

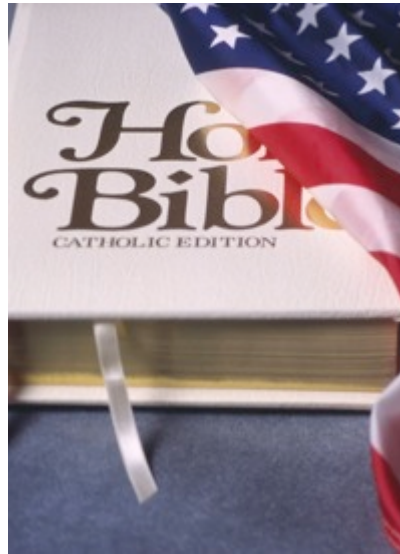


Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 10, 2009

Schooling in the Third Millennium: Bible Out, Sodom In

Now, I could mention how Scripture told us there would come a time when good would be called bad and bad would be called good, but then this piece would be rendered inappropriate for school reading.

What transpired in suburban Philadelphia goes back to October 2004, when parent Donna Kay Busch was invited to read her son Wesley's favorite book during his school's "All About Me" program. However, it just so happens that, according to Mrs. Busch, Wesley's favorite book is the Bible. Not surprisingly, this caused some secular agita at his school, Culbertson Elementary.



Shocker of shockers, the case was litigated, and just recently the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a lower court ruling and found in Culbertson's favor. Writing for the majority, Chief Judge Anthony J. Scirica beat the separation-of-church-and-state drum and [said](#), "Parents of public school kindergarten students may reasonably expect their children will not become captive audiences to an adult's reading of religious texts."

But this reluctance to impose values doesn't extend to the secular variety. This is evidenced by the Alameda United School District in California, which has decided to deny parents the opportunity of opting their children out of its "Safe Schools" (yes, that's a euphemism) curriculum, which is billed as an effort to prevent anti-homosexual bullying. This, despite the fact that the program actively pushes the homosexual agenda. Writes Adam Brickley at [CNSNews.com](#):

The program includes a [sic] between one and four lessons each year between grades 1 and 5 to introduce students to "LGBT" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual) issues.

As part of the curriculum, second graders will be exposed to books like "And Tango Makes Three" — a story book about two male penguins who hatch an egg and raise a chick together in New York's Central Park Zoo — and first graders will see "Who's in a Family?" which exposes students to a variety of "different" family structures.

There is much to say about these stories, but first I will surprise many and disappoint my critics. Although I disagree profoundly with Culbertson Elementary School's decision, I must support their right to be wrong. As I've said before, it is completely ridiculous in principle to apply free speech rights within the confines of schools, as neither teachers nor students enjoy any such thing. If a teacher habitually makes inappropriate remarks, we will expect him to be fired or placed on administrative duty. Likewise, students may not curse at teachers, direct racial epithets at other children, or even just speak whenever they please. Thus, the idea of "free speech" in school is a non-starter (interestingly, secularists have no trouble accepting that freedom of religion in schools is a non-starter).

Yet, as is so common today, the court still stumbles badly in its reasoning. As to this, I call your attention to two of its pronouncements. Maryclaire Dale of the AP reports on them, [writing](#):



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The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals says the school's decision does not violate First Amendment rights given the nonpublic nature of the classroom and the tender age of the children.

The mother, Donna Kay Busch, argues the students heard stories related to Passover, Christmas and other religious holidays.

The appeals court says there is a "significant difference" between identifying those holidays and reading from Scripture.

This rationale doesn't reflect adherence to constitutional principles — it reflects judicial activism. After all, the idea that the Founders never intended for the First Amendment to apply to minors in schools — something pointed out by Calvin Thomas — is a hard-and-fast constitutional principle; there is no ambiguity. But what of the talk about "tender age"? How does the Constitution speak to exactly what degree of free-speech rights a minor is afforded and what he may be exposed to at a given age? Is there a sort of First Amendment sliding scale?

Obviously, no such formula can be found in law, which means that it is a judgment call. But the power to make it rightly lies with local school boards — which can reflect the will of the people — not imperious black-robed jurists-cum-oligarchs. And judges overstep their bounds when they assume this power for themselves.

The same applies to the silly practice of decreeing from the bench what religious elements are too "religious" to be in schools. It's one thing to say there is no "separation of church and state" in the First Amendment and thus it's up to localities to determine what religious elements will be allowed in their public institutions, as this is a correct and easily identifiable constitutional principle. (I should mention two things here. First, this would have seen the secularists' will done in the Culbertson case, anyway. Second, this cherry-picking of ideas and conceptions of morals is what schools always do. Why institute multiculturalism instead of monoculturalism? Why feminism instead of traditional sex roles? Why libertine sex education instead of abstinence? It is again a case of the secularists' skepticism about values being reserved for other people's values.) Instead, however, the Third U.S. Circuit has adopted the common jurists' rationalization that since holy days such as Christmas have taken on a "secular flavor," they have a place in the public square. Yet this is the epitome of hubris. They now will tell us not only what minors may say and hear at what age and where, but also what religious elements are no longer religious!

As for the Alameda homosexual curriculum, it so speaks for itself that an explanation of its outrageousness almost seems gratuitous. Thus, insofar as this goes, I'm tempted to paraphrase Louis Armstrong's thoughts on how to play jazz and say "If you have to ask, you'll never know." Yet I would like to expand on a very simple point made by Bobby Eberle at The Loft. He [writes](#), "Whether we are talking about 'gay' issues or 'straight' issues, it is simply inappropriate to talk about them with elementary school children. They are CHILDREN! They are in school to learn how to read, write, spell, and absorb basic facts that will allow them to learn even more later. They are NOT in school to be subjects of some left-wing agenda!"

This simple common-sense point raises a question: were it not for the power of the pink hordes, would we seriously consider broaching sex-related issues with children still sporting baby teeth? It's a double standard that much reminds me of the Gene Robinson case. As some of you may remember, Robinson was the openly homosexual Episcopalian priest who was elevated to bishop despite having left his family to be with a man. The move was hailed as a blow for equality and "tolerance," and the politically



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correct storyline was one of a man brave enough to be himself and a church brave enough to accept him. Yet the real story was one of people so bereft of principle that they applied situational values. What I mean is, would Robinson have been lauded had he left his wife and family for another woman? Would he have even been considered for bishop? Would we have been accosted with blather about how he was being true to himself? ("Hey, this is who I am: an adulterer. I mean, given our 'evolutionary path,' there has to be a gene for it.") But, of course, whether it's the Episcopalians or Alameda, there are no double standards when your values change with the wind.

Yet I try to be more principled. So, I will sum up my attitude toward these school districts with the G.K. Chesterton tautology, "Having the right to do something is not at all the same as being right in doing it." I support these schools' legal right to be as stupid as they wish, even if I abhor the stupidity itself. Of course, moral rights are a different matter entirely. But if our policies were governed by that highest law, most of our educators wouldn't be in the schools in the first place.



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