Christians Teaching in the Public Schools: What are Some Options?
By J. E. Schwartz

Abstract: James Schwartz asks how Christians who are teachers in public schools can live a life of faith within the constraints of the First Amendment. He then presents and evaluates three options, highlighting philosophical and theological difficulties with two of them. Dr. Schwartz teaches in Geneva College's Department of Education.

Defining a Problem

The high degree of secularization that permeates public schools in North America presents a problem for many teachers who are Christians. How can a Christian live a life of faith while employed in a public school? Although there was a time in our history when American culture assumed that a school teacher would teach from a Christian perspective, that assumption is no longer valid. In fact, observers note that a state of conflict seems to characterize our public schools, with a secular value system held forth over and against a Christian perspective. Before the “clarifications” announced by the Clinton administration concerning religious expression in public schools, there had been an increasing tendency for school boards to establish policies that virtually prohibited any free exercise of religion by students while in public schools. Beyond this, a myth has developed that any mention of religion in public schools is somehow prohibited. Many Christians who are teachers or who want to be teachers in public schools have been confused by and concerned about the tension between living their faith and living within the constraints that exist within this public school arena.

Christians Teaching Culture in the Public Schools: Three Options

This paper focuses on helping Christians who are teaching or who wish to teach in today's government-supported schools. The goal is to offer options that may permit a Christian teacher to maintain his or her integrity as a Christian at the same time not to violate the First Amendment. For the purpose of the paper make the assumption that Christians agree about the ultimate nature of reality and about the nature of humans. That is, Christians agree that the personal God the Bible is the ultimate reality, and that humans are created by Him in His image, are fallen into a state of sin, and may be redeemed by faith in Jesus Christ.

I describe three distinct roles in which Christian teachers may be able function in a public school setting. The first role calls for Christians teaching the public schools simply to be participants in the passing along of culture the next generation. I refer to this first option throughout the paper as “Agent for Enculturation.” A second position that Christians may take is one in which they act as “undercover agents” seeking ways to provide a Christian perspective on the things they teach and so to be a light to the world. The overall goal this second option might be to return the country to its Christian roots and establish Christianity as the dominant public philosophy. I refer to this position throughout the paper as “Christian Advocate/Evangelist.” The third position calls on Christians to introduce worldview questions into the study culture in public schools. The goal is to identify and respond justly to the source of differences among
cultures and among the different participants in our pluralistic society. In order to stress the importance of a reciprocal understanding of rights and responsibilities, I refer to this third position throughout the paper as “Gold Rule Truth-Seeker.”

Although I treat these three positions as if they were separate and distinct, it is unlikely that a teacher would “fit” categorically into one or another of the positions. There are areas of overlap where the distinctions among the positions become blurred. In fact, most teachers would find themselves acting at times in one of these roles and at times in another of them. The reason for treating them if they were separate and distinct is to highlight different emphases that a teacher may want to consider.

In keeping with some of the assertions about knowledge and truth that I make in the paper, I will attempt to identify some of my own presuppositions and positions at the outset. I am writing this paper as a Christian believer who committed to serving Jesus Christ in the preparation of teachers. I argue in the paper that there are serious problems with both the Agent for Enculturation position with the Christian Advocate/Evangelist position, in spite of the fact that both these positions have something of value. In developing the position of Golden Truth-Seeker I have taken what I feel are the best aspects of the first two positions and have blended them eclectically into a position that I feel offers the best hope for authentically living the Christian life in the public school setting.

**Goals and Methods of the Three Roles**

Christian teachers who view their role in the public school system as an Agent for Enculturation would feel that God has called them to be an influence for good in the lives of children. The teacher can only exercise this calling as long as he enjoys the goodwill and sanction of the school district that is the employer. The Agent for Enculturation would consider it to be counterproductive and unwise to jeopardize this goodwill and sanction by taking a controversial role concerning religion. The goal of a Christian teacher playing this role would be to develop and maintain the public trust, carry out the perceived mandate and expectations of the public school system, and demonstrate the viability of the Christian faith in the process of doing so.

The Christian/Advocate/Evangelist would be uncomfortable with the support given to a secular public school system by the prior role. Rather than seeing the teaching job as one of quiet influence on children’s lives, the Christian Advocate/Evangelist would be seeking to let her "light be seen by men." This Christian would make no secret about her religious convictions and perspectives. Instead, she would make the most of every opportunity to show the light of Christ in the process of teaching the school curriculum.

