which Is Right for Your Child?” *ibid.* (Sept. 1978), 44-46.

Twentieth-century American evangelicalism existed in a tension between separatism from the world and engagement with it. Should children be sheltered from the world in Christian schools, or should they witness to other children within the public schools? Should congregations form their own schools, or should they work within the constraints imposed by the Supreme Court to improve the local public schools? Should a Christian school meet the world's academic standards? And—for individuals like Willimon—should evangelicals run the risk of being tarred as segregationists, or should they try to stay ahead of the race issue by rendering vocal support for the newly integrated public schools?

### **More Leisure, Less Home Life**

For many parents, of course, sending a child to a Christian school was simply not an option. “Inasmuch as most of us evangelicals do not have a Christian day school to which to send our children, we are forced to think of means by which the teaching programs of our churches can be augmented and strengthened,” wrote Roland C. Doll, an education professor at City University of New York, in a 1964 *Christianity Today* article on school prayer and Bible reading. “If we were given two to five additional hours each week for Christian education, what would we do?” Doll’s question is reminiscent of the work of Clarence Benson of Moody Bible Institute, both in his suggestion of setting aside more time for religious instruction outside of the school and in his emphasis on qualified teachers, curriculum, and equipment. “With competent teachers, a well-planned curriculum, and helpful materials, a few additional hours a week could profitably be spent in Christ-centered education,” Doll wrote. He criticized churches unwilling to make a serious financial commitment to the religious instruction of their young, and suggested that small congregations could collaborate in creating religious instruction programs.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Doll, “Prayer, the Bible, and the Schools.”

Doll did not point readers to the educational ministry of the church as a mere replacement for lost religious instruction in the public schools. Rather, he did not see the public schools as a place for spiritual observances. “In 1960 Dr. Billy Graham ... asked me how I viewed the public schools as a source of strength for American youth,” Doll wrote, “In good conscience I had to reply pessimistically, because the public schools have functions far removed from the spiritual.” Doll worried that popular condemnation of the *Engel* and *Schempp* decisions spoke to a failure on the part of parents to provide for their children’s spiritual development at home and in church. “America’s major hope at the beginning of the present decade lay in the spiritual impact that church and home could make upon children,” he wrote. “Surely, in the confusing aftermath of the Supreme Court’s rulings ... our hope continues to lie in the same institutions.”<sup>279</sup>

“What is the greatest single educational agency?” Henry asked in 1964 editorial. “And by the same token, where does the greatest responsibility for youth rest? Some may point to the elementary and secondary school (public or private, secular or Christian) or the college and university (state-supported, private, or church-related),” he wrote. “Others may attribute to the informal but all-pervasive molders of human personality—television, radio, stage and screen, newspapers, periodicals, and popular books of the day—the greatest educational influence. Still others will look, perhaps wistfully, to the church. But while all of these are potent educational forces, none of them is the greatest single educational force. This distinction belongs to the home.”<sup>280</sup> Henry worried that the home had been compromised. “The integrity of the American home, using the word ‘integrity’ in its root sense of wholeness, has been breached,” he warned. “The God-fearing family that united parents and children in a common life in the home no longer

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> “The Power of the Home,” *Christianity Today*, May 8, 1964, p. 15. “The Greatest Educational Force,” *ibid.*, August 28, 1964, pp. 28-29.

characterizes the nation.” He continued: “The paradox is that with greater leisure for true home life than ever before, we have less home life than ever before.” Henry urged parents to spend time in Bible reading and prayer with their children. “It is God’s plan for every Christian home to be a church that has an altar with the Bible upon it.”<sup>281</sup>

In 1968, the *Moody Monthly* ran an article on teenage rebellion that featured a drawing of three teens. One teen held a sign reading “Revolt is Growth” while the other two looked in confusion at the opposite page, where a parade of parents held signs with slogans like “Parents Can Take It” and “We Were Rebels Too.” During the late 1960s, many evangelicals and fundamentalists were deeply concerned by rising anti-war protests, changing sexual norms, and the emergence of a hippie counterculture. Not all signs were negative. Beach missions and other outreach programs targeting youth experienced great success, and the counterculture frequently represented a dismissal of materialism in favor of religious seeking. The 1970s also saw the emergence of an evangelical Left. Still, many fundamentalists and evangelicals looked on hippies with dismay, wondering where these young people’s parents had gone so wrong.<sup>282</sup>

In his 1970 book, *Dare to Discipline*, Christian psychiatrist James Dobson gave full voice to concerns about teenage rebellion and student unrest. He quickly sold over a million copies.

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<sup>281</sup> “The Greatest Educational Force,” *Christianity Today*, August 28, 1964, 28-29

<sup>282</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, “What To Do about Teenage Rebellion,” *Moody Monthly* (July-Aug. 1968), 30-31, 46-47, 83. Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven’s Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Concern about youth is evidenced in the large number of articles in directed toward parents. For examples, see Letha Scanzoni, “Must We Fear for Our Children?” *Moody Monthly* (Feb. 1965), 30-34; John M. Drescher, “Now Is the Time to Love,” *ibid.* (Feb. 1968), 33-36; Marlene A. Hess, “Let’s Span the Generation Gap,” *ibid.* (June 1969), 30-31; Ed Dayton, “Raising Your Child in a Shock-Proof World,” *ibid.* (Dec. 1970), 27-28; Charles Blair, “Our Young Americans,” *ibid.* (July-Aug. 1972), 44-45, 47; and Nancy M. Tischler, “Suffer the Little Children,” *Christianity Today*, May 9, 1975, p. 4-5. On teens, see Charles M. Sell, “Start Talking with Your Teens,” *Moody Monthly* (Nov. 1974), 39-41; Elizabeth Skoglund, “What Your Teens Need Most,” *ibid.* (March 1973); and Phil Landrum, “Today’s Teenagers . . . Another Lost Generation?” *ibid.* (June 1965).

Dobson condemned “unstructured permissiveness” and argued that a failure to instill respect for authority in children was the root of everything from anti-war protests to hippies to drug use. Dobson tied problems in the public schools to failure to enforce authority. Teachers, he alleged, had grown wary of mandating students’ obedience and instead worked to win student’s respect through love. “The degree of student control exercised by school authorities has never been so minimal as it is today in America,” he wrote, warning of dress code violations, drugs, and violence. He excoriated campus administrators for allowing students to demonstrate rather than imply banning “revolutionary organizations” like the Students for a Democratic Society and expelling the students involved. “Their motivation is derived from something more basic than the draft, Vietnam, war research, pollution, the voting age, police brutality, campus military recruitment, and so on,” he wrote. “The real motive in campus violence is the electrifying grab for power and publicity.” All of this, Dobson argued, could be traced to schools’ failure to teach students obedience to authority beginning in elementary school.<sup>283</sup>

Dobson promoted early discipline in the home and peppered his book with anecdotes from his counseling experience. “I am not recommending that your home be harsh and oppressive,” he wrote in an excerpt published in the *Moody Monthly*. “I am recommending a simple principle: when you are defiantly challenged, win decisively.” Dobson combined traditional ideas about corporal punishment with his training as a psychiatrist, presenting himself as an expert in family problems. *Dare to Discipline* brought Dobson name recognition and a

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<sup>283</sup> James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970). See also James Dobson, “Dare to Discipline,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1970), 29, 48-50.

following, and in 1977 Dobson founded Focus on the Family, a nonprofit organization that promoted his beliefs about child-rearing and Christian parenting.<sup>284</sup>

### **Contingency and Change**

In 1976, the *Moody Monthly* published an article titled “I’m against Prayer in Schools,” by Harman R. Clark, Jr., an attorney from New Jersey. “The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for believers—only for those who are born again according to His Word,” he wrote. Echoing J. Gresham Machen’s comments four decades earlier, Clark wrote that “to have children repeat [the Lord’s Prayer] without teaching the only way to become a true child of God is to hold out false hope to the unsaved, and to place a stumbling block in the way of the believer’s child by teaching, at least by implication, a form of universalism.” He presented scripture to back up his position, arguing that prayer should not involve “meaningless repetition.” Clark inveighed, too, against replacing prayer with a moment of silence, warning that a moment of silence might become confused with meditation, or be used by a teacher to point to the universal brotherhood of mankind. Like Clarence Benson before him, Clark called on readers to “accept the Court’s ban as a closed door.” Re-instituting school prayer, he argued, “would not solve our national ills, and might lead some parents, and some Christians, to abandon even more parental responsibilities in moral and ethical training.” Clark challenged Christians to provide religious instruction in the home and to step up their emphasis on children’s ministries and Sunday school. “When did you last invite a neighbor’s child to your Sunday School?” he asked, closing his article with a call to “open other doors” to children.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Dobson, *Dare to Discipline*. See also James Dobson, “Dare to Discipline,” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1970), 29, 48-50.

<sup>285</sup> Harman R. Clark Jr., “I’m Against Prayer in Schools,” *Moody Monthly* (Oct. 1976).

How widespread was Clark's outright opposition to school prayer? Not widespread enough to prevent the editors from adding a disclaimer to his article explaining that his position did not necessarily reflect that of the *Moody Monthly*. Still, Clark did not argue that public education should be secular. Like others before him, he called for classes in comparative religion, history of religion, and the Bible as literature, noting that the Court had not barred any of these.<sup>286</sup> Had things been different, *Engel* and *Schempp*, and school prayer along with them, might have faded from memory as little more than a bump. By the end of the 1970s, however, concerns about sex education, evolution, changes in public school textbooks, and teenage pregnancy and drug use would change the way many viewed these decisions.

During the mid- to late 1960s, curriculum created by the Sex Education Information Council of the United States (SEICUS) was adopted in an increasing number of public schools. Parents across the country rose in protest. While SEICUS director Mary Calderone spoke positively of saving sex for marriage and argued that she was only trying to give students knowledge, her detractors accused her of trying to erode the morals of American youth. Some suggested that she was a Communist operative. Conservatives swapped stories of sex education teachers stripping naked in the classroom and teachers herding seven-year-olds into dark closets to “feel” each other. “Most evangelical parents believe in a sound sex education based on Christian morality,” Bob Hill, an Ohio pastor, wrote in an article for the *Moody Monthly*. “Home is the best place for sex education,” wrote Jo Ann Engels of Bellingham, Washington, who taught classes in sex education for parents, in another article in the same publication.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> For secondary literature on sex education during the 1970s, see Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Kristin Luker, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex—and Sex Education—Since the Sixties* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006); and Natalia Mehlman,

At a local level, the introduction of new sex education curriculum was frequently followed by fervent organizing as parents took their grievances to school boards and to the media. “The late sixties sex education controversies helped launch Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists into the realm of sexual politics,” writes Janice M. Irvine, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts. Parents’ grassroots activism at the school district level was accompanied by the creation of new national organizations such as Eagle Forum, Focus on the Family, and Concerned Women for America, which would amplify conservatives’ concerns about the family and youth. An important locus of influence was shifting from Bible institutes to the national organizations that would comprise the Christian Right.<sup>288</sup>

The 1960s also saw changes in the way evolution was presented in public school science classrooms. Opposition to evolution stemmed from belief in the inspiration and infallibility of scripture, a conviction that served as a central tenet of the fundamentalist movement in the 1920s and made up the first line of the National Association of Evangelicals’ statement of faith in 1942. If the Bible was infallible, these individuals argued, Genesis must be taken at face value, which meant that the world was created in six days less than ten thousand years ago, and not over millions of years through an evolutionary process. While some on the nascent evangelical Left explored new ways of reconciling the Bible and science, opposition to evolution remained an important part of fundamentalists’ and most evangelicals’ belief systems in the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the 1960s saw the emergence of a creationist renaissance that was

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“Sex Ed ... and the Reds? Reconsidering the Anaheim Battle over Sex Education, 1962-1969,” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (May 2007), pp. 203-32. See also “The Battle of Anaheim,” in William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Gordon V. Drake, “Is the Little Red School House the Place to Teach Raw Sex?” *Christian Crusade*, 1968; and “Sex in the Classroom,” *Time*, July 25, 1969, p. 50. For quotes, see Bob Hill, “What Kind of Sex Education?” *Moody Monthly* (Dec. 1969); and Jo Ann Engels, “Don’t Be Silent on Sex,” *ibid.* (Dec. 1970).

<sup>288</sup> Irvine, *Talk about Sex*, 61, 64.

launched by the publication of Henry M. Morris and James C. Whitcomb's 1961 book, *The Genesis Flood*. The decades that followed saw the founding of new creationist organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research and Answers in Genesis.<sup>289</sup>

During the 1920s, fundamentalists sought to bar teaching evolution from the classroom. Worried about having their texts banned in states that had passed anti-evolution legislation, many textbook publishers voluntarily confined evolution to the margins of their science curriculum. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite to successfully orbit the earth. Concerned about threats to national security and the importance of science attainment, the National Science Foundation gave the Biological Science Curriculum Study (BSCS) grants to revamp the nation's high school biology curriculum. The new BSCS textbooks emphasized evolution to an extent previous textbooks had not. In 1965, the *Moody Monthly* ran an article warning parents about changes in high school biology courses curriculum. "This month as several million impressionable teenagers flood our nation's high schools for a new term, many of them will find evolution entrenched in the curriculum as never before," wrote Cora Reno, a Wheaton-educated zoology teacher and author of *Evolution: Fact or Theory?* published by Moody Press.<sup>290</sup>

In 1965, a high school biology teacher in Little Rock, Arkansas, sued the state of Arkansas over its ban on teaching evolution. Don Langston, the attorney for the state, argued

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<sup>289</sup> A creationist renaissance began in the 1960s, jumpstarted by a book by Henry Morris and John C. Whitcomb. See Henry Morris and James C. Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1961). For more, see Edward J. Larson, *Trial and Error: The American Controversy over Creation and Evolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>290</sup> Cora Reno, "Evolution? Revolution? Or Solution?" *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1965).

primarily that the state had the right to choose the curriculum used in its public schools, but he also made the case that keeping evolution out of the classroom was “a religious neutrality act” because “it could keep the discussion of the Darwin Case versus the Bible story out of the teaching in the public schools.” This defense fell apart when Langston admitted under questioning that the law barred only evolution from being taught. In *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that any law that required “that teaching and learning must be tailored to the principles or prohibitions of any religious sect or dogma” amounted to an unconstitutional establishment of religion and that “the state has no legitimate interest in protecting any or all religions from views distasteful to them.” *Epperson* struck down any state law banning evolution.<sup>291</sup>

Recovering quickly from their defeat, creationists spent the next two decades arguing that if evolution could not be barred from the classroom, states should mandate the teaching of creation science alongside evolution. “Education should present more than a one-sided answer,” Henry Morris wrote in the *Moody Monthly* in 1974. Anti-evolution activists moved from working to ban evolution to seeking to mandate creation science under a “teach both sides” rubric. Morris argued that evolution, because it touched on origins, was a theory with religious implications. Teaching evolution but not also teaching creation science, then, disadvantaged Christianity. After *Engel* and *Schempp*, Henry called for including instruction about religion and religious beliefs in the school day; by advocating for equal time for creationism, activists asserted that religion had a place in the school curriculum.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968). Larson, *Trial and Error*, 98-124.

<sup>292</sup> Henry M. Morris, “Evolution, Creation, and the Public Schools,” *Moody Monthly* (March 1974).

