

Prayer issue misleads

DESPITE THE accumulated wisdom of centuries that preserved separation between religion and the public schools, recent legislation in Congress supporting "equal access" for religious and other groups on school property and school time threatens the preservation of the rights and sensitivities of the diversity of religions represented by school children.

The rationale behind this bill and others that call for silent prayer in the public schools is that prayers will elevate our moral tone, rescue the American family, and save the nation from spiritual decline.

These arguments reflect wishful thinking rather than an honest and clear appraisal of our society and the people who comprise it.

WE ARE A country of many religions, and of diverse faiths. America has many institutions which provide for the existence of genuine pluralism in our country, and which express respect to each group, denomination, and community of faith.

The public school is one such institution. It is a place where children of various religious background study together and learn mutual concern for one another. Any practice which would divide children, rather than emphasize the importance of respecting the diverse groups which make up America, endangers the creative role of the public school in teaching the uniqueness of the American way of life.

Prayer is too personal and religion too important for the legislators to intrude upon. The relationship between human beings and their faith in God is as essential and deeply personal as any that life provides. It grows from family, faith, and tradition. And it comes in far too many varieties to be properly encompassed in a single school or public institution.

IF RELIGION has not taken root outside the public schools, it will not be acquired in the minutes between the taking of attendance and the opening

moral perspectives Rabbi Irwin Groner

of the textbook. It will not be acquired in study hall, the lunch hour, or assigned time.

Introducing prayer in the public schools, in any form, will embarrass the non-participating children, tempt teachers and administrators to push their own expressions of belief and breach the wall between church and state. The outcome will be especially painful to those whose religion places them in a minority in their classrooms, or whose families request that they not participate.

For many years, the courts have made it clear that the right to worship as one pleases is so private and so sensitive that government must maintain absolute neutrality, and must in fact abstain itself from this entire process. Current legislation and the attitudes of some political leaders violate the sacred ground that should be left to parents, church and synagogue, and private conscience.

THE MORAL Majority talks about "the right of little children to pray" but what it means is the power of a dominant group to compel conformity to its views.

As a teacher of religion, I affirm the importance of prayer and religious values in the life of an individual and society. I have dedicated my life to this purpose. But I affirm the wisdom of the first Amendment of our Constitution which leaves to the individual and the religious community content of religious beliefs and practices.

In a time when these fundamental values are challenged, I urge that we reaffirm the sanctity of private worship and the integrity of the public schools.

Drugs + alcohol = danger

Dear Joe: You often warn us in your column of the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol. I would appreciate it if you would enlarge on this subject as I like my before dinner martinis and I take several medications that have been prescribed for me by my doctor — who, by the way, has never discussed this subject with me.

Mr. Paul S.

Before I go into some detail about the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol, I would like to comment on whose responsibility it is to inform one's doctor as to the amount of alcohol consumed daily — and it is primarily that of the patient.

Maintaining and promoting good health should be everyone's lifelong commitment; and yes (of course), doctors and other health professionals are essential in helping us with this task — but gone are the days when we turned all the responsibilities for our physical and mental well-being over to our doctors.

When answering your question on the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol, I will look at certain classes of drugs, give an example of the name of a drug in that class and tell you what can happen if that drug is taken while consuming more than a moderate amount of alcohol.

A moderate amount of alcohol for a twenty-four hour period is one glass of wine, or a bottle of beer or a mixed drink. Martinis, with their mixture of gin and vermouth, should be avoided.

Drugs used for thinning the blood (anticoagu-

gerontology

A. Jolayne Farrell

lants), such as Warfarin, react when taken with more than a moderate amount of alcohol by increasing the possibility of hemorrhage. This is apparent when there is an increase in bleeding of the gums and generalized bruising. Sedative drugs (barbiturates) such as Phenobarb, tranquilizers such as Valium, antidepressants such as Tofranil, antihistamines such as Contac and narcotics, mainly Demerol, all react by increasing sedation and cause the nervous system to be depressed when taken with more than the above mentioned amount of alcohol.

Lastly, antibiotics such as Penicillin when taken with alcohol have a decrease in their germ killing action.

I'm sorry to give you the "bad news" about your martinis — but not telling your doctor about the amount of alcohol you drink daily, prior to his ordering your medication, is not fooling him — it is cheating yourself.



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