This showing forth of the light might take many different forms. One example might be in presenting literature in which a Christian perspective is present. (Middle school students might read *Where the Red Fern Grows*, for example.) Another example might be including a generous proportion of Biblical or church history in teaching about Western civilization. In these examples, the Christian Advocate/Evangelist is willing to take some risks and test the limits of the church/state separation line in order to fulfill his calling to be a light in the public school system.

The Golden Rule Truth-Seeker would have a somewhat less abrasive view of her role than would the Christian Advocate/Evangelist. At the same time, the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker would agree with the Christian Advocate/Evangelist that the Agent for Enculturation is too
accommodating of secularism. Instead of keeping the religious questions largely private, as the Agent for Enculturation would need to do, the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker would attempt to treat religious questions and concerns as a normal and healthy part of public human life. Rather than presenting a Christian point of view as dogmatic 'Truth,' as the Christian Advocate/Evangelist would do, the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker would stress the importance of a non-Christian's right to follow her own convictions.\(^5\)

This even-handed embrace of both the free exercise concept and also the no-establishment concept of the First Amendment would lead the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker to encourage wholesome inquiry into deep questions in the classroom setting. It is because of this even-handedness that the term "Golden-Rule' is a part of the name for this role.

**Assumptions of the Agent for Enculturation**

The concept of a high wall of separation between church and state, characteristic of today's public school system, is indicative of an assumption about ultimate reality. Today's doctrine of separation implies the idea that 'church' and 'state' are two totally separate and distinct entities. This belief indicates a worldview that presumes a bifurcated reality that is represented by the religious and the secular.

Taken further, this bifurcated view of reality normally includes another bifurcation: the separation between the private and the public. Those with this view hold the school responsible for helping a child develop a public self, and they hold the home responsible for helping a child develop a private self. This dualism leads us to believe that our religion is a private matter of choice, somewhat analogous to our choice of our spouse or our neighborhood, and that it has little or no relevance to our public self.

These distinctions enable a Christian teacher to choose the role of Agent for Enculturation as his classroom self. In order for a Christian Agent for Enculturation to act in good conscience, both toward God and toward the public school employer, there must not be a conflict regarding obedience to God and obedience to humans.\(^6\) The Christian must believe it is acceptable to God for him to maintain a low profile in terms of religious commitments in school. At the same time, the public school must be able to trust the teacher to keep his religion private.

Basic to the role of Agent for Enculturation is the belief that it is the job of the public school to equip children for their public role in society. Those who hold this view see this equipping process as providing the basic skills and knowledge necessary for life in a democracy. Some adherents of this view would argue in favor of including *dispositions* necessary for life in a democracy, but many critics have begun to question whose values are being taught in public schools.\(^7\) Much of the public battle over Outcomes Based Education\(^8\) has centered on this question.

In order to create a list of skills and knowledge that are necessary for life in a democracy, a person must make some epistemological assumptions. If one is constrained by the doctrine of separation of religion from public life one must make the assumption that a category of purely secular knowledge exists. Knowledge is categorized, as it were, with knowledge that is categorically religious excluded from a secular public school system. The category of knowledge appropriate for the public school would be assumed to be presuppositionless. The assumption is that secular knowledge is built only on rational and/or empirical foundations that do not themselves rest on any tenets of faith about how the world is.
Part of what defines the role of the Agent for Enculturation is an emphasis on certain Biblical values. Since this position is the least subversive of the three, one might assume that an adherent of this position places a high value on social stability. This in turn may reflect a high value placed on cooperation with and obedience to authority. The existing structures prevent a public examination of religious questions in public school, and the Agent for Enculturation accepts the constraint. The wall of separation between church and state would evidently be considered to be a “good” that is worthy of preserving.

Since the goal of schooling, in this view, is to equip children for effective democratic living, it may be safe to assume that an Agent for Enculturation places high value on the skills and knowledge needed for democratic living. Spiritual concerns would be seen to be intertwined with and integral to democratic living.

**Critique of the Agent for Enculturation Role**

**Strengths:** The Agent for Enculturation functions in a much-needed role in our society. The Biblical values of love, compassion, stability, and obedience are in short supply, and the Agent for Enculturation embodies these. Furthermore, it is possible to teach a public school curriculum from a Biblical perspective as long as the Biblical source of that perspective is kept veiled. An example of this would be the teacher who emphasizes a concern for the environment without identifying that concern as an outgrowth of the Creation Mandate of Genesis 1:28.