In the 1970s, responding to civil rights' and women's rights' activists calls for better representation in public school textbooks, educators began to replace traditional Dick and Jane style texts with stories that reflected a multicultural outlook. These changes concerned conservatives, who worried that the new readers communicated a relativistic outlook to students, in place of moral absolutes. A series of new readers titled *Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)*, came in for the greatest criticism. "Here fifth graders discover the life-style (wife swapping, murder of grandparents, mating with animals, etc.) of the Netsilit Eskimo tribe," wrote James C. Hefley, a freelance writer and author of *Textbooks on Trial*, in a 1977 article in the *Moody Monthly*. Hefley argued that MACOS excluded Christianity selectively while including information and stories from cultures and many Christians considered immoral or pagan.<sup>293</sup>

After examining her district's new sex education curriculum and finding that it taught an "atheistic and relativistic view of morality," Alice Moore, the wife of a fundamentalist minister, ran for and won a spot on the Kanawha County, West Virginia, school board. Four years later, in 1974, Moore grew concerned by what she saw in a new list of reading books recommended by the county's English Language Arts Textbook Committee. She contacted Mel and Norma Gabler, a Texas couple who had been reviewing school textbooks since the early 1960s, for advice. The information the Gablers sent her confirmed Moore's fears and touched off a conflict that lasted for a year and ultimately involved school bombings, a massive and prolonged school boycott, and one death as parents rose in protest of the new books. In part, Moore's objections were grounded in racial tensions. Her initial concern was piqued by the inclusion of a book about Malcolm X, and she later accused the textbooks of "unduly favoring blacks." But Moore's

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<sup>293</sup> James C. Hefley, "What Christians Can Do about Bad Schoolbooks," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1977).

concerns were far more comprehensive; she alleged that the books were both anti-Christian and anti-American.<sup>294</sup>

Other concerns were more universal. During the 1970s, Americans became increasingly concerned about the presence of crime and drugs in public schools, as well as declining test scores and decreased respect for teachers. “Across the U.S., a pattern of crime has emerged that is both perplexing and appalling,” read a 1977 *Time* magazine article. “Many youngsters appear to be robbing and raping, maiming and murdering as casually as they go to a movie or join a pickup baseball game,” it concluded. Panics over teen pregnancy joined those over juvenile delinquency. White flight led to changing perceptions of inner city schools, particularly high schools and middle schools. As urban decay exacerbated these problems, parents increasingly won victories against school busing designed to integrate metropolitan areas. Historian Philip Jenkins calls the 1970s a “decade of nightmares”; to many Americans it certainly felt that way.<sup>295</sup>

As the 1970s drew to a close, it began to appear that Henry’s heady hopes for including religious perspectives in the public school curriculum would go unrealized. While classes on Bible as literature were introduced in some schools, particularly in the South, much of the country instead saw more comprehensive sex education materials, the revamping of high school biology curriculum to center evolution, and the introduction of multicultural reading textbooks

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<sup>294</sup> Historian Carol Mason has argued that parents in Kanawha County were worried that the new textbooks would undermine their local way of life and place a cultural gulf between them and their children. See Carol Mason, *Reading Appalachia from Left to Right: Conservatives and the 1974 Kanawha County Textbook Controversy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). On the Gablers, see James C. Hefley, *Textbooks on Trial* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977).

<sup>295</sup> “Why Those Falling Test Scores,” *Time*, Sept. 12, 1977, p. 40; “Why SAT Scores Decline,” *Newsweek*, Sept. 5, 1977, p. 82; “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” *Newsweek*, December 8, 1975, p. 58. “The Youth Crime Plague,” *Time*, July 11, 1977, p. 20; “Terror in Schools,” *U.S. News and World Report*, Jan. 26, 1976. “Ford to City: Drop Dead,” *New York Daily News*, Oct. 29, 1975. Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford, 2008). See also Bruce W. Dunn, “Watching a Nation Die,” *Moody Monthly* (July-Aug. 1976).

that decentered traditional white American culture and brought other religions and perspectives into the classrooms. At the same time, concerns about gang violence, drugs, declining test scores, and sexual promiscuity among high school students grew. Certainly, there was often a contrast between the more sensational stories that hit the news and individuals' confidence in their own local schools. But the news shaped perceptions, and perceptions were powerful.

## Chapter 5: A Secular Humanist Problem

Vicki Frost, a mother of four living in Hawkins County, Tennessee, listened with interest as her friend, Jennie Wilson, told her about “secular humanism.” The year was 1983, and Wilson had encountered the term while reading *The Battle for the Mind*, a book published by influential fundamentalist pastor Tim LaHaye in 1980. “We are being controlled by a small but very influential cadre of committed humanists, who are determined to turn traditionally moral-minded America into an amoral, humanist country,” LaHaye wrote. Frost was fascinated. Soon after this, her sixth grade daughter brought Frost one of her school reading assignments and asked for help her with a futuristic story about taking a trip to Mars and encountering inhabitants who communicated by telepathy. Perturbed by what she saw, Frost picked up the phone and called her friend. Humanism, she said, had come to Hawkins County.<sup>296</sup>

Frost and Wilson called a public meeting and told the assembled parents that the school’s new reading textbooks were anti-Christian and dangerous. The books, they said, contained Hindu themes, witchcraft, and promoted telepathy, which was associated with the antichrist. The two also called attention to stories that promoted evolution, feminism, gun control, and passages they argued “disparaged free enterprise, the military, Christianity, and the government.” Frost claimed that these problems suffused the textbooks. “You can take every page of this book and there’s something objectionable in it,” she told those gathered. After the meeting, Frost began lobbying the school board. The newspaper picked up the story, and Frost and Wilson gave interviews on a local radio station. Then Frost called the Gablers.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Stephen Bates, *Battleground: One Mother's Crusade, the Religious Right, and the Struggle for Control of Our Classrooms* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993), 15-19. Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1980).

<sup>297</sup> Bates, *Battleground*, 22-23.

Mel and Norma Gabler began reviewing school textbooks in the early 1960s after becoming concerned that their son's school materials were not sufficiently supportive of the free enterprise system. The Gablers took their concerns to the Texas State Board of Education, which approved textbooks for the state's public schools. Due to of the state's large population, the Board had an outsized influence on the textbooks selected across the country. The Gablers had some success before the Board and proved effective promoters. By the 1980s the Gablers also reviewed textbooks looking for "humanistic principles" such as those that dealt with "evolution, self-authority, situation ethics, distorted realism, sexual permissiveness, anti-biblical bias, anti-free enterprise, one-world government, and death education."<sup>298</sup>

In 1974, nearly a decade before Frost reached out to the Gablers, Alice Moore, a school board member in Kanawha County, West Virginia, contacted the couple with similar concerns. The Gablers' detailed reviews played a substantial role in Moore's testimony and in the protests that followed. In 1983, however, Frost had something that Moore had not—access to the well-funded national organizations that comprised the emergent Christian Right. Concerned Women for America, founded in 1979 by Tim LaHaye's wife, Beverly LaHaye, championed Frost's cause and turned secular humanism in Hawkins County into a national sensation.<sup>299</sup>

By the 1980s, the lines between evangelicals and fundamentalists became blurred as fundamentalists entered national politics, displaying a newfound willingness to work with individuals in mainline denominations. Organizations like Focus on the Family and Concerned

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<sup>298</sup> Ann Wharton, "Mel and Normal Gabler Battling Textbook Bias," *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1987), 25-28. For other stories on reading textbooks and on the Gablers, see Editorial, "What Johnny Should Read," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 31, 1975; James C. Hefley, "What Christians Can Do about Bad Schoolbooks," *Moody Monthly* (Jan. 1977); Pamela Urfer, "The Occult in Children's Books," *ibid.* (Oct. 1977); James Hefley and Harold Smith, "What Should Johnny Read?" *Christianity Today*, Sept. 7, 1984; and Ann Wharton, "Mel and Normal Gabler Battling Textbook Bias," *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1987).

<sup>299</sup> Bates, *Battleground*, 304. On Kanawha County, see Mason, *Reading Appalachia*.

Women for America spoke for both fundamentalists and many evangelicals. The 1980s saw a rapprochement in other ways as well: At the decade's end, a series of scandals that took down televangelist Jim Bakker so tarnished the fundamentalist label that, like in the 1940s, many fundamentalists abandoned the term and dubbed themselves evangelicals. During this decade, both fundamentalists and many evangelicals expressed concern about secular humanism, although they sometimes disagreed on how to discuss the problem. During this chapter I will be addressing both groups, and will sometimes use "conservative evangelicals" as an umbrella term to encompass both fundamentalists and those evangelicals not on the evangelical Left. When discussing the Christian Right, I will also occasionally use the term "religious conservatives," as many activists hoped to involve conservative Catholics, Jews, and others in this coalition.<sup>300</sup>

The emergence of a Christian Right was in part the result of a concerted effort by Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, and Howard Phillips, conservative political activists on the Right who had cut their teeth in the Young Republicans and on Barry Goldwater's 1964 campaign but become dissatisfied with Nixon's failure to cut federal bureaucracy. They hoped to widen their coalition by bringing religious conservatives into politics through the use of wedge issues. This goal might initially have seemed out of reach. 1976 saw the election of Jimmy Carter, an evangelical Christian and a member of the Democratic Party, as president. Newsweek declared 1976 "the year of the evangelical." But despite this attention, many conservative evangelicals were put off by Carter's embrace of feminists' Equal Rights Amendment and failure to take a strong stance against homosexuality and abortion, among other things.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> On Jim Bakker, see Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 43-45.

<sup>301</sup> Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167-71. For dissatisfaction with Jimmy Carter, see William

In 1978, the IRS declared that any Christian school that did not meet a racial quota must prove that it had made a good-faith effort to reach out to and recruit black students or lose its tax-exempt status. Christian school advocates organized quickly and deluged the IRS with mail opposing the order, forcing the agency to backstop and withdraw its proposal. Even the administrators of Christian schools that enrolled black students opposed the order, typically citing concerns about state oversight of Christian schools or government overreach. Weyrich later claimed that “what galvanized the Christian community ... was Jimmy Carter’s intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation. ... suddenly it dawned on them that they were not going to be able to be left alone to teach their children as they pleased. That was what brought those people into the political process.” While many factors brought conservative evangelicals into national politics in the late 1970s, Weyrich does accurately describe the psychological impact the IRS order had on Christian school advocates and their supporters—and many did blame Carter.<sup>302</sup>

Ed McAteer, a Southern Baptist layperson with an interest in conservative politics, suggested that Weyrich, Vigurie, and Phillips recruit Jerry Falwell, an influential fundamentalist pastor in Virginia whose popular *Old Time Gospel Hour* television program increasingly focused on moral issues like pornography and abortion.<sup>303</sup> In his 1978 book, *How You Can Help Clean Up America*, Falwell encouraged readers to organize local campaigns such as boycotting stores that sold pornographic magazines, and his distaste with Carter’s Playboy interview led him to endorse Gerald Ford in 1976. Still, Falwell pledged to “stay totally on spiritual issues” and told

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Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 156-159, 160-162, 200-205.

<sup>302</sup> Paul F. Parsons, *Inside America’s Christian Schools*, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987), 119-22, esp. 120. See also Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 163-64; and Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 172-73.

<sup>303</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 171-72.

*Esquire* that “I don’t talk politics.” When Weyrich and McAteer approached with the proposal for what would become the Moral Majority—a national political activist organization designed to mobilize religious conservatives and engage them in politics—Falwell refused. He was, after all, a fundamentalist, and fundamentalists were traditionally wary of forging alliances across doctrinal lines, something Weyrich and McAteer’s organization would require.<sup>304</sup>

Falwell agreed to Weyrich and McAteer’s proposal after a phone call from Francis Schaeffer, a self-styled philosopher and cultural critic. During the 1930s, Schaeffer attended Westminster Theological Seminary, where he studied under Cornelius Van Til, a Christian Reformed Church (CRC) theologian who pioneered the idea that all beliefs were based on underlying “presuppositions.” After serving as a pastor in the fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian Church denomination, Schaeffer moved to Switzerland to serve as a missionary. In 1955, after a theological crisis that led him to cut ties with his denomination, Schaeffer opened L’Abri, “the shelter,” an eclectic hostel where young adults traveling across Europe could stop and attend lectures and debate philosophy. During this period Schaeffer gained near-celebrity status among young evangelicals, who appreciated his edgy persona and intellectual engagement.<sup>305</sup>

In the 1970s, Schaeffer began traveling more frequently to the United States, speaking at colleges and universities. Toward the end of the decade, hoping to expand his reach, Schaeffer wrote and produced two film series—“How Should We Then Live” and “Whatever Happened to

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<sup>304</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 172-73. Jerry Falwell, *How You Can Help Clean Up America* (Lynchburg, Va.: Liberty Publishing Company, 1978). Historians Matthew Sutton and Darren Dochuk have traced alliances with the anti-communist, pro-business Right going back to the 1920s, as well as contributions to conservative Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign. However, conservative evangelicals had not engaged in politics as their own constituency. Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: Norton, 2011). Matthew Avery Sutton, “Was FDR the Antichrist? The Birth of Fundamentalist Anti-liberalism in a Global Age,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (March 2012), 1052-1074.

<sup>305</sup> Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 137-43; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 159-60.

the Human Race”—in which he presented “secular humanism” as the primary antagonist of Christianity in modern society. According to journalist William Martin, Schaeffer’s film series, which were screened in churches across the country, “helped introduce evangelicals to secular humanism, an elastic concept that would eventually supersede communism as their prime ideological enemy.” Schaeffer spoke directly to laypeople, arguing that all individuals approach the world through the lens of set presuppositions and that secular humanist presuppositions had taken over much of Western culture, leading to the decline of Christian influence.<sup>306</sup> Schaeffer not only talked Falwell out of his reluctance to ally politically with conservatives across religious lines and convinced him to found the Moral Majority—”God used pagans to do his work in the Old Testament, so why don’t you use pagans to do your work now?”—he also changed the minds of a generation of fundamentalists and evangelicals about the expediency of political activism and of fighting to regain control of the culture rather than withdrawing from it.<sup>307</sup>

### **Defining Secular Humanism**

In 1984, Senator Orrin Hatch inserted an amendment in a section of the Education for Economic Security Act reading “Grants under this subchapter may not be used for consultants, for transportation or for any activity which does not augment academic improvement,” adding the phrase “or for any course of instruction the substance of which is Secular Humanism.” The measure quietly passed, but no one in Hatch’s office or in the Justice Department was able to define what constituted “instruction the substance of which is Secular Humanism.” Hatch’s amendment became something of a media sensation, and while he tried to diffuse the attention by arguing that school districts should determine for themselves what constituted secular

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<sup>306</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 194-97, esp. 195. Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? L’Abri 50th Anniversary Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 19.

<sup>307</sup> Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 197.

humanism, the publicity his measure received refused to go away. In 1985, Hatch supported a proposal to remove the phrase from the statute.<sup>308</sup>

The term “secular humanism” proved somewhat difficult to define. “*Humanism*,” Schaeffer wrote in his 1981 *Christian Manifesto*, “is the placing of Man at the center of all things and making him the measure of all things.” In his 1991 book, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, historian George Marsden argued that “the secular humanist idea revitalized fundamentalist conspiracy theory” and that “the ‘secular humanist’ thesis.” It is perhaps not surprising that Tim LaHaye, who proved influential in translating Schaeffer’s ideas into the language of a secular humanist plot, ran regular lectures for the John Birch Society during the 1960s and 1970s. Still, the term was not embraced by fundamentalists alone—*Christianity Today*, which positioned itself as the flagship publication of mainstream evangelicalism, ran articles referencing the inroads made by secular humanism throughout the 1980s. For many evangelicals, as for fundamentalists, references to the inroads made by “humanism” or to the efforts of “secularists” helped explain changing sexual norms and the sudden prominence of abortion, homosexuality, and feminism.<sup>309</sup>

When identifying secular humanism, Schaeffer often pointed to the Humanist Manifestos of 1933 and 1973. Humanism emerged during the 1920s as a response to rapid cultural change that led many intellectuals to question whether traditional religion was still adequate for the modern era. In 1927, a group of nontheistic Unitarians gathered in Chicago to form the Humanist

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<sup>308</sup> Leo Pfeffer, “The ‘Religion’ of Secular Humanism,” *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Autumn 1987), 499-500

<sup>309</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Wechester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1981), 23. George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 109. Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 195. Rob Boston, “If Best-Selling End Times Author Tim LaHaye Has His Way, Church-State Separation Will Be Left Behind,” *Church and State*, Vol. 55, No. 2 (Feb. 2002), 9.

Fellowship. Two years later, Charles Francis Potter, a former Unitarian minister, founded the First Humanist Society of New York, declaring Humanism “a new religion” and “a new faith for a new era.” Philosopher John Dewey and other prominent intellectuals, including Albert Einstein, sat on the society’s board. The signers of the 1933 Humanist Manifesto declared that progress came through the efforts of man, and not through theistic religion. Self-described Humanists typically supported progressive social causes, including birth control, women’s rights, and euthanasia. In 1941, Unitarian ministers Curtis W. Reese and John H. Dietrich founded the American Humanist Association (AHA), and in 1973 the AHA released a new, updated Humanist Manifesto. “No deity will save us,” the Humanist Manifesto II read, “we must save ourselves.”<sup>310</sup>

“The Humanist Manifestos not only say that humanism is a religion,” Schaeffer declared in his *Christian Manifesto*, “but the Supreme Court has declared it to be a religion.” At issue was a footnote in Justice Hugo Black’s majority opinion in *Torcaso v. Watkins* (1961), a case that dealt with religious tests for public office: “Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God,” Black wrote, “are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others.”<sup>311</sup> “Justice Black never anticipated and never intended that the term secular humanism should be used by champions of fundamentalism as justification for either censorship of public school instruction or introduction of religious instruction or both,” wrote legal scholar Leo Pfeffer in 1987. “But that is exactly

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<sup>310</sup> Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 53-54. Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools: Humanism’s Threat to Our Children* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1983), 78-79. On Humanism, see Roy Speckhardt, *Creating Change through Humanism* (Washington, D.C.: The Humanist Press, 2015); and Richard Stringer-Hye, “Charles Francis Potter,” *Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography*, May 17, 2001, <http://uudb.org/articles/charlesfrancispotter.html>.

<sup>311</sup> Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, 54. LaHaye, *Battle for the Public School*, 90, 75.

what happened.” Pfeffer had been one of appellant Roy Torcaso’s lawyers and argued the case before the Supreme Court. Black’s statement “was irrelevant and immaterial,” he said, because Torcaso never claimed to be anything but an atheist and because the decision was based on legal reasoning laid out in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948), which held that the First Amendment forbade not only the preferring of one religion over another but also the preferring of belief over disbelief.<sup>312</sup>

As Pfeffer outlined in his 1987 article, “secular humanism” cropped up in dozens of protests and court cases throughout the 1980s. As religious conservatives used the concept to assert that schoolbooks that contained themes they disapproved of constituted an unconstitutional establishment of religion. Pfeffer drew attention to a recent case, *Smith v. School Board of Mobile County*, in which six hundred Alabama teachers and parents sued the school board over the use of history, social studies, and home economics textbooks they claimed promoted the “religion” of secular humanism. In 1987 a federal district court found in favor of the plaintiffs, but the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit reversed the lower court’s decision later that year, finding that the books had “the primary effect of conveying information that is essentially neutral in its religious content” and that “none of these books convey a message of governmental approval of secular humanism or governmental disapproval of theism.”<sup>313</sup>

In *Smith*, the district court found in favor of the appellees on the grounds that the textbooks “imply strongly that a person uses the same process in deciding a moral issue that he uses in choosing one pair of shoes over another” and that “the student must determine right and wrong based only on his own experience.” The Eleventh Circuit demurred. The textbooks, they

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<sup>312</sup> Pfeffer, “The ‘Religion’ of Secular Humanism,” 497-98. Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 196. *Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County*, 827 F2d 684 (11th Cir. 1987).

<sup>313</sup> Pfeffer, “The ‘Religion’ of Secular Humanism,” 504-507.

said, appropriately sought to instill in children “such values as independent thought, tolerance of diverse views, self-respect, maturity, self-reliance and logical decision-making.” The Eleventh Circuit further found that “the Establishment Clause does not ban federal or state regulation of conduct whose reason or effect merely happens to coincide or harmonize with the tenets of some or all religions.” That a concept was a tenet of secular humanism, the court argued, did not mean that teaching it constituted an establishment of religion.<sup>314</sup>

In his 1987 article, Pfeffer expressed disappointment at “the Supreme Court’s avoidance of clarifying the meaning of secular humanism,” which he argued “has encouraged numerous assaults by fundamentalists upon action taken by public school teachers and administrators in the course of their responsibilities.” The Eleventh Circuit, too, chose not to address whether secular humanism was a religion in their ruling in *Smith*: “The Supreme Court has never established a comprehensive test for determining the ‘delicate question’ of what constitutes a religious belief for purposes of the first amendment,” the Court found, “and we need not attempt to do so in this case, for we find that, even assuming that secular humanism is a religion for purposes of the establishment clause, Appellees have failed to prove a violation of the establishment clause through the use in the Alabama public schools of the textbooks at issue in this case.”<sup>315</sup>

### **The Creation of a Narrative**

“We are faced with the imposition of a government-backed religion,” Timothy D. Crater, a pastor in Atlanta, Georgia, warned readers in a 1981 article in *Christianity Today*. “The goal is to reshape society through the molding of young minds.” That religion was secular humanism. “Its leaders are attempting to remake public school teachers into its ministers and priests, public

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<sup>314</sup> *Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County*.

<sup>315</sup> Pfeffer, “The ‘Religion’ of Secular Humanism,” 503; *Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County*.

classrooms into its sanctuaries, public tax coffers into its offering plates, and other people's children into its captive congregation.” Crater argued that educators no longer made teaching children skills their goal but focused instead on “the complete ‘resocialization’ of the child—the complete reshaping of his values, beliefs, and morals.” There were, he argued, school programs “designed to ‘free’ the children from the Judeo-Christian notions of value and morality their parents may have passed on to them.” Crater was not alone. “Secularists are struggling valiantly to try to pull our nation out from under its conscious submission to a supreme moral ruler, warned Kenneth S. Kantzer, editor of *Christianity Today* in 1982. “They are trying to make the United States into a pagan nation.”<sup>316</sup>

During the 1980s, a bevy of conservative lawyers and New Right legal societies argued that judicial decisions in defense of the separation of church and state had gone too far and amounted to discrimination against religion. “A pluralistic society demands that Christian values be heard,” attorney Carl Horn, who worked for Wheaton College and the Christian Legal Society before serving in the Reagan administration, argued in 1984 *Christianity Today* article. “Instead they are being blotted out.” Horn referred to the public schools as “social laboratories” and warned that Christians were discriminated against and that secularism had replaced pluralism. “Enter the secular social engineers with no commitment to the sacred character of the family, who seek to advance their world view through the public schools, and, as we say in the law, the issue is clearly drawn,” Horn wrote. The public schools had become the province of “the high

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<sup>316</sup> Timothy D. Crater, “The Unproclaimed Priests of Public Education,” *Christianity Today*, April 10, 1981, p. 44-47. Editorial, “Does Religion Belong in School?” *ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1982.

priests of secularism ... who long for a new order free of the artificial restraints of religion and morality, where man's reason and individualism are the highest source of wisdom and value."<sup>317</sup>

John W. Whitehead, president and founder of the Rutherford Institute, a conservative legal organization, also used the language of a persecuted minority. "The Supreme Court allows freedom for almost any view in the public schools," he wrote in a 1985 *Fundamentalist Journal* article. "Religion, however, is suspect." Richard John Neuhaus, pastor and director of the Center on Religion and Society, made a similar argument in a 1988 article in *Christianity Today*: "The idea of religious liberty in America," he wrote, "has been stood on its head." (Neuhaus' center was run by a conservative think tank, the Rockford Institute.) In 1984, Martin Mawyer, who worked in Falwell's Moral Majority and would found the Christian Action Network in 1990, wrote in the *Fundamentalist Journal* that "ever since the Supreme Court struck down state organized prayer and Bible readings in 1962 and 1963, students and teachers have been losing their religious liberties in the public schools."<sup>318</sup>

In a 1985 *Fundamentalist Journal* article, Richard T. Habermas, an education professor at Falwell's Liberty University, floated the idea of a "null curriculum" made up of "subject matters that schools neglect to teach: voids in educational programs that limit the kinds of ideas and skills a student might otherwise have had." He continued: "As long as the federal courts forbid prayer in schools, this example of null curriculum will continue to teach an even stronger message, implicitly: students will equate education with the absence of religion, and

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<sup>317</sup> Carl Horn, "How Freedom of Thought Is Smothered in America," *Christianity Today*, April 6, 1984.

<sup>318</sup> John W. Whitehead, "Freedom in the Public Schools: Standing against the Tide of Secularism," *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1985), 17-19. On the Rutherford Institute, see Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 499-500. Richard John Neuhaus, "The Upside-Down Freedom," *Christianity Today*, Dec. 9, 1988; Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). Martin Mawyer, "Religious Freedom Not Welcomed in Public Places," *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1984), 61-62.

developmental growth with the lack of divine guidance.” In his article in the same publication the same year, Whitehead agreed: “If the total impact of a school value program is to promote a humanistic ideology, or if it utilizes the practices of a humanistic religion, it may be held that the state is aiding and preferring a secular religion,” he wrote.<sup>319</sup>

In 1984, *Christianity Today* published an article by Richard A. Baer, Jr., a professor of environmental ethics at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, titled “They Are Teaching Religion in the Public Schools.” Baer argued that science pointed to evolution, but that the way evolution was taught in programs like Carl Sagan’s *Cosmos* was religious in nature. “The concern of parents not only about evolution but, more widely, about the overall religious-philosophical underpinnings of elements of the public school curriculum has been scoffed at by many who deny that any particular perspective is a force in the public schools, much less a threat to the moral and religious values of America’s school children,” he wrote. “Yet one need not look far for some quite convincing evidence of the legitimacy of these vocal parents’ concerns.” Even as Baer took a more nuanced position than some—arguing that creation science had no place in the curriculum—he, too, referred to the entrenchment of humanism in the schools, writing that “the shift in public schools away from a basically theistic framework (mainly Protestant-Unitarian) to humanism has been well documented.” During this period, Baer argued, textbooks had changed: “References to God and traditional religious values have become less and less common, and those that remain are often pejorative in nature.”<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Ronald T. Habermas, “Prayer in Schools: A New Perspective,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (July-Aug. 1985), 23-24. John W. Whitehead, “Freedom in the Public Schools: Standing against the Tide of Secularism,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1985), 17-19, esp. 17.

<sup>320</sup> Richard A. Baer Jr., “They Are Teaching Religion in the Public Schools,” *Christianity Today*, Jan. 17, 1984, pp. 12-15, esp. 12.

In a 1981 *Christianity Today* article titled “How I Slid into Education’s Permissive Pit and Climbed Out Again,” Bill Freeman, chair of the Department of Teacher Education at Austin College, regaled readers with stories of educators working to undermine traditional beliefs and values. “In 1972, after I had spent 25 years becoming continually more entrenched in the permissive doctrines fostered by Dewey and others, relativism was dominating my life,” he wrote. In 1973, at his teenage children’s urging, Freeman spent time studying Schaeffer’s books and writings. Taking a sabbatical, he traveled to Schaeffer’s L’Abri to study, and was soon convinced of “the influence of humanism in our culture.” In another article in the same issue, Reo M. Christenson, a political science professor at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, wrote that: “The spirit of secular humanism became the spirit of our age, gaining indisputable control over public higher education and the potent mass media.” “Some schools have opted for ‘values clarification,’ in which students, through directed bull sessions, are supposed to discover for themselves what values to live by,” he added.<sup>321</sup>

“There is no conspiracy at work in public schools to deny our children an ethical and moral foundation,” Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, sought to reassure readers in a 1989 *Christianity Today* article. Boyer insisted that moral education was a shared goal. “Teachers want children to do what is right,” he wrote. That Boyer felt the need to address the claim points to the parlance it had gained among a vocal subset

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<sup>321</sup> Bill Freeman, “How I Slid into Education’s Permissive Pit and Climbed Out Again,” *Christianity Today*, April 10, 1981. Reo M. Christenson, “Clarifying ‘Values Clarification’ for the Innocent,” *ibid.*, April 10, 1981. See also Kathleen M. Gow, “Values Clarification Stirring the Muddy Waters of Anything-Goes Philosophy,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1986), 26-28, 38. Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1980), 206-207. Jerry Falwell, “Who Is Responsible for Educating Children?” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1983), 8-9.

of evangelicals. “The goal is not to indoctrinate students,” he insisted, “but to provide a climate in which ethical and moral choices can be thoughtfully examined and convictions formed.”<sup>322</sup>

### **The Battle for the Public Schools**

During the 1980s, fundamentalists and many evangelicals came to believe that they were being actively discriminated against—that every viewpoint was allowed in the public schools but theirs. More than anyone else, it was fundamentalist pastor Tim LaHaye who wove the various school-related issues that concerned evangelicals together into a cohesive secular humanist plot. Later famous for his popular *Left Behind* novels, a fictional account of the end times, LaHaye was already a well known when he published his 1983 book, *The Battle for the Public Schools: Humanism’s Threat to Our Children*. A California pastor, LaHaye ran a national ministry, Family Life Seminars, and founded a Christian school in 1965 that grew into the model Christian Unified School System of San Diego. Deeply influenced by Schaeffer, LaHaye first took on secular humanism in his popular 1980 book, *The Battle for the Mind*, in which he argued that humanists had gained control of the nation's political, media, and entertainment systems.<sup>323</sup>

In his 1983 book, LaHaye argued that secular humanists had infiltrated the nation's schools. In chapter titled “Religion Takes Over the School House,” LaHaye informed readers that the Gablers, the Texas couple who screened textbooks for signs of communism, anti-Christian bias, and secular humanism, listed “nine basic tenets of humanism found in our children’s textbooks.” These were: evolution; “the idea that children are their own authorities”; situational ethics; “the idea that there is no supernatural”; sexual freedom; “the idea that children should have the right to read anything”; death education; internationalism; and socialism.

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<sup>322</sup> Ernest L. Boyer, “The Third Wave of School Reform,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 22, 1989, pp. 16-19.

<sup>323</sup> Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 327-28. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Public Schools*.