**Weaknesses:** The extent to which a secular/sacred distinction is Biblical is open to question and debate. On one hand, it can be argued that sin has affected every part of our lives, and that the gospel is intended to redeem every area that sin has affected. This would seem to indicate that a strict separation between our “secular” lives and our ‘sacred’ lives is unwise and harmful. On the other hand, we do have a distinct relationship with a personal God. To think that there is no distinction between our relationship to God and our relationship to the creation and to other humans is to tend toward a pantheistic heresy.

The problem with the bifurcation that so often accompanies the Agent for Enculturation is that the secular/sacred distinction becomes so strong that it becomes a separation. The sacred can mistakenly be thought to have nothing of substance to say to the secular. It becomes possible for a Christian teacher to mistakenly think that God has no relation to the subjects taught in the public schools.

Parallel to the question about the secular/sacred separation is a question about the private/public separation. Christianity makes a claim on every aspect of our lives. (Of course the same thing could be said about Judaism and Islam.) Those who would seek to define religion as a strictly private matter lack an understanding of the pervasive nature of the claims of religion. It is understandable that non-religious or secular people would think that religion is a private matter and that its influence can be confined to the private sphere. However, if Christians allow themselves to be conformed to that mold, they are limiting the extent of Christ's claim on their lives. Christianity's power to change the world rests on its call to obedience to an omniscient and loving God. To limit the call of God to matters of private devotion and worship is to dramatically reduce the power of the Christian gospel.

Some profound difficulties arise from the bifurcated view of reality in the thinking of the Agent for Enculturation. In terms of school subjects, the bifurcation becomes fragmentation as a child proceeds into higher and higher levels of education. Once we see knowledge as existing in separate and distinct areas, it becomes very difficult for the student to bring about any kind of
integration of knowledge into a meaningful whole. The student who attempts to overcome this fragmentation must address the tension brought about by the presupposed bifurcated nature of knowledge as sacred/secular and private/public.

A further difficulty for the Agent for Enculturation is the frequently-encountered assumption that some knowledge is neutral toward religion. An assumption of neutrality in subject matter might seem unproblematic in a tool subject such as mathematics or basic reading, but on closer examination, even these tool subjects are not completely neutral. We do not engage in reading for its own sake, for example. We do not just read words on a page: we always read something. We read ideas. The content of the books and materials that children read is anything but religiously neutral. Concerning mathematics, questions about the nature of mathematics are usually excluded from school study. This exclusion represents a secular bias in the teaching of mathematics.9

One must question whether it is Biblical to be as supportive of the existing social order as the Agent for Enculturation would tend to be. As Richard John Neuhaus10 points out, civility is a virtuous response to non-threatening situations but it is an inappropriate response to threats to life or safety. Is it appropriate to comply willingly when the world presses to exclude religion from public discourse? Is it best to place cooperation as the highest priority in the face of the world's attempts to limit the influence and role of religion? Jesus regularly displayed confrontational response to the Pharisees, whom he saw as a serious threat to the gospel he was proclaiming.

An expected outcome of the privatization of religion is the belief that each person's religious convictions and moral behavior are strictly private matters. This kind of thinking results in people feeling that although they personally are opposed to a particular behavior, they must not prevent others from engaging in it. We see this among some people today regarding abortion. There is a growing belief that “although I find it unacceptable, I have no right to tell another person how to live.”

The implication is that moral convictions are no more than personal preferences, and that one person's preference is as valid as another's. When this view widespread, religion has lost its normative power. Each person does what is in his own eyes," and there is nothing to compel morally right behavior.

A further difficulty with the privatization of religion is that differences between different groups become exacerbated. One group follows its charismatic leader and another group follows a narrow and legalistic doctrine, and there is no dialogue or interaction between them. One cannot evaluate disagreements because they ultimately cannot be publicly examined. “I believe that such-and-such is true” becomes the final argument, and it leaves one in an irreconcilable position with any disputant. Each person’s “I believe” must be treated as equally valid, resulting in fragmentation of society.
Assumptions of the Christian Advocate/Evangelist Role

The description of those holding this position represents a characterization of the "religious new right."\(^1\) All of the ontological assumptions detailed for the Agent for Enculturation may also be made by the Christian Advocate/Evangelist. There are two ontological differences, however, between the two positions. First, the assumptions about a bifurcated reality are not logically required by the Christian Advocate/Evangelist, as they are with the Agent for Enculturation. Second, if the Christian Advocate/Evangelist does hold a bifurcated view of reality, she would find a basic tension between the sacred and the secular, and would place the sacred on a higher plane than the secular.