LaHaye dedicated individual chapters to many of these items, writing about public schools' promotion of the United Nations, "explicit sex education," and "values clarification" programs which encouraged students to think through and form their own values and beliefs.<sup>324</sup>

Tying together academic decline and moral subversion, LaHaye argued that secular humanists were using sex education to erode the place of religion in American society. "You must understand that, in the mind of a humanist, the worst catastrophe for a young girl is not that she loses her virtue in promiscuous sex or even becomes the rape victim of some sex-crazed pornography reader," LaHaye wrote. "To a humanist, the greatest disaster occurs when a young person grows up with religious taboos about right and wrong, or as many call them, moral absolutes." The goal of sex education programs, LaHaye contended, was to replace spiritual decision-making with an obsession of sex. "The whole plan sounds Satanic, doesn't it?" he asked readers. "Where do you think it came from? The humanists I have met aren't clever enough to have thought that up all by themselves." LaHaye offered statistics on teenage sexual activity, drug use, and falling grades dire enough to fill any parent with dread. "We once boasted the highest literacy level in the world," he told readers. "But that was before humanism took over the schoolhouse."<sup>325</sup>

LaHaye was adamant that schools had ceased to be centers for education and had instead become centers for secular humanist indoctrination. "Secular educators no longer make learning their primary objective," he wrote. "Instead our public schools have become conduits to the minds of our youth, training them to be anti-God, antimoral, antifamily, anti-free enterprise, and anti-American." He went on: "Public education today is a self-serving institution controlled by elitists of an atheistic, humanist viewpoint; they are more interested in indoctrinating their

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<sup>324</sup> LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 80.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-43, 15.

charges against the recognition of God, absolute moral values, and a belief in the American dream than they are in teaching them to read, write, and do arithmetic.” LaHaye dedicated the first four chapters of his book to the look-say method of teaching reading, which he said secular humanists had adopted in place of phonics in order to ensure that students did not learn to read. Public schools were not just bereft of God, LaHaye said: They were dedicated to removing a generation's faith.<sup>326</sup>

LaHaye joined Schaeffer in arguing that secular humanism was a religion. “Our public schools are committed to the philosophy of atheistic humanism,” LaHaye explained. “Secular humanism, the official doctrine of public education, has all the markings of a religion. This religion monopolizes the minds of our nation's 43 million public-school children.” In a chapter titled “Religion Takes Over the Schoolhouse,” LaHaye argued that secular humanism had its own priesthood, missionaries, seminaries, and temples. “As incredible as it may seem to you, their objective is to change our nation's generation of children from their commitment to traditional moral values and the values of their parents to the new humanist values.” Secular humanism's temples, LaHaye argued, were the nation's elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities.<sup>327</sup>

LaHaye compared philosopher John Dewey to Joseph Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. “Humanist control will result in humanist totalitarianism,” LaHaye wrote, “because history shows that the ruthless Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, or John Dewey types will arise to discriminate against their victims.” In his 1980 book, Falwell compared Dewey to Hitler, whom, he said, knew well how to indoctrinate children. Whitehead, in his 1983 *The Stealing of America*, followed a discussion of Dewey by a statement that “the presuppositional base undergirding

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 14.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 71, 83.

modern American education is in some aspects what Adolf Hitler had in mind.” He quickly clarified: “The public education system in this country is obviously not yet on the same level as that of Nazi Germany.”<sup>328</sup> Evangelical and fundamentalist leaders had long criticized Dewey, who died in 1952, chalking the secularization of the public schools up to his influence in shaping education policy in the early twentieth century. “John Dewey is dead,” Whitehead and John Barton quoted far-right theologian Rousas Rushdoony in their 1980 book, “but ... it is his mind, his thinking, that’s governing the schools around us.” “The subtle penetration of the Humanist philosophy into public education occurred not only by the displacement of a Christian philosophy,” wrote Christian school promoters Robert Allen Hill and Olaf John in their 1978 book, *Your Children: The Victims of Public Education*. “The educational theories of John Dewey, one of America’s most influential thinkers, put Humanism into the curriculum and classroom in almost every American school.”<sup>329</sup>

### **A New Backstory**

In their 1980 book, Barton and Whitehead tied everything from vandalism of school property to teen pregnancy to suicide rates to education's shift “from a Christian foundation to a humanist foundation.” Barton and Whitehead created a timeline for this decline: “Without exception,” they wrote, “every statistic cited in the previous chapter shows one thing: constant deterioration since 1963, the same year that the Supreme Court ruled both prayer and devotional

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<sup>328</sup> Falwell, *Listen America!* John W. Whitehead, *The Stealing of America* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1983), 87. LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 93.

<sup>329</sup> John Barton and John Whitehead, *Schools on Fire: It’s Not Too Late to Save the Public Schools* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndall House, 1980), 67. Rousas Rushdoony founded the Chalcedon Foundation, a right-wing think tank, in 1964, and is widely known as the founder of Reconstructionism, a movement to establish Mosaic Law in place of civil law. Rushdoony’s writings had a significant impact on Schaeffer and on the emerging Christian Right. Rushdoony was himself influenced by Dutch Calvinist theologian Cornelius Van Til. See Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 498-99, 121. Robert Allen Hill and Olaf John, *Your Children: The Victims of Public Education* (Van Nuys, Ca.: Bible Voice, 1978), 35.

Bible reading unconstitutional in our public schools.” Despite their criticism of Dewey, by the 1980s many conservative education reformers had come to view the public schools of the 1940s and 1950s through rose-colored glasses, positioning *Engel* and *Schempp* as a watershed moment.<sup>330</sup>

In 1983, Falwell wrote wistfully of the schools he had attended as a child. “Until about 30 years ago, public schools provided the necessary support for building character in boys and girls,” he stated. “The Bible was read and prayer was offered in every classroom in the nation.” He went on: “I am forced to believe that the decay of the public school system accelerated into a downward spiral when prayer and Bible reading were removed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Humanistic 'secularization' and 'values clarification' replaced the Biblical values upon which this great Republic was built.” Falwell finished by referring to his own boyhood, writing that “[w]hen I attended school in the 1940s I was not a Christian, but I learned to reverence and respect God and the Bible.” Nostalgia had set in. While school Bible reading increased in the early 1950s as part of an emphasis on civil religion, even at its Cold War height fewer than half of public schools held devotional exercises. 1950s concerns about juvenile delinquency began to fade from memory as well. If these memories could not stand up to historical scrutiny, they nevertheless became meaningful components of a historical narrative that justified present-day action.<sup>331</sup>

Even the Christian music world felt the influence of narratives centering *Engel* and *Schempp* as the genesis of school decline. Contemporary artist Carman’s popular 1991 song, “It’s Our Turn Now,” in 1991, the Christian hit included the following lyrics: “The ball got dropped in '62 / They wouldn't let children pray in school / Violent crime began to rise / The grades went down and the kids got high / Free love, gay rights / No absolutes, abortion on

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<sup>330</sup> Barton and Whitehead, *Schools on Fire*, 9-11, 14, 25.

<sup>331</sup> Falwell, “Who Is Responsible for Educating Children?”

demand / Brought VD, AIDS, and no morality / Today no one knows right from wrong / There's blood on people's hands.” These narratives belie evangelical and fundamentalist leaders’ initially more nuanced responses to *Engel* and *Schempp*, and erase evangelical theologians’ concerns about secular education during the 1950s.<sup>332</sup>

By the early 1980s, conservative evangelicals had become increasingly critical of the U.S. Supreme Court. While the anti-abortion movement was initially the purview of Catholics, Schaeffer’s film series, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, had a significant impact on evangelicals and fundamentalists, portraying abortion as one of the moral evils of their time. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) suddenly loomed large. Other decisions, too, rankled conservative evangelicals. In *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), the Supreme Court struck down state bans on teaching evolution. More cases were to come. In *Wallace v. Jaffree* (1985), the Court ruled that Alabama’s voluntary prayer statute was unconstitutional because it lacked any secular purpose, and in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987), the Court ruled against the teaching creation science in the public schools. Growing concern about the Supreme Court was not limited to these evangelicals. The conservative wing of the Republican Party increasingly alleged that the courts were overstepping their role, inveighing against “activist judges.” Such disapproval of the Court offered a new context for retrospective consideration of *Engel* and *Schempp*.<sup>333</sup>

Not all evangelicals and fundamentalists centered *Engel* and *Schempp* in the explanatory narratives they told about the secularization of the public schools. In his 1983 book, LaHaye argued that the public schools had been hopelessly humanist from their inception and that Horace Mann, the father of public education, had himself been a humanist (Mann was a Unitarian). Still,

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<sup>332</sup> Carman, *Addicted to Jesus*, 1991.

<sup>333</sup> *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U. S. 113 (1973); *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U. S. 97 (1968); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U. S. 38 (1985); *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U. S. 578 (1987). Whitehead, *Stealing of America*, 25. See also Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 192-93.

much of the evidence of moral decline LaHaye provided came with graphs that took the mid-1960s as their starting point, leaving the reader with the impression that that *Engel* and *Schempp* decisions were implicated in the problems he outlined. Other writers made much of such statistics, creating graphs that purported to show that venereal disease, teen pregnancies, living together out of wedlock, and even alcoholism had risen swiftly beginning in the mid-1960s. By the 1980s, *Engel* and *Schempp* had taken on explanatory power and come to play a central role in conservative evangelical narratives about school decline.<sup>334</sup>

### **Grappling with Pluralism**

During his 1980 campaign for president, Reagan declared his support for such a school prayer amendment. Reagan had some fences to mend with evangelicals—he was divorced, and had in the past taken stances in favor of abortion and gay rights. Reagan was also running against an evangelical incumbent, although Jimmy Carter’s own positions on abortion and gay rights had rendered his own support among evangelicals shaky. Endorsing a school prayer amendment allowed Reagan to signify to evangelicals that they could count on him to represent their issues while in the White House. While the evangelical Left never broke up with Carter, the fundamentalists and evangelical voters who made up the nascent Christian Right responded to Reagan with enthusiasm.<sup>335</sup> After Reagan’s election, the Christian Right pushed him to make good on his promise and introduce a school prayer amendment. In May 1982, Reagan did just that. “Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in the public schools or other public institutions,” Reagan’s proposed amendment read. “No person

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<sup>334</sup> LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 57-69, 17. Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Battle over School Prayer: How Engel v. Vitale Changed America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 1.

<sup>335</sup> Ward Sinclair, “School Prayer Issue Simmering,” *Washington Post*, July 3, 1980, A6. Tracy Wood, “Reagan Gets Perfect Score on ‘Biblical’ Test,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 6, 1980, A1. Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 188-89; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 232.

shall be required by the United States or any state to participate in prayer.” In five years of hearings, the amendment never made it past Congress.<sup>336</sup>

Kantzer, the editor of *Christianity Today*, offered some caution, pushing back against new narratives about *Engel* and *Schempp*: “The Prayer Amendment is certainly no panacea for the moral ills of our society,” Kantzer wrote. “The evangelist who blamed the Supreme Court ban on school prayers for ‘crime, racial conflict, drug abuse, political assassination, the Vietnam war, sexual promiscuity, and the demise of American family life’ is living in a dream world.” Kantzer also worried the amendment might prove a distraction from other concerns. “Evangelicals must not allow themselves to be sidetracked by a concern for the School Prayer Amendment, making it into an issue out of all proportion to its true significance,” he wrote. Despite such caution, Kantzer endorsed Reagan’s school prayer amendment.<sup>337</sup>

“The Prayer Amendment, for good or ill, has become the symbol of whether or not America still has the will to claim itself to be a nation under God,” Kanzer wrote. He further argued that amending the Constitution to enshrine for school prayer would give evangelicals “a greater sense of their responsibility to act politically as Christians.” The prayer amendment, for some, played a symbolic role in the battle for the soul of the nation. Despite his objection to those who blamed every moral ill on *Engel* and *Schempp*, Kantzer voiced strong criticism for the rulings: “In order to avoid litigation and to ‘be on the safe side,’ school officials across our nation have pretty much eliminated voluntary prayer or Bible reading or religious exercises of any kind,” he wrote. “The cumulative effect of this upon our nation is disastrous. In the first place, it has deprived religious people of sharing with their children the basic structure of their

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<sup>336</sup> “Reagan Proposes School Prayer Amendment,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1982. Editorial, “Does Religion Belong in School?” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 3, 1982, 12-15.

<sup>337</sup> Editorial, “Does Religion Belong in School?” 12.

own religious and moral commitments. Furthermore, it has deprived our nation of communicating its religious heritage to its citizens. And finally, it has, in effect, established a religion of secularism.”<sup>338</sup>

There was a tension at play in Kantzer’s writing. He insisted that amending the U.S. Constitution to allow prayer in public schools would demonstrate that “America still has the will to claim itself to be a nation under God,” yet he also wrote that evangelicals “must protest any attempt to force a particular religion down the throats of the American people” and declared himself “wholly committed to freedom from government control.” He followed these statements with a question: “How can we adequately protect the right of our people not to have an alien religion forced upon them by government but at the same time allow them the free exercise of their own religion?” he asked. A neutral position, Kantzer suggested, would permit religious exercises for those who want them while allowing others to opt out.<sup>339</sup>

Despite their traditional opposition to both school prayer and school prayer amendments, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution endorsing Reagan’s amendment. “For 170 years following the writing of the First Amendment, the right of prayer in public schools was a time-honored exercise and a cherished privilege,” its resolution read. “This proposed amendment does not constitute a call for government-written or government-mandated prayer.” Twenty decades earlier, the Convention had praised the Supreme Court’s decision in *Engel*. Much had changed during those two decades. “Considerable confusion as to the rights and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution with regard to prayer in school has been engendered by the Supreme Court decisions of 1962 and 1963,” their 1982 resolution read. “Public school officials

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

and lower courts have frequently misinterpreted these Supreme Court decisions as a ban on voluntary prayer.”<sup>340</sup>

As late as 1980, a *New York Times* article could casually mention that the Convention “officially opposed overturning the Supreme Court ban, because, they say, any form of prayer in school endangers the separation of church and state.” Two years later, the Convention had recently undergone a conservative takeover; Bailey Smith, a conservative hardliner, served as president of the Convention for the 1981 and 1982 terms. When the *Fundamentalist Journal* interviewed Smith in 1983, he stated that secular humanism had “become a religion of its own” and that it could be found in the public schools. Smith drew a line between “forced prayer” and “the right to pray.” As power within the Convention shifted, the denomination moved from opposing school prayer on the grounds of religious liberty to endorsing a school prayer amendment on the grounds of religious liberty.<sup>341</sup>

The line drawn between “voluntary” and “forced” prayer is curious given that neither *Engel* nor *Schempp* involved “forced” prayer. In both cases, the prayer in question was technically voluntary—students were permitted to leave the room or otherwise choose not to participate. The Court examined instead whether a prayer led by a teacher or school official created a sense of coercion *even if a student was given the option to remain silent or leave the room*. Their conclusion in *Schempp* was that it did. When fundamentalists and evangelicals addressed the possibility that even technically voluntary prayer might create a sense of coercion,

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<sup>340</sup> “Resolution on Prayer in Schools: New Orleans, Louisiana—1982,” Southern Baptist Convention, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/862>. See also Gerald Strober, “A Report on the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1982), 52; and “Baptists Vote ‘No’ on Prayer Amendments,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 23, 1964, p. A3.

<sup>341</sup> George Vecsey, “Clerics Back a School-Prayer Bill,” *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1980, p. B10. See also, Marjorie Hunters, “Opposition to School Prayer Amendment Mounting in the House,” *ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1971, p. 53. On Bailey Smith’s interview with the *Fundamentalist Journal*, see “An Interview with Bailey Smith,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Feb. 1983), 30-32, esp. 32.

they tended to brush it aside. “Those who suggest that a child would be too embarrassed to leave the room during school prayer are curiously silent on the question of leaving the room during offensive sex education courses,” wrote Cal Thomas, an evangelical reporter who would later become a well-known conservative columnist. Conservative evangelicals had come to identify many other areas of the public schools that they felt involved coercion, from subversive reading textbooks to sex education to the teaching of evolution. In this context, describing a prayer students were allowed to opt out of as coercive made little sense.<sup>342</sup>

That is not to say that formerly nuanced approaches to school devotionals had disappeared entirely. After endorsing Reagan’s school prayer amendment, Kantzer spent much of his editorial responding to critics. “Christians often object that the watered-down sort of religious exercise acceptable to the vast majority of American citizens could only be an impoverished civil religion offensive to any evangelical who bases his religion on the Bible,” Kantzer noted. “Evangelicals have no desire to ‘establish’ a false deistic religion and promulgate it in our schools,” he responded. To those who might argue that religion was “a matter for the home and church,” Kantzer countered that “we dare not teach our youngsters that religion is a purely private affair that does not affect public life.”<sup>343</sup>

### **Opting Out**

“We couldn’t conceive of God-fearing Israelites turning their young children over to Canaanites for their education.” This was how Joseph Bayly, Christian publisher and longtime Christian school supporter, explained his decision to send his children to Christian schools in a 1980 *Christianity Today* article. Such religious language often played a role in the promotional

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<sup>342</sup> Cal Thomas, “News: Prayer In Our Public Schools,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1982), 49.

<sup>343</sup> Editorial, “Does Religion Belong in School?” 14-15.

materials of Christian school advocates. “Learn not the ways of the heathen,” Hill and John wrote in their 1978 book, using Jeremiah 10:2 to urge parents to send their children to Christian schools. Not all evangelicals were on board with Christian schools, however. Some worried that removing their children from the public schools would leave these schools without Christian influence, or that children who attended Christian schools might end up isolated and stunted. Christian school supporters responded that the spiritual risk children faced when they attended public schools was simply too great.<sup>344</sup>

Christian school promoters argued that God had given parents, and not the government, the responsibility for educating children. “The fundamental reason for the formation of Christian schools is a biblical one,” wrote George B. Livesay, an education professor at Falwell’s Liberty University, in a 1983 *Fundamentalist Journal* article. “Ephesians 6 and other Scriptures instruct parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admiration of the Lord.” Others Christian school advocates compared Christian schools to a greenhouse and children to plants. “A hothouse is designed to protect young, tender plants during their growing years so they can be transplanted in the real world later on and be ahead of plants that didn’t have the opportunity,” explained Paul Kienel, executive director of the Association of Christian Schools International, which formed when the National Association of Christian Schools merged with several state-level Christian school organizations in 1978. Kienel also used the language of religious warfare, another common theme in Christian school promotion: “The Christian school movement ... gets some the basic character established before the child does battle with the world.”<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Joseph Bayly, “Why I’m for Christian Schools,” *Christianity Today*, January 25, 1980, 24-27; Hill and John, *Your Children*.

<sup>345</sup> George B. Livesay, “How To Start a Christian School,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1983), 16-18, 53. For Paul Kienel, see Paul F. Parsons, “The Fourth ‘R’,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 4, 1987, 21-27. Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 34-35.

In the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalists condemned parochial schools, arguing that private schools were un-American, promoted factionalism and division, and prevented immigrant groups from assimilating to American culture and values. By the 1980s, many leaders of the Christian Right and the Christian school movement had come to believe that the public schools were agents not of Americanism but of secular humanism. These individuals increasingly worried that *their* children were being assimilated—and into an America they no longer recognized.

“The meaning of pluralism has undergone a radical redefinition in the past two decades,” wrote Paul F. Parsons, a professor of journalism at Kansas State University, in *Christianity Today* in 1987. “In earlier years, pluralism meant merging various nationalities, religions, and languages into one ‘American way.’ Our public schools were designed to fulfill this historic acculturation process. . . . Since society was then dominated by Protestant values and concepts, this acculturation process was firmly rooted in cultural Protestantism.” Parsons won a religious studies fellowship from the University of North Carolina and visited 100 Christian schools across the country, capping his project with a 1987 book, *Inside America’s Christian Schools*. While Parsons was himself not an evangelical, he won widespread approval with his sympathetic approach to Christian schools. “Today,” Parsons wrote, “pluralism means the right to be American without acculturation.” According to Parsons, the “transformation to a secular education system” after WWII “led those still adhering to the values of cultural Protestantism to rebel. Many Christians chose to build an alternative community rather than acculturate to a society they believed had gone wrong.”<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Parsons, “The Fourth ‘R’,” 27. See also Parsons, *Inside America’s Christian Schools*.

The Christian school movement grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s. By 1978, the Association of Christian Schools International boasted 1200 member schools and a total enrollment of 150,000 students. In 1987, Parsons estimated that roughly 15,000 Christian schools were in operation nationwide. A cottage industry producing curriculum for Christian schools sprang up, and the Accelerated Christian Education program, founded in 1970, promised a way for churches to open Christian schools without the need for trained teachers; children at these schools sat in cubicles and read through workbooks individually, raising one of a set of flags to get the attention of a classroom monitor, often a parent, when they needed to use the bathroom or were ready to be tested over a workbook. By 1987, an estimated 4,800 ACE schools nationwide boasted an enrollment of half a million students.<sup>347</sup>

In some states, Christian schools came in conflict with state requirements and regulatory bodies. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Christian school advocates urged Christian schools to hold the highest academic standards and to seek state accreditation, arguing that Christians should strive for educational excellence. But as views of both public schools and state education officials changed, priorities shifted. A growing number of those founding Christian schools began to see compliance with state regulatory requirements as compromise with the world. Parents at a church in Nebraska were arrested for refusing to send their children to a school that met state requirements; pastors who established Christian schools in Kentucky and Ohio found

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<sup>347</sup> On numbers, see Dave Raney, "Public School vs. Christian School: Which Is Right for Your Child?" *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1978); Parsons, *Inside America's Schools*, x; and William J. Reese, "Soldiers for Christ in the Army of God: The Christian School Movement in America," *Educational Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Spring 1985), 185. On Accelerated Christian Education, see Paul F. Parsons, "Ace Virtueson Meets Paster Alltruth," *Christianity Today*, Sept. 4, 1987, 22; and George B. Livesay, "How To Start a Christian School," *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1983), 16-18, 53. On the curriculum industry, see Adam Laats, "Forging a Fundamentalist 'One Best System': Struggles over Curriculum and Educational Philosophy in Christian Day Schools, 1970-1989," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan. 2010), 55-83.

themselves moving through the court system as they argued that they should not have to obey state teacher requirements or curriculum mandates. “State Department of Education officials, as representing a philosophy of Secular Humanism, are not capable of evaluating a Christian philosophy,” Ralph D. Mawdsley, professor of education law at Falwell’s Liberty University, summarized the Nebraska church’s position in 1983. Fundamentalists tended to be most opposed to following state requirements. Fundamentalist Bob Jones III argued that it was “impossible for a school to obey the Lord and be a member of a regional accrediting association.”<sup>348</sup>

Christian school promoters were divided on the question of accreditation. “In the quest for quality, many Christian schools are considering state and regional accreditation,” wrote senior editors Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson in the *Fundamentalist Journal* in 1983. “Others argue that a Christian institution should not submit to a secular evaluation.” Dobson and Hindson outlined each position and argued that readers should condemn neither those who sought accreditation nor those who did not. “In our widely diverse society there is certainly a place and definitely a need for both,” they concluded. Dobson and Hindson were not alone in discussing this issue in terms of diversity and pluralism. “States have increasingly extended their authority over diverse methods of instruction, claiming that quality must be achieved through regulating the *manner* of education at the expense of pluralism,” wrote Mawdsley in the *Fundamentalist Journal* later the same year. “If diversity in the manner of education offered to students is to be significantly restricted, our long-standing national commitment to pluralism in education has

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<sup>348</sup> For the Nebraska pastor, see Ralph D. Mawdsley, “Pluralism in Education: Reality or Myth,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Nov. 1983), 31-34. For Bob Jones III, see Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, “Academic Accreditation Quality or Compromise,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1983), 10-11.

become only a hollow shell.” In this way, Mawdsley used the language of pluralism to defend opposition to state standards for Christian schools.<sup>349</sup>

Disagreement also surfaced around vouchers and tuition tax credits. In 1982, *Christianity Today* published pro and con articles side by side: James Skillen, executive director of the Association for Public Justice, a Christian think tank founded in 1977 by Dutch Calvinists, argued that education was the responsibility of the parent and that education funding should be divided among all those who educate children; R. G. Puckett, a Baptist minister and executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, argued that public education was the responsibility of the citizen. “Up until the 1840s Americans assumed almost without question that education was the concern of parents,” Skillen wrote. “Schools were not state supported, state founded, or state initiated.” Puckett framed the argument differently. “As a *citizen*, I am paying taxes to support the public school system,” he explained. “As a *parent*, I am paying tuition to send my daughters to Baptist universities.” 1920s and 1930s fundamentalists opposed public funding for parochial schools; during the 1980s, Falwell, LaHaye, and others came down solidly on the side of public funding for parochial schools in the form of vouchers and tuition tax credits. These individuals, after all, now had parochial schools of their own<sup>350</sup>

Still, approval of Christian schools was not universal. Some evangelicals worried that parents who sent their children to Christian schools would offload the responsibility of parenting on these schools; others voiced concerns that sending children to Christian schools would result in those students’ isolation, or that removing these students from the public schools would make

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<sup>349</sup> Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, “Academic Accreditation Quality or Compromise,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1983), 10-11. Ralph D. Mawdsley, “Pluralism in Education: Reality or Myth,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Nov. 1983), 31-34.

<sup>350</sup> James Skillen and R. G. Puckett, “Tuition Tax Credits: Debate and Rebuttal,” *Christianity Today*, July 16, 1982, pp. 24-28.

it only more difficult for non-Christian children to have access to the gospel. Kent R. Hunter, director of the Church Growth Analysis and Learning Center and author of *The Lutheran School: Opportunity for Mission*, disputed such negative perceptions of Christian schools in a 1981 *Christianity Today* article. “The first step is to establish a philosophy of ministry that recognizes the day school not only as an agency of nurture, but also as a vehicle of evangelism,” he wrote. “The harvest beyond the chalkboard is ripe with opportunity.” Hunter’s vision was predicated on a Christian school model that enrolled children whose parents were not church members and encouraged teachers to build bridges with these families and invite them into the church. Not every Christian school did this, however; some, relying more heavily on the greenhouse model, limited attendance to the like-minded.<sup>351</sup>

Race also continued to come up in discussions of Christian schools. By the 1980s, Christian school advocates themselves admitted that racism had played a role the founding of many Christian schools. “To our shame as evangelical Christians, many ‘Christian’ schools have been founded—and continue today—for the purpose of perpetuating racial segregation,” Bayly wrote in an article for *Christianity Today* in 1980. “In the Deep South in the ‘60s, there was a racist movement among private schools, and many called themselves Christian schools,” declared Ronald E. Johnson, vice president of Accelerated Christian Education, a Christian school curriculum company. “There’s a big difference between what those old white-flight schools were in the Deep South and what Christian schools are today.”<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> For concerns about parents’ motivations, see Robert Billings, “Christian Schools Assembling a Winning Team,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1987), 21-22. Kent R. Hunter, “Christian Day Schools: An Open Door to the Unchurched,” *Christianity Today*, May 29, 1981.

<sup>352</sup> Bayly, “Why I’m for Christian Schools.” For Ronald E. Johnson, see Parsons, “The Fourth ‘R’.” See also Billings, “Christian Schools Assembling a Winning Team.”

Of course, even Christian schools founded during the 1970s and beyond frequently had a predominantly or entirely white student body. In 1987, Parsons estimated that the student body of Christian schools had a minority enrollment of only 4%, compared with a nationwide minority enrollment of 26.7%. Parsons quoted several members of Christian school boards insisting that they had done everything they could to reach out to African American students, with no success. Some African American parents may have kept their children out of white Christian schools due to concern that their children would face overt or covert racism, but there were likely other factors at play. Many Christian schools simply reflected the racial segregation of the churches that founded them. African American parents were also less likely than white parents to be able to afford the cost of Christian schools, and many black parents were likely not interested in opting out of a public school system they had only recently gained full access to.<sup>353</sup>

### **Bringing the Children Home**

The modern homeschool movement began in the 1970s among progressive critics of traditional schooling, and was popularized most heavily by radical educational reformer John Holt and Seventh Day Adventist Raymond Moore. In *Home Grown Kids*, published in 1981, Moore urged parents to teach their children at home until around age ten, arguing that the early years were critical for children's educational, emotional, and spiritual development. Moore's insistence that homeschooling during the early years strengthened family bounds and gave children a firm spiritual grounding held instant appeal for many parents.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter-Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 148. Parsons, *Inside America's Christian Schools*, 113-126, esp. 114.

<sup>354</sup> Milton Gaither, *Homeschool: An American History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 122-34. Raymond Moore, *Home Grown Kids: A Practical Handbook for Teaching Your Children at Home* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1981).

In 1983, after reading Moore's *Home Grown Kids*, Christian psychiatrist James Dobson had Moore on his popular radio show and publicly endorsed homeschooling. Dobson gained a large following after the publication of his 1970 book, *Dare to Discipline*, and founded Focus on the Family in 1977 to promote his ideas about childrearing and the family. Soon a household name among conservative evangelicals, Dobson's Focus on the Family became one of a panoply of Christian Right organizations active during the 1980s and his popular radio show was broadcast on 200 Christian radio stations nationwide. Dobson's interview with Moore generated the highest volume of mail the show had ever received, and raised the profile of homeschooling. A growing number of parents, particularly those who had become disillusioned with Christian schools or found them inaccessible, began turning to education in the home.<sup>355</sup>

Falwell's *Fundamentalist Journal* provided positive coverage of homeschooling throughout the 1980s. In a 1985 article, Ann Wharton, professor of journalism at Falwell's Liberty University, wrote about a family in Louisiana that began homeschooling "after they realized that their son's Christian school was using state adopted textbooks and offering leisure reading that promoted the theory of evolution to second graders." Wharton also interviewed Vicki Farris, the wife of Christian Right lawyer Michael Farris, who began homeschooling when her daughter had a "change in attitude toward the family" after she started first grade at a Christian school; Vicki attributed this change to peer pressure. "I really missed having her at home," Vicki told Wharton. "I felt I was losing out on my relationship with my daughter." In an 1988 article, Kay Raysor interviewed Ann Schrader, who began homeschooling after becoming "concerned about the language and attitudes" she saw "even in Christian schools." Schrader told

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<sup>355</sup> James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970). Balmer, *Encyclopedia*, 177-78. Gaither, *Homeschool*, 132-34. On mail, see Dean Merrill, "Schooling at Mother's Knee: Can It Compete?" *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1983.