Implicit in the position taken by the Christian Advocate/Evangelist is the belief that "state" should be subservient to "church." Since the primary goal of the Christian Advocate/Evangelist is to use her position to bring about a Christian viewpoint, the implication is that the institutions of the state (i.e., the school) should be used to benefit Christianity. This, in turn, implies an authoritarian view of the relationships between God and humans and between humans and other humans. God is the authority over human beings, and God wishes to use institutions of authority to further His kingdom on earth.

The use of the public school to further the Kingdom of God in this way implies an assumption about the nature of humans as well. If the state (through the school) can foster Christianity, then it must be assumed that the convictions that people form are influenced, at least in part, by the institutions that affect their lives. The Christian Advocate/Evangelist recognizes the great power that state institutions hold over human beings. This power is better in the hands of Christians than non-Christians, according to the Christian Advocate/Evangelist.

Knowledge, according to the Christian Advocate/Evangelist, is powerful enough to influence the convictions people hold. On one hand, Christians of this persuasion feel that their emphasis on Christian themes in what they teach can have a positive influence on people. From another perspective, they tend to favor varying degrees of censorship of unsuitable materials. Both of these perspectives reveal that the Christian Advocate/Evangelist views knowledge as power, for good or for ill.

In contrast to the Agent for Enculturation, the Christian Advocate/Evangelist would not find it logically necessary to make a distinction between private an public spheres of knowledge. Since the Christian Advocate/Evangelist brings or her faith into the classroom, it is evident that the private/public distinction is no necessary. For this reason, the Christian Advocate/Evangelist may be considers to have resolved one of the greatest weaknesses of the Agent for Enculturation.

The highest values, according to the Christian Advocate/Evangelist, are related to the spreading of a Christian public morality. The argument is often made that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and that it is the responsibility of today's Christians to work toward a restoration of a Christian public morality. This goal would take precedence over the goals of social stability and obedience to authority that are emphasized by the Agent for Enculturation.

Because the Christian Advocate/Evangelist places the highest value on spreading a Christian public morality, he interprets the First Amendment differently than does the Agent for Enculturation. The Christian Advocate/Evangelist would interpret the First Amendment as primarily a protection for the church against intrusion into its affairs by the government. As such,
the Christian Advocate/Evangelist would not find any moral or ethical problem with using the public school to teach a Christian perspective.

**Critique of the Christian Advocate/Evangelist**

**Strengths:** The Christian Advocate/Evangelist provides a clear and unanimous call to righteousness. In one sense these people function today in much the same way that prophets of the Old Testament did. They are a voice to our society calling it to attend to the claims of the Bible. One must admire the courage and the strength of conviction demonstrated by the Christian Advocate/Evangelist.

**Weaknesses:** The use of the authority of the state to spread Christianity is a flawed idea, both historically and Biblically. Historically, beginning with the Roman Empire, many nations have tried to make Christianity, or a particular denomination of Christianity, the state religion. The effect of this attempt has bee to actually weaken the church by undermining the need for personal conviction and commitment. The notion of using state power to establish Christianity is flawed Biblically as well. We see this in the very crucifixion of Jesus. If state power were be used to establish the Kingdom of God, Jesus could have taken an earthly thrown and begun His Kingdom immediately. Crucifixion is the very antithesis of the use of state authority to establish Christianity. Jesus gave up the power that he had order to bring redemption.

Instead of the authority of the state, the gospel depends on the authority of God in its claims. The authority of God is characterized more by authoritativelyness than by authoritarianism. The difference is that God's authority is an authority function through truth, whereas the state's authority is an authority functioning through power.

Those who seek to use state institutions to spread Christianity underestimate the importance of the free will of humans. True conviction and true conversion to Christianity occur as a person wrestles with the meaning of existence and with questions of the ultimate nature of reality. It is only as one realizes the burden of the freedom that God has given that one is able to begin to fear God. When one begins to understand that one's decisions about God have eternal consequences, then one begins to take those decisions extremely seriously. If the state intervenes in this process of realization, there arises the risk that people will fail to recognize their own responsibilities to make decisions of eternal consequence. If this happens, then “conversion” to Christianity (or to any religion) only occurs at a very shallow level.