Raysor that her children, “who had always been in Christian schools, were not growing spiritually.” One family began homeschooling when they were no longer able to afford Christian school; another started after struggling with the commute to a Christian school.<sup>356</sup>

While some parents began homeschooling over concerns about their children’s Christian schools, Raysor wrote, others came to have “a conviction that God never intended kids to be educated by other people.” Vicki Farris, Wharton wrote in her article, came to believe that “parents are responsible to train their children” and that “God gave [my child] to me, and I was giving that responsibility to others.” Faith O’Brien used similar language to explain her motivations for homeschooling: “I have very strong convictions that the Lord has given us our children, and no one can replace us as parents.” Homeschooling father Peter Yarema appealed to scripture in an interview for an article in *Christianity Today*: “Deuteronomy 6 is very clear ... that *we* are to teach our children what they need for a living—not someone else,” Yarema said. “Proverbs speaks again and again about fathers and mothers instructing their offspring. Even if there were a Christian school down the block, we wouldn’t send our three. Teaching them is *our* job.” For these parents, homeschooling was not a fallback; it became a biblical mandate.<sup>357</sup>

Homeschooling also promised a solution to a longstanding concern: fundamentalist and evangelical leaders had worried for decades that the family was pulled apart, each member over-extended in a myriad of activities outside of the home. One homeschooling mother, Pat, stated that having her six children in school had meant that her family was “pulled in so many different

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<sup>356</sup> Ann Wharton, “Me? Teach My Kids?” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1985), 24-26. Kay Raysor, “Home-Schooling The Parents' Perspective,” *ibid.* (Sept. 1988), 16-18, 38. For more, see Dean Merrill, “Schooling at Mother's Knee: Can It Compete?” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1983.

<sup>357</sup> Kay Raysor, “Home-Schooling The Parents' Perspective,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1988), 16-18, 38. Wharton, “Me? Teach My Kids?” Eric E. Wiggin, “Is Home Schooling an Alternative for Your Child?” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1985), 27. Dean Merrill, “Schooling at Mother's Knee: Can It Compete?” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1983, 16-21.

directions” to the extent that they “weren’t a family anymore, just people who lived in the same house and went some places together.” Homeschooling, Pat said, allowed them to be a family again, to slow down and create a family bond.<sup>358</sup> Not everyone was so resoundingly positive about homeschooling. In a 1983 article in *Christianity Today*, Dean Merrill, a Christian publisher employed as executive editor of *Christianity Today’s Leadership Journal*, designed for pastors and others in ministry, outlined some of the drawbacks of homeschooling: “Homeschooling, in the end, amounts to a trade-off of sorts,” he wrote. “Family closeness is gained at the expense of the varied experiences of school.” One mother homeschooling a teenage daughter told Merrill that “the problem of friends is a major source of discontent. We are still praying for a solution to this. She misses being with the other boys and girls on a regular basis.”<sup>359</sup>

Merrill paired his article with a short story titled “the home school that didn’t work.” There, he wrote about Linda, who started homeschooling her son Mark after he began having stomach aches in kindergarten. “The one Christian school nearby was too high pressured, and the other was too expensive,” she explained. “I read a lot by Raymond Moore and the others, and in August we finally decided to keep Mark home for first grade.” As the year went on, Linda found it hard to homeschool while also caring for two preschoolers, and some of the hopes she had had for field trips and activities did not work out. Worried about making an upcoming move with no school transcripts, she enrolled Mark at the local public school in April. “His first grade teacher

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<sup>358</sup> Kay Raysor, “Home-Schooling The Parents’ Perspective,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1988), 16-18, 38. Ann Wharton, “Me? Teach My Kids?” *ibid.* (Sept. 1985), 24-26. Eric E. Wiggin, “Is Home Schooling an Alternative for Your Child?” *ibid.* (Sept. 1985), 27.

<sup>359</sup> Dean Merrill, “Schooling at Mother's Knee: Can It Compete?” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1983, 16-21, esp. 21, 19

turned out to be a Christian,” Linda told Merrill. “He seems happy now in school,” she added. “Maybe I gave him the breather he needed.”<sup>360</sup>

Finally, Merrill spoke with Spencer Sawyer, who was taught at home through eighth grade in the 1940s. Merrill does not offer any details as to why Sawyer was homeschooled; before the advent of the modern homeschool movement in the 1970s, rural children were sometimes taught at home due to the lack of a school close enough to attend. Some children were also taught at home due to illness; being homeschooled for elective reasons was rare. In his 2008 history of homeschooling, education professor Milton Gaither profiled a family that went off the grid and homeschooled during the 1950s under the influence of the Catholic Worker movement. Gaither termed the family “a true anomaly” during that period. Regardless of why Sawyer was homeschooled, his reflections pushed back against the framework used by some of the most adamant homeschool promoters. “Sooner or later, kids have to mix it up in society,” Sawyer told Merrill. “I wouldn’t say I regret being taught at home, but Christianity has to be lived in the real world. You can’t avoid the four-letter words forever.”<sup>361</sup>

Such concerns were not limited to articles in mainstream evangelical publications like *Christianity Today*. In a 1988 article in the *Fundamentalist Journal*, Larry L. Kiser, an administrator at Southside Christian School in Greenville, South Carolina, also offered a critique of homeschooling: “The artificial absence of peer pressure may be pleasant, but does that build resiliency?” he asked. “Children learn to resist peer pressure by confrontation, not by avoidance.” Kiser urged parents who might be considering homeschooling to look critically at their own strengths and weaknesses, and to start homeschooling slowly, perhaps with only one child at a time. He cautioned homeschooling parents against “spiritual snobbery,” and

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<sup>360</sup> Merrill, “A Home School That Didn’t Work,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1983, 18.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19. Gaither, *Homeschool*, 83-85.

recommended that they encourage their children “to have positive attitudes toward children in traditional schools.” Whether children should be sheltered from pressures until they were older, or whether they were best served by experiencing them and growing through them now, would become a perennial conversation in an era of Christian schools and homeschooling.<sup>362</sup>

### **The Public School as Mission Field**

The majority of fundamentalist and evangelical parents continued to send their children to public schools during the 1980s. In some cases, these parents may have been satisfied with their local public schools; in other cases they may have had no other options. But enrollment in the public schools was not always a product of necessity alone. Many parents saw the public schools as a mission field. Even Falwell noted that “[t]otal Christian abandonment of the public schools will leave millions of this nation’s young people helpless victims of secular humanism.”<sup>363</sup> In a 1984 *Fundamentalist Journal* article, Dale G. Watt, an educational consultant with the Blaney Institute, a conservative think tank located in Madison, Wisconsin, warned that Christian parents had neglected their “responsibility to influence the public schools,” adding that “our participation in the system can make a vital difference.” He offered a list of examples: “We must be involved—attend school functions, communicate with teachers, serve on committees, as aids, and share with teachers materials that present the Christian worldview.” Parents, Watt argued, could change the local public schools and support their children’s faith by showing up at their child’s schools day after day.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Larry L. Kiser, “Home Education: A Realistic View,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1988), 14-15, 38.

<sup>363</sup> Falwell, “Who Is Responsible for Educating Children?”

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*; Dale G. Watt, “Influencing Public Education: The Christian’s Responsibility,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1984), 29-30.

In a 1982 article for *Christianity Today*, Barbara J. Hampton, a homemaker in Wooster, Ohio, made a personal appeal to her fellow parents: “I want to suggest three reasons why Christian parents should be seen frequently in their children’s public school,” she wrote, “first, it is right; second, it will encourage the children; third, it will open up opportunities for sharing our faith.” In contrast to Bayly’s positioning of the public schools as Canaan, Hampton compared them to Jerusalem, where Jesus preached at the end of his life. “If we never venture out into it,” she wrote, “men will not see our good works and praise our Father in heaven.” Hampton suggested that as other parents “abandon to the public schools the raising of their children,” Christian parents who were involved and present in their children’s schools had increased opportunities to influence their children’s classmates.<sup>365</sup>

“I do not dismiss lightly the legitimate concerns over whether an alternative religious system is being taught—though perhaps not consciously—in the public schools,” Hampton wrote. “On the contrary, that very concern should make our presence in the public school even more imperative.” The public schools, she wrote, were a battlefield. “Dirty words are scrawled on bathroom walls. Deskmates swear. Fights break out on the playground. A few boast of real or imagined sexual exploits. Many have as their constant frame of reference those TV shows our children are not allowed to watch. And most important, God is not publicly acknowledged as the Lord of learning.” Hampton was not against Christian schools; she began her article by disclosing that she herself had gone to a Christian school and that she treasured her experience there. That option, she said, was not available to her children. Hampton’s belief that parents who sent their children to a public school were sending them into a war zone drove her insistence on parental involvement: “Our children need to know that we care how they live in such an

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<sup>365</sup> Barbara J. Hampton, “Why Some Parents Go to School with the Kids: Public Schools Are a Slice of Every Christian’s Mission,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 3, 1982, 24-25.

atmosphere, for they are the vulnerable front-line soldiers in the battle of world views,” she wrote.<sup>366</sup>

Still, Hampton’s approach was not merely pragmatic or driven by necessity. “In urging this involvement, I am actually urging only for Christian involvement in the world,” she wrote. “It is the hurting world, daily showing one of its most vulnerable faces in the classroom of the public school; children who have been abused, children who have had no breakfast (or little attention), children batted back and forth between divorced parents, children who have physical or mental handicaps, children of a scorned minority or with a halting foreign accent.” She went on: “I admit it gives me great pleasure when a small, black boy shyly asks me to read again *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, or when a scrawny girl peers through her bangs to tell me that her grandmother is going to crochet a Christmas gift ‘for my teacher, and the mother that reads to us.’ And I know the joy of children crowding around to show me their cuts or special rocks or racing cars.”<sup>367</sup>

After painting a vivid picture of her involvement in her children’s public school, Hampton called other parents to similar efforts. “Opportunities wait behind every schoolhouse door,” she wrote. “God has not abandoned his children in the public schools of America. He is still Lord of all the subjects they study and the relationships they form. He still holds Christian parents accountable for both demonstrating and encouraging their sons and daughters toward increasing Christlikeness in their schools. He still calls us to the joy of serving in that needy mission field just down the street.”<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

If the public schools were a mission field, parents were not the only ones serving in them. In a 1985 *Fundamentalist Journal* article, Christian author Angela Elwell Hunt wrote about the influence of teachers. “How can a teacher integrate a secular curriculum and the gospel without offending the local ACLU chapter?” she asked. Hunt interviewed a 32-year veteran ninth-grade English teacher, Wanda Schlafly. “At the beginning of the year I tell the students that I am a Christian, that I love the Lord, that they better not swear, that I won’t put up with vulgar language,” Schlafly responded to Hunt’s question. “By telling them right up front that I’m a Christian, I have laid the background for the things that will come up later.”<sup>369</sup>

Schlafly went on to outline some of the ways she might brought the gospel into her classroom: “For instance, in an assignment to verbally describe a scene, so others can visualize it, I describe a missionary trip my husband and I made to Africa. I casually mention that I believe everyone needs to hear the gospel at least once, and my students will ask, ‘what is the gospel?’ If they ask the question, I can stop and explain it to them.” As Hunt explained, “When the class studies Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Wanda enlarges on the priest’s description of God’s grace and explains that grace is ‘God’s riches at Christ’s expense,’ and she gives step-by-step instructions on how to be saved.” In this way, Hunt wrote: “During the 180 days with her students, Wanda consistently and effortlessly intermingles her personal religious views into classroom discussions.”<sup>370</sup>

Hunt interviewed other teachers who described approaches less heavy handed than that of Schlafly. “I don’t think you can be a Christian and not let it show through your words and actions,” Janis Baldwin, a third grade teacher in a Cincinnati suburb, told Hunt. Jackie Reynolds,

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<sup>369</sup> Angela Elwell Hunt, “Public Schools: The Largest Mission Field,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1985), 21-22.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

a fellow third grade teacher at the same school, offered a similar perspective: “My Christian life is evident in how I love my students. If they can’t read the gospel, they are going to read my life. My Christian witness is evident in how I love them, how I reach them, and how I discipline them.” Schlafly, too, referenced love: “We’re not going to win them all, or even half, or even a fourth, but if that seed of love is planted, sometime along the way someone else will water and God will give the increase.” If the public schools were mission fields, that made Christian teachers missionaries.<sup>371</sup>

### **A Provocative Approach**

Parents could also serve as lookouts watching for objectionable materials. Crater, the Georgia pastor who wrote in *Christianity Today* of “the imposition of a government-backed religion,” encouraged parents to scrutinize their children’s materials in order to learn the “true nature” of the curricula at their local public schools. “Parents have a right to know what their children are being taught,” he wrote in 1981. Books published by figures in the Christian Right and the Christian school movement echoed the same theme. “Check the list of movies or filmstrips and examine recommended reading material assigned junior- and senior-high-school students,” LaHaye urged parents, referring specifically to sex education programs. “If you, like many parents, get nowhere with your principal, then either arouse other parents or find a group and join their vigorous campaigns. Formally appeal to the school board,” he advised. “If this fails, consider a recall movement.” Barton and Whitehead closed their 1980 book with an action handbook. “We have argued that you have the God-given power to change our schools,” they

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<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

wrote. “Now we would like to guide you to the many ways in which you can ‘dig in’ and ‘let your light shine’ in the darkened corridors of our public schools.”<sup>372</sup>

The language these authors used was often inflammatory. “It is very difficult to keep sex-education films from becoming pornographic and erotic, particularly if they are produced by people who see nothing wrong with pornography,” LaHaye told his readers. Anti-sex-education crusader John Steinbacher titled his 1970 book *The Child Seducers*. “When you consider that the ultimate goal of warfare is the control of the vanquished by the victor, we are therefore, in the greatest conflict of the history of mankind,” educational critic Joseph P. Bean declared in 1972 in a pamphlet titled *Public Education: River of Pollution*. “Welcome to World War III.” Jerry Falwell’s call was equally forceful: “I am convinced that the answer to our national dilemma in education lies in the hands of the parents of schoolchildren,” he wrote in 1983. “We must rise up and demand change and demand it now! Preachers and politicians may be ignored, but millions of angry parents will be heard.” But such provocative approaches frequently did not make for effective communication with school boards.<sup>373</sup>

In 1985, *Christianity Today* published an article by Charles L. Glenn, director of urban education and equity efforts for the Massachusetts Department of Education, titled “Why Public Schools Won’t Listen.” In his article, Glenn drew parallels between evangelicals’ concerns and the efforts of various minority groups to see their children’s needs met in the public school

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<sup>372</sup> Timothy D. Crater, “The Unproclaimed Priests of Public Education,” *Christianity Today*, April 10, 1981, p. 44-47. LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 167, 170-71. Barton and Whitehead, *Schools on Fire*, 146. Some authors urged parents to evaluate the curriculum at any school they considered their children attending. See Dave Raney, “Public School vs. Christian School: Which Is Right for Your Child?” *Moody Monthly* (Sept. 1978); and Robert W. Smith, “How Does Your Child’s School Measure Up?” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1989), 32-34.

<sup>373</sup> LaHaye, *Battle for the Public Schools*, 129. Joseph P. Bean, *Public Schools: River of Pollution* (Fullerton, Ca.: Educator Publications, 1972), 18. John Steinbacher, *The Child Seducers* (Fullerton, Ca.: Educator Publications, 1970). Falwell, “Who Is Responsible for Educating Children?”

curriculum. “[W]e educators could not do our job well if advocates for the rights of poor children, minority children, girls, and children with special needs were not constantly raising issue and demanding a response,” he wrote. “What is troubling about the concerns raised by evangelicals, though, is that they are *not getting through*.” Glenn wrote that in all of his reading of the education press and consulting with state-level counterparts across the country, “I have found virtually no understanding of what evangelicals are saying about public schools, or why they are upset.”<sup>374</sup>

Glenn was a member of the mainline Episcopal Church. Still, he was bothered enough by the way he saw evangelicals’ concerns being treated by education officials—and sympathetic enough to their concerns—to pen an article in which he drew on his knowledge and expertise as a state education official to offer them advice. “I want to suggest that evangelicals have not raised their concerns in a form to which public educators can relate,” Glenn wrote. “I will suggest how to translate a major evangelical concern into the accepted language of policy and practice within public education—what can be done now, within present structures and laws.”<sup>375</sup>

Parents worried that Christianity was not being included in textbooks covering the nation’s past, Glenn wrote, should approach the issue with school officials as a matter of fairness. “Emphasize that you have exactly the same concern that black parents have, that their children be told about the contributions and special perspectives of black Americans,” he wrote. “By using the analogy with other concerns and by talking about what you want to see included rather than what you want taken out, you can avoid identification as a ‘book burner’ or censor.” Glenn drew on the success of other groups in having their perspectives represented in the public

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<sup>374</sup> Charles L. Glenn, “Why Public Schools Won’t Listen,” *Christianity Today*, Sept. 20, 1985, p. 13-16, esp. 13-14.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

schools as a model. “The fact that public schools have responded to the demand for ‘multicultural, gender-fair’ curriculum strengthens your argument that fairness demands that religious faith also not be ignored.” Glenn called on evangelical parents to present themselves as one more minority group in the panoply of American ideas and beliefs rather than as the dominant or majority perspective.<sup>376</sup>

In the decades since *Engel* and *Schempp*, evangelicals and fundamentalists had sought to induce public schools to include classes on the Bible as literature. Glenn urged individuals pushing for such classes to accept that these classes should not involve evangelizing students, while also ensuring that they did not center on “debunking.” “Should not evangelicals support anything that makes students feel that religion is important and interesting to learn about?” he asked, suggesting that the classes could be valuable even absent proselytizing. Similarly, Glenn suggested that evangelical parents present released-time religious education classes as an option similar to remedial, enrichment, and advanced classes and programs available in the school. “If some students are leaving the school for classes at the planetarium, why should others not go to a church?” he asked. “If the seventh period of the day is used for mini courses, why not allow religious instruction to be one of them?”<sup>377</sup>

“The multitude of court rulings and the restrictions written into state and federal constitutions do not mean that Christian parents must either use non-public schools or subject their children to an education in which their faith is ignored or subtly denigrated,” Glenn assured his readers. “There are a number of approaches that may be pursued without seeking to polarize a community or impose Christian practices or perspectives on children whose parents object.” His primary concern was framing: “By suggesting variations on practices with which school

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<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

administrators are already familiar, and by identifying their concerns with those of other groups accommodated by public education in the interest of fairness, evangelicals could make substantial progress in meeting their educational goals for their own children,” he wrote. “At the same time, they can increase the capacity of public schools to respond to the pluralism in our society.”<sup>378</sup>

In 1988, the *Fundamentalist Journal* published a similar critique by Frank C. Nelsen, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. An evangelical as well as an academic, Nelsen drew on themes from his 1987 book, *Public Schools: An Evangelical Appraisal*. In his book, Nelsen addressed LaHaye’s claims about secular humanism point by point. “Is there a grand conspiracy on the part of public educators to bring the secular humanism of Manifestos I and II into the schools?” Nelsen asked. “There seems to be no hard evidence for any conspiracy. But another question should be raised: Are the ideas and philosophy contained in the manifestos in the curriculum of the public schools?” Nelsen answered this question in the affirmative: “Although the humanistic literature written by public and university educators does not specifically refer to the Humanist Manifestos, yet this literature does seem to reflect much of the spirit and philosophic assumptions of the manifestos.”<sup>379</sup>

It was LaHaye’s tactics that came in for the greatest criticism. “When fundamentalists object to such books as *Cinderella*, *Macbeth*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Catcher in the Rye*, and others, they do their cause, their children, and the public school a disservice,” Nelsen wrote. “Rather than have books banned or withdraw their children from

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>379</sup> Frank C. Nelsen, “When Christian Parents Meet the Public School,” *Fundamentalist Journal* (Sept. 1988), 12-13, 64. Frank C. Nelsen, *Public Schools: An Evangelical Appraisal* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), esp. 86-87, 89. See also Mark Noll, review of *Public Schools: An Evangelical Appraisal*, by Frank C. Nelsen, *Journal of Church & State*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter 1989), 153.

reading classes, parents ought to spend time with their children in open discussion, not indoctrination, as to why they object to certain books used in the public schools.” In his article, he noted that “school administrators often find Evangelicals and Fundamentalists tough to deal with.”<sup>380</sup> This was a problem with a solution. “Christian parents are more effective with public school personnel when they lower their emotional level,” Nelsen informed his readers. “Being in control and logically presenting a point of view based on solid facts is the best method,” he added, acknowledging that this “may not be easy when parents feel strongly about an issue that affects their children.” Like Glenn, Nelsen addressed framing. “Educators are impressed when well-informed parents express concern not only for their own children, but for all the children in the school district,” he noted. “Learning some of the terms used by professional educators is helpful,” he added.<sup>381</sup>

While much of Nelsen’s advice was similar to Glenn’s, Nelsen spent more time than Glenn taking education officials to task. “Evangelical attitudes do not give administrators and teachers or school board members the right to treat concerned Christian parents as second-class citizens, or to ignore or ridicule their deep-seated concerns,” he wrote. “If school administrators and teachers had a better understanding of the biblical point of view, Christian parents might be more cooperative.” Nelsen urged school officials to learn more about evangelicals and fundamentalists and their history, and argued that school officials should remember that—“more often than not”—evangelical and fundamentalist youth “come from homes where they are taught a strong value system” and “bring stability, discipline, and respect for authority to the local school.” School officials, Nelsen argued, should treat Christian parents with respect.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Nelsen, *Public Schools*, 193. Nelsen, *When Christian Parents Meet the Public School*, 13.

<sup>381</sup> Nelsen, *When Christian Parents Meet the Public School*, 13.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

For two decades, conservative activists had engaged in the sort of provocative language and tactics Glenn and Nelsen both argued was ineffective. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when parents in Anaheim, California, and elsewhere rose against new sex education curricula, they traded apocryphal stories about teachers who herded second graders into closets and told them to “feel” each other and teachers who got carried away and stripped naked in front of their classes. The 1974 Kanawha County, West Virginia, textbook protests devolved into school bus shootings and bomb threats. By encouraging conservative evangelical parents to connect their arguments to those of African American and feminist school activists—and by urging them to “lower their emotional level”—Glenn and Nelsen sought to offer these parents a way to escape such notoriety and negative publicity.<sup>383</sup>

### **Mozart v. Hawkins**

The textbook protest Vicki Frost initiated in Hawkins County, Tennessee, in 1983 was exactly the kind of media spectacle Glenn and Nelsen hoped could be avoided. After Frost’s public meeting, where she shared her concerns with the community, a group of concerned parents spoke before the School Board of Hawkins County. “Secular humanism is a religion, according to the U.S. Supreme Court,” declared Wilson. Bob Mozert, a fellow parent who agreed with Frost’s contentions, argued that the lightning bolts in an illustration in the books promoted sorcery. Frost told the school board that they would be “liable to a lawsuit if a child were to learn

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<sup>383</sup> On sex education, see Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battles over Sex Education in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Kristin Luker, *When Sex Goes to School: Warring Views on Sex—and Sex Education—Since the Sixties* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

mind control from the books and use it on his parents.” Later, Frost declared that “I would rather my children have an F than be taught demonology.”<sup>384</sup>

After a cold reception from the school board, Frost and a group of parents formed Citizens Organized for Better Schools (COBS), with Mozert as their leader. They continued to speak at school board meetings. In November, the school board dismissed the parents’ complaints. The district had already purchased the Holt readers and did not have money to replace them. Besides, the members of the school board did not understand what the problem was: they did not see anything wrong with the readers. Just before Thanksgiving, Rebecca and Marty Frost were suspended for refusing to participate in reading class. When Frost went to the elementary school proposing to take her third child out of her classroom and tutor her during reading time, she was arrested for trespassing on school property. In desperation, Frost and the other parents reached out to Concerned Women for America lawyer Michael Farris.<sup>385</sup>

Tim LaHaye’s wife, Beverly LaHaye, founded Concerned Women for America (CWA) in 1979 to undermine feminist activists’ contention that they spoke for the women of America. CWA, which championed a range of Christian Right issues, decided to take Frost’s case; Farris would represent the parents. According to reporter Stephen Bates, “within a few weeks, the conflict was a centerpiece of CWA fundraising appeals.” Over the next few years, while Frost’s children attended a local Christian school, the case wended its way through the courts. People for the American Way, a progressive organization founded in 1981 to oppose the Christian Right,

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<sup>384</sup> *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, 827 F.2d 1958 (1987). For the school board meeting, see Bates, *Battleground*, 33-34, 36. For additional treatments of *Mozert*, see David Worth Dellinger, “‘My Way or the Highway’: The Hawkins County Textbook Controversy” (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1991); and R. Andrew Lugg, “Accommodations for Religious Minorities v. Special Education Accommodations: A Legal Analysis of *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1997).

<sup>385</sup> Bates, *Battleground*, 38-39, 89-92, 96-100, 107-112, 117-118.

represented the school board. Frost's case became a proxy battle between two national political organizations in a wider "culture wars" confrontation.<sup>386</sup>

At the beginning of the case, Farris argued that the Holt readers taught "witchcraft, evolution, disobedience, and 'the religion of secular humanism.'" On one point the plaintiffs were right—the Holt readers did not contain any stories from the Bible, and no stories that referenced Christianity positively. The plaintiffs, however, did more than simply ask for the inclusion of positive portrayals of their history or beliefs. Instead, they objected to the inclusion of materials that they argued were offensive to their religion. By the time the case reached the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, Farris had shifted his approach, contending now that it did not factually matter whether the readers taught secular humanism—what mattered was that the plaintiffs stated that reading the books violated their religious beliefs. The courts, Farris said, should not be in the business of deciding whether stated religious objections were genuine or valid.<sup>387</sup>

In 1987, in *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, the Sixth Circuit held that simple exposure to beliefs contrary to one's religion did not violate the free exercise clause. "Our holding requires plaintiffs to put up with what they perceive as an unbalanced public school curriculum, so long as the curriculum does not violate the establishment clause," the justices held. "Every other sect or type of religious belief is bound by the same requirement." Frost lost more than the court case. She objected to such a wide range of materials that she became a national laughing stock. Even her neighbors in Hawkins County, Tennessee, felt that she went too far. Frost had objected to everything from *The Diary of Anne Frank* to *The Wizard of Oz*;

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<sup>386</sup> On Concerned Women for America, see Bates, *Battleground*, 100-104, 117-18. On People for the American Way, see *ibid.*, 124-30, 146-52.

<sup>387</sup> On "witchcraft," see Bates, *Battleground*, 156. On Michael Farris' initial legal strategy, see *ibid.*, 156-60. On what was in the textbooks, see *ibid.*, 203-210.

when she stated in court that her children were not allowed to watch certain TV programs, a *Cincinnati Post* headline announced: “Parent banned ‘Sesame Street’.” Concerned Women for America had enabled Frost’s case to go further and last longer than Moore’s had, but even they was unable to successfully control its press coverage.<sup>388</sup>

In *Mozert*, the plaintiffs and the defense disagreed on which side was promoting diversity. “We’re asking for diversity in choice,” Farris said, “they’re asking for uniformity in coercion.” Dyk, the lawyer for the defense, argued that “it is the public schools who are in favor of diverse education, and the plaintiffs in this case who are fundamentally against it.”<sup>389</sup> Feminist and African American activists approached school reform through the lens of identity politics. They presented themselves as minority interest groups and asked for inclusion in the process. Falwell, in contrast, named his political action group the “Moral Majority.” Kantzer, the editor of *Christianity Today*, warned that *Engel* and *Schempp* had “deprived our nation of communicating its religious heritage to its citizens” and argued that the prayer amendment had become “the symbol of whether or not America still has the will to claim itself to be a nation under God.” While cultural alienation was nothing new, conservative evangelicals often saw themselves as a minority that *ought* to be the majority, or that had a God-given or historical right to drive the direction of the nation. Did they want a mere chair at the table—or the table itself?<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 267. Glenn, “Why Public Schools Won’t Listen,” 16.

<sup>390</sup> Bates, *Battleground*, 12-13.

## Epilogue

In 1989, amid financial trouble and tainted by the sexual and financial scandals that engulfed his close associate, televangelist Jim Baker, Jerry Falwell closed the doors on the Moral Majority, an organization he had founded only ten years before. Meanwhile, televangelist Pat Robertson's failed 1988 run for president led some to ask whether that the Christian Right was faltering. In 1989, the same year the Moral Majority shuttered, Robertson tapped Ralph Reed, an individual who had both Republican political experience and a recent conversion experience, to run the Christian Coalition, a new organization that would use the mailing list from Robertson's presidential campaign to amplify conservative evangelical views in national politics.<sup>391</sup>

In his work as head of the Christian Coalition, Reed focused primarily on leveraging influence within the Republican Party, often behind the scenes. "It's like guerrilla warfare," Reed said. "If you reveal your location, all it does is allow your opponents to improve his artillery bearings." The goal, Reed said in 1991, was "to see a working majority of the Republican Party in the hands of pro-family Christians by 1996 or sooner." His efforts proved extraordinarily successful. In 1994, the Republican Party swept the midterm elections under the leadership of house minority whip Newt Gingrich, a close associate of Reed's. At a press conference in the following May, Reed released the Christian Coalition's "Contract with the American Family," a document that laid out positions on a range of Christian Right social issues. Gingrich and a "phalanx" of other Republican leaders participated in the press conference, endorsing Reed's

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<sup>391</sup> On Jerry Falwell, see Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 212-13. On Pat Robertson, see *ibid.*, 491-93.

contract. “Republicans now almost universally consider Christian conservatives a foundation of their political coalition,” the *Los Angeles Times* declared.<sup>392</sup>

The first agenda item listed in the Contract with the American Family was a “Religious Equality Amendment” to ensure that “all citizens, including students, would be free to express their faith in non compulsory settings in ways that affirm their convictions without infringing on the rights of others.” The document claimed that children had been expelled for praying silently before meals, or told that they could not read the Bible during quiet reading time. “Simply hearing others pray may be unpleasant for some students, but isn’t that the price of freedom of speech?” the Contract with the American Family queried. While Congress did consider Reed’s proposed amendment, the amendment failed to gain the votes it needed, largely due to concern that it might weaken the protections of the First Amendment.<sup>393</sup>

It is the third item listed in the Contract with the American Family’s agenda is of particular interest: “Promoting School Choice.” “America’s public school system once epitomized what was right about America,” the Christian Coalition declared. Trumpeting declines in test scores and decrying centralization and bureaucracy, the document warned that “a number of schools have adopted politically correct curricula that do not correspond to either the academic needs or the personal values of students and their parents” and that issues “from school prayer and sex education to dress codes and cultural emphasis ... create great turmoil in families and schools alike.” The solution, the Christian Coalition contended, was to allow parents “to spend their education dollars at the school of their choice” through vouchers and other public

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<sup>392</sup> On Ralph Reed, see *ibid.*, 478-79. On the Christian Coalition, see *ibid.*, 132-33; and Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 303-328. Christian Coalition, *Contract with the American Family* (Nashville: Moorings, 1995). Ronald Brownstein, “GOP Leaders Embrace Christian Coalition Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1995.