The idea that knowledge has the power to change people is very difficult to criticize. On one hand, all educators must hold to this concept, otherwise teaching would be of no value. On the other hand, Christians, of all people, should have an understanding of why education, by itself, cannot change human nature. Romans 7 teaches that knowing what is right does not give us the power to do what is right. Only through the transforming power of the grace of Jesus Christ are we able to be ‘set free’ from the effects of sin in order to be better people. It may seem decidedly unchristian to criticize the axiological assumptions of the Christian Advocate/Evangelist. The notion that the greatest good for Christians is in advancing the Christian gospel seems to be beyond question. In fact, the critique is not based on a disagreement with the goal of spreading the gospel, but rather on a disagreement about acceptable means of achieving the goal. The Christian Advocate/Evangelist simply ignores too many critical aspects of what it means to be human. The critiques detailed in the preceding sections indicate that the Christian Advocate/Evangelist has an excessively simplistic view of the world and of human nature.
Assumptions of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker

Some further elaboration of what it is that characterizes the Golden Rule Truth Seeker is needed. The most immediate distinctive of this position is the belief that the religious dimension of human life is an appropriate topic for consideration in public schools. The teacher may introduce this topic through a study of religious liberty itself. The First Liberty Institute\(^\text{12}\) has produced an exemplary set of curriculum materials that can be used to explore the topic of religious liberty at a variety of grade levels.

The teacher can undertake a further exploration of the religious dimension of life in the context of the Philosophy for Children program.\(^\text{13}\) This program provides a series of “novels” for children along with accompanying teachers’ guides that are designed to engage children in philosophical questions and issues. Although this program was not specifically designed to include religious questions, it seems advisable not to exclude them. A key feature of the Philosophy for Children program is its teaching methodology. The teacher is taught how to develop community of inquiry in the classroom, and this becomes the context within which philosophical (and religious) questions are examined. The community of methodology increases the likelihood that the issues will be handled justly and that the teacher will not become a teacher of a religion. Through the use of these materials children can be taught to pose fundamental worldview questions.

Once children can pose worldview questions, and once they are aware of some basic worldview differences, they can begin to study both history and literature from a worldview perspective. In the course of studying about other culture throughout history, the children can explore how those cultures might have answered questions about the fundamental nature of reality, about the nature humans, about the nature of knowledge, and about the nature of right and wrong. Children can be taught to ask the same questions about the characters that they read about in literature. The fact that these questions are examined in the context of the study of history and literature makes it less likely that the children will become embroiled in personal disputes and arguments about their own worldviews. Of course, as they get older, they should be encouraged to extend the investigation to include a comparison of their own personal worldviews in a mutually respect manner.

These three components—an exploration of religious liberty, considers of philosophical and religious questions in a structured program, and posing worldview questions in the study of history and literature—combine to define the curriculum emphasis of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker.

A foundational ontological assumption of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker is the reality is an integrated whole. The sacred/secular and private/public separate required by the Agent for Enculturation are intentionally diminished by the Gold Rule Truth-Seeker. The Golden Rule Truth-Seeker sees these distinctions as related spheres in an integrated reality, rather than as totally separate dimensions of life. This is an important assumption because it makes it problematic to specifically some categories of knowledge from school inquiry. Truth cannot be discovered certain categories of knowledge cannot be brought into the discussion. Another presupposition made by the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker is that the created world an expression of the God who created it, in spite of the fallen condition of hum beings. This is an important presupposition because it means that study of created world can provide illumination of characteristics of the invisible God.
An epistemological assumption made by the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker that a person's worldview makes neutrality of knowledge impossible. Both this assumption and the assumption about the integrated nature of reality are logic necessary to the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker. The non-neutrality assumption is important because it reveals why it is that secularization is unsatisfactory as the basis for separation of church and state.

Another epistemological concern is the assertion made by the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker that all truth is God's truth, wherever it is found. The implication this assertion is that truth itself is not neutral, but that it always can reveal something of God's nature. This assertions important because it makes the Golden Rule Truth Seeker unafraid to explore and investigate freely. There is no true discovery that can be made that will undermine or threaten the Christian faith.

As the name implies, the highest educational value for the Golden Rule Truth Seeker is in seeking truth. Integrity, intellectual honesty, and curiosity would all be highly valued as components of truth-seeking. Since the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker holds that all truth is God's truth, the quest for truth can be seen to be, in some ways, a quest for God. Whether a child chooses to turn the quest for truth into a quest for God is not the teacher's immediate concern. If it were, then the teacher would be engaging in inappropriate proselytizing within the public school.

The “golden rule” component of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker implies that justice is highly valued. It is extremely vital for the validity of this position in the public school that the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker show an awareness of the connection between rights and responsibilities. Along with exercising a right to express her religious beliefs, the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker has a responsibility to extend that same right to others. Guiness discusses the need for us to extend religious liberty to people of all faiths or none.

Because the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker opens the way for the consideration of religious questions while at the same time requiring a mutual exercising of rights and responsibilities, a balance is maintained between the two clauses of the First Amendment. There is no establishment of religion, because people of all religious commitments (or none) are invited into the discussion. There is no limitation of the free exercise of religion because no religious questions are excluded or considered to be inappropriate.

Critique of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker

Christians who prefer one of the other positions may raise some objections to the position of the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker. Although I do not consider these objections to represent serious flaws, I will discuss them briefly here.

One objection may be that the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker goes too far in supporting non-Christian views. By allowing discussion of varying worldviews in the studies of history and literature, and later by allowing the children to identify and discuss their own worldviews, the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker seems to be opening a kind of Pandora’s box. Where does one draw the line? What bizarre ideas may the teacher legitimately exclude?

This objection has some merit. In an attempt to address and include religious questions, the teacher should not relinquish control of what is discussed in the classroom. The focus should always be on specific philosophical and religious questions (for example: What are humans? What is reality? How do we decide what's right and wrong? Does history mean anything?), and the teacher should exercise control and professional judgment concerning the questions that are explored.
The fact that many of the answers to these questions will be decidedly Christian should not trouble the Christian teacher. No truth can be found undermines the Christian faith, so we have no need to fear ideas that we might hear in a Golden Rule Truth-Seeker's classroom.

Another objection that may be raised is that the opening up of religious questions for discussion will lead to non-rational, heated disputing and conflict. Although it is true that this is a risk, it is a risk that must be taken. The school be able to address the differences that have historically divided groups of people If we cannot learn in school how to live together with our deepest differences, then there is little hope that we can learn it somewhere else. Furthermore, the very that we are compelled to extend to others the same rights that we ourselves enjoy (e.g., religious liberty) is a viable way of reducing conflict.

Objections to Golden Rule Truth-Seeker from Secularists

Those who are actively involved in the secularization of the schools may raise some objections to the position of Golden Rule Truth-Seeker. The primary objection raised by secularists would be the objection that consideration of religious question in public school violates the separation of church and state. The proper response to this objection would be to make the argument that establishment of secular is as the state-sponsored worldview already violates the establishment clause of First Amendment. The position of Golden Rule Truth-Seeker actually does a better job of separating church and state because it provides an even-handed treatment of all religious views. In order for secularists to accept this argument they need to be willing to view secularism as a religious commitment. It is likely that courts will need to be involved in helping secularists realize that their commitments are religious in nature.

A further objection that might be raised by secularists would center on issue of neutrality. A fundamental tenet of modernism is that neutrality is not possible, but essential. Although the argument presented in this paper and in a large body of Christian literature makes a case against the notion of neutrality, it not an idea that will die easily. The proper response to this argument would be Christians to take every opportunity to reveal the logical impossibility of neutrality. The argument against the possibility of neutrality needs to be repeated in every appropriate context. Over time, perhaps, there will be a general recognition that neutrality is not possible.

Conclusion

In response to secularization of the public schools, Christian teachers have some options. With wisdom, perhaps we can lead the way toward a he balanced inclusion of religious and worldview questions in our public s curricula. With faith in Jesus Christ, and with the belief that we are applying the Golden Rule, we should be able to exercise our religious liberty while at the same time extending that same liberty to others. It is doubtful that we can expect non-religious people to lead the way in this important direction. The vision that I have presented, one of public school students engaged in respectful, meaningful dialog about fundamental questions, is a vision that is well-suited to Christians seeking to fulfill their calling in public school settings.
Notes


4 Wilson Rawls, *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961). This story of a boy and his hunting dogs does not ignore the boy's spiritual growth as he seeks to understand some of life's mysteries.

5 This emphasis should not be construed to mean that the Golden Rule Truth-Seeker does not believe in the absolute truth of the Bible.

6 This was the conflict faced by Peter in Acts 4:19.

7 Marzano, “When Two Worldviews Collide.”

8 Jones, Janet L. “Targets of the Right,” *The American School Board Journal* 180, no. 4 (1993): 24: “Among the objections raised to such programs [as OBE] are that they intrude upon a parent's rightful role, promote values established by the government rather than the family, and divert scarce resources away from academics.”


11 Neuhaus, 5-6.


0s Guiness, “Tribespeople, Idiots, or Citizens?” *Social Education* 54, no. 5 (1990@- 278-286.