<sup>393</sup> “Restoring Religious Equality,” in *Contract with the American Family*, 1-12, esp. 1, 9.

funding for private and parochial schools. In another section, “Local Control of Education,” the contract called for abolishing the Department of Education, “the nexus for interest groups and bureaucrats. While Reed’s Christian Coalition did not represent all evangelicals—the evangelical Left, in particular, kept its distance—the days of universal support for public education had ended, replaced by a growing emphasis among conservative evangelicals on school choice, privatization, and dismantlement.<sup>394</sup>

### **Successes and Setbacks**

In the decades that followed the 1980s, conservatives gained wide influence over the nation’s sex education programs. While conservatives initially sought to prevent schools from implementing sex education programs they disapproved of, they soon turned instead to developing sex education programs of their own, with a high degree of success. Beginning in the 1990s, programs that promoted abstinence from sexual activity before marriage, such as True Love Waits and The Silver Ring Thing, gained entrance to public school classrooms across the country. As part of such programs teens signed sexual celibacy pledges, and received silver rings meant to symbolize abstinence. Dozens of states passed legislation requiring public schools to provide abstinence education, and federal and state governments have provided programs that promote sexual celibacy until marriage with billions of dollars in funding since the 1990s.<sup>395</sup>

Creationist groups have been unable to replicate conservative success with abstinence education programs in the science classroom. After the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state laws that required schools to teach “creation science” in *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987), creationist

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<sup>394</sup> “Promoting School Choice,” in *Contract with the American Family*, 23-36, esp. 23, 29-30, 28. “Local Control of Education,” in *Contract with the American Family*, 13-22, esp. 20.

<sup>395</sup> Janice M. Irvine, *Talk about Sex: The Battle over Sex Education in the Untied States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 187-91. John S. Santelli, “Abstinence-Only Education: Politics, Science, and Ethics,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Fall 2006), 835-58.

groups continued promoting the same programs using the new language of “intelligent design.” Proponents of “intelligent design” argued that the theory was scientific, not religious. In 2004, the Dover Area School District in York County, Pennsylvania, mandated that biology teachers in the district present “intelligent design” to their students. A group of parents sued the district, and in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* (2005), U.S. District Court judge John E. Jones III found that “the overwhelming evidence at trial established that ID is a religious view, a mere re-labeling of creationism, and not a scientific theory.” Anti-evolution activists have yet to recover from the setback *Kitzmiller* dealt them and their efforts.<sup>396</sup>

In 1989, Leslea Newman self-published *Heather Has Two Mommies*, a children’s book about a young girl growing up with lesbian parents. A year later, Alyson Publications picked up *Heather* and another of Newman’s books, *Daddy’s Roommate*. In 1992, both books were included on a list of recommended books affixed to “Children of the Rainbow,” a multicultural curriculum guide for first grade teachers in New York City. After public outcry, the curriculum was revised to remove the offending books. The books next found their way to public library shelves around the same time, causing additional outcry. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, local parents and Christian Right organizations pushed back against curriculum and assignments that normalized gay and lesbian families and relationships.<sup>397</sup>

In 2002, James Dobson called on all parents to pull their children out of the public schools. “This godless and immoral curriculum and influence in the public schools is gaining

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<sup>396</sup> *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U. S. 578 (1987). *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School Dist.*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (MD Pa. 2005). See also Peter Irons, *God on Trial: Dispatches from America’s Religious Battlefields* (New York: Viking, 2007), 281-338.

<sup>397</sup> Leslie Newman, “Heather and Her Critics,” *Horn Book Magazine*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Mar./April 1997), 149-54. Opinion, “The Rainbow, Revised,” *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1993. For more on evangelical concerns that public schools were “pro-homosexual,” see Interview with James Dobson, *CNN Larry King Live*, Sept. 18, 2002.

momentum across the nation in ways that were unheard of just one year ago,” he wrote of programs designed to combat bullying promote acceptance of gay and lesbian identities. “It’s as though the dam has now broken and activists representing various causes, including homosexuality, are rushing through the breach in ways that are shocking.”<sup>398</sup>

### **Whither Prayer**

In April 1999, two teenagers shot and killed thirteen people at Columbine High School in Colorado. “You say, why are kids killing themselves, and why are they killing each other?” Robertson asked in the aftermath of the shooting. “Well, you just look back about 30-some years and you find, in my opinion, the principal reason,” he continued, referencing the Supreme Court decisions that struck down school prayer and Bible readings in the early 1960s. “We have allowed the Supreme Court to run roughshod over us, Lord, and we haven’t protested,” he lamented. Other Christian Right leaders made similar statements. “As a result of banning school prayer, the absolutes of the Judeo-Christian ethic have been replaced by situational ethics, moral skepticism and anti-Christian dogma,” declared Falwell in an attempt to explain the tragedy that had unfolded at Columbine. The Christian Coalition ran radio ads declaring: “It’s time for Congress to lift the ban on the expression of faith in our classrooms. Give your kids the opportunity to pray, and our teachers the freedom to discuss morality and decency.”<sup>399</sup>

As the nation reeled in the wake of such senseless loss of life, a school prayer case in rural Texas wound its way through the courts. On June 19, 2000, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 against the district’s policy of public prayer at school football games, in *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000). The school district had argued that the prayers, delivered by

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<sup>398</sup> Ted Olson, “Dobson Again Calls for Parents to Pull Kids Out of Public Schools,” *Christianity Today*, July 1, 2002.

<sup>399</sup> Joseph L. Conn, “Exploiting Tragedy,” *Church & State* (June 1999).

students, were “private student speech.” In the majority decision, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote that prayers that occurred “on school property, at school-sponsored events, over the public school’s public address system, by a speaker representing the student body, under the supervision of school faculty, and pursuant to a school policy that explicitly and implicitly encourages school prayer is not properly categorized as ‘private’ speech.”<sup>400</sup>

Evangelicals heralded the election of President George W. Bush in 2000. Bush expanded funding for faith-based nonprofit organizations and school-based programs promoting abstinence, frequently invoked God and his Christian faith, and spoke of finding ways to “get around” the First Amendment. As governor of Texas, Bush spoke favorably of school prayer when asked to comment on *Santa Fe*. Yet Congress failed to discuss a school prayer amendment during Bush’s eight years in office, and a disconnect emerged between Christian Right leaders’ endorsement of the importance of school prayer and Republican politicians’ lack of willingness to introduce and champion a school prayer amendment.<sup>401</sup>

In 2012, a man walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and left 20 first graders dead. Once again, Christian Right leaders invoked the removal of school prayer for the public schools as an explanation for the tragedy. “God is not going to go where he is not wanted,” declared Bryan Fischer, president of the American Family Association. “We have spent fifty years telling God to get lost, telling God we do not want you in our schools, we don’t want to pray to you in our schools.” Pastor and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee made similar comments: “Should we be so surprised that our schools would become a place of carnage?” he asked. “Because we’ve made it a place where we don’t want to talk about eternity.” Discussion of school prayer rarely takes place outside of such horrors. It is as though school

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<sup>400</sup> *Santa Fe Independent School Dist. v. Doe*, 530 U.S. 290 (2000).

<sup>401</sup> “Church, State, and the Bush Administration,” *Church & State* (Feb. 2001).

prayer has become an explanatory device brought up only after a school shooting, and then left unmentioned again until the next tragedy.<sup>402</sup>

### **School Choice**

By the end of the 1990s, support for school vouchers was closely associated with the Christian Right. In 1999, the Christian Coalition's new executive director, Randy Tate, called on the following year's presidential candidates to adopt an agenda of "defending the unborn, fighting for tax relief and school choice." School choice became central to these groups' political agenda in part because conservative evangelicals, like the Catholics whose efforts to obtain public education dollars they had opposed generations before, now had parochial schools of their own. But for some evangelicals and fundamentalists, this shift was about more than gaining access to public funding for their schools.<sup>403</sup>

In 2017, after winning the 2016 presidential election in a surprise upset, Donald Trump nominated Betsy DeVos for Secretary of the Department of Education. Critics noted that DeVos' background lay not in public education but in promoting private school vouchers and the conversion of conventional public schools into privately run public charter schools. DeVos, many objected, had made her career out of promoting the dissolution of public education. Yet for her conservative evangelical supporters, this was precisely the point. Almost across the board, Christian Right groups lauded Trump's choice, praising DeVos and her work. "As one of the

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<sup>402</sup> Michael McCluskey, *News Framing of School Shootings: Journalism and American Social Problems* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 101.

<sup>403</sup> Terry M. Neal, "GOP Hopefuls for 2000 Woo Religious Right," *Washington Post*, Feb. 6, 1999, p. A2. Benjamin Domenech, "Dobson's Choice: Why the Conservative Outsider's Agenda Worries GOP Leaders," *Washington Post*, April 19, 1998, p. C2. Megan Rosenfeld, "Donald Hodel: A Belief in Belief," *ibid.*, May 4, 1998, p. D1. Dana Milbank, "Congress Girds for Social Issues and Deadlock," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 27, 1996, p. A24. On state voucher bills in the early 2000s, see Adam Nosier, "In Louisiana, Inklings of a New (True) Champion of the Right," *New York Times* (June 2, 2008), p. A12.

nation’s highest-profile school-choice proponents, she would have unprecedented potential to introduce new parent-empowerment reforms that will shake up the status quo,” declared Focus on the Family.<sup>404</sup>

In one sense, we have arrived not far from where we started. DeVos grew up in a Christian Reformed Church (CRC) congregation in Michigan and attended Dutch Calvinist Christian schools through high school. The CRC, which established its own system of private schools in the nineteenth century, opposed American-style public education from the beginning. Indeed, the CRC was strongly influenced in its early years by Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch theologian and politician in the Netherlands who opposed the creation of a system of religiously neutral public schools in that country, arguing instead for a system where money followed the pupil to the school of the parent’s choice, including religious schools. While studying at Calvin College, a school affiliated with the CRC, DeVos came under the influence of Kuyper’s ideas about schools. DeVos’ adherence to Kuyper’s model explains her insistence in a recent interview that “we should be funding and investing in students, not in school buildings, not in institutions, not in systems,” as well as this 2015 statement: “Let the education dollars follow each child, instead of forcing the child to follow the dollars.”<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Focus on the Family Issue Analysts, “Elizabeth ‘Betsy’ DeVos,” *Focus on the Family*, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/understanding-the-issues/following-the-leaders/elisabeth-betsy-devos>.

<sup>405</sup> Willemien Otten, “The Hidden Roots of Betsy DeVos’s Educational Policies,” The Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Chicago Divinity School, May 25, 2017. Harry Van Dyke, “Government schools or Free schools? Abraham Kuyper addresses a long-standing controversy in the Dutch parliament,” *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies*, Vol 35, No. 2 (2014), 29-45. Todd Spangler, “Betsy DeVos flubs question about Michigan schools on ‘60 Minutes’,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 12, 2018. Prepared Remarks by Betsy DeVos, “Competition, Creativity & Choice in the Classroom,” March 11, 2015, <http://www.federationforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Betsy-SXSWedu-speech-final-remarks.pdf?e40fe9>.

In another sense, we have arrived very far from where we started. While Kuyper fought to make Christian schools a reality in the Netherlands, nineteenth century American evangelicals fought to prevent parochial schools from gaining access to public education dollars. During WWI, Christian schools affiliated with the CRC were burned due to suspicions that these schools, many of which still provided instruction in Dutch, were anti-American and de facto seditious. At mid-century, fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals remained opposed to even indirect funding for private schools. Today, Christian Right organizations, largely controlled by conservative evangelicals, are among the most active promoters of school choice, including both charter schools and public funding for private schools.<sup>406</sup>

To be sure, not all evangelicals supported DeVos' nomination, and those on the evangelical Left can be critical of inequalities perpetuated under the guise of school choice. *Sojourners*, a prominent evangelical Left publication, condemned DeVos' nomination. *Christianity Today* declined to either endorse or condemn DeVos, instead publishing an article by Andrea Ramirez, executive director of the Faith and Education Coalition for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Coalition, reminding readers of the importance of supporting strong public schools alongside school choice. "At this point, we know that 90 percent of America's children are in public schools," Ramirez said in an podcast with editor-in-chief Mark Galli and assistant editor Morgan Lee, "so I think that as believers we need to engage and think

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<sup>406</sup> Robert P. Swierenga, "Disloyal Dutch? Herman Hoeksema and the 'Flag in Church' Controversy during World War I," *Origins*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2007), 28-35. "School Choice: Talking Points," *Focus on the Family*, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/socialissues/education/school-choice/school-choice-talking-points>. "Education," *Concerned Women for America*, <https://concernedwomen.org/issues/education/>.

afresh about our personal engagement with strengthening the public schools whether our children are at public schools or not.”<sup>407</sup>

Even as Ramirez urged listeners to support local public schools and educational equity, Galli, Lee, and Ramirez treated school choice as a given. “I know in my neighborhood, I have quite a few neighbors who are Christians, many of the families do not send their children to the district schools,” Lee told Ramirez. “I’m wondering if it’s possible for Christians to still support their public schools regardless of whether their kids are attending these schools.” “Some Christians have withdrawn from the school system, primarily because they feel it is a school system that teaches, as they would put it, anti-Christian values or pagan values,” Galli noted, referencing acceptance for transgender identities in many public schools. “Why would you tell them to help a student become successful in that system?” Ramirez responded by arguing that Christians have an obligation to be salt and light to those outside their circles, reiterating her support for school choice, suggesting ways parents who homeschool or send their children to Christian, magnet, or charter schools might be able to come alongside and support their local district schools from without.

This may not be the story of Betsy DeVos, but it is the story of how a wide swath of evangelicals came to question the public schools and advocate school choice.

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<sup>407</sup> “How Betsy DeVos’ Education Plan Is at Odds with Christian Values,” *Sojourners* (May 2017), <https://sojo.net/magazine/may-2017/devos-plan-education-against-Christian-values>. Andrea Reyes Ramirez, “Under DeVos, the Real School Choice Christians Face,” *Christianity Today*, Feb. 7, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/february-web-only/under-devos-real-school-choice-christians-face.html>. Podcast, “What Will God Do with Betsy DeVos?” *Christianity Today*, Quick to Listen, episode 45, Feb. 9, 2017 <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/february-web-only/what-will-god-do-with-betsy-devos.html>.

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