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PEER PRESSURE AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

The crux of the argument in the lawsuits of those who have kept prayer out of the public schools, and are currently re-litigating this issue in the Alabama case of Jaffree v. James now on appeal, is the alleged harm that is inflicted on the atheist when the rest of the students in the classroom stand in prayer. The atheist claims that this harm is an infringement of his First Amendment rights.

This point is stated in the Jaffree brief filed in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals by Ishmael Jaffree as follows: "Even though appellants have requested that they be excused from class during all prayer activity, they are being made to suffer by exposing the fact that they are 'different' than peers each time they leave the classroom to protect their First Amendment freedoms."

Jaffree's lawyers thus played on the emotions of the court in order to evoke symphathy for the child's predicament. He either loses "face" in front of his peers by appearing "different," or he succumbs to peer pressure and prays (in violation of his alleged First Amendment rights) even though his parents don't want him to pray.

But that argument is precisely the argument of parents who oppose classroom training about sex. They complain about the harm that is inflicted on their children by being forced to sit through a classroom discussion with students who believe that teenage pre-marital sexual activity is morally acceptable; and, if they are excused from class, they are made to suffer because that exposes the fact that they are "different" from their peers each time they leave the classroom to protect their First Amendment freedoms.

A similar condition exists when a child, whose parents have brought him up to believe that God created man, is required to sit in a classroom where the teacher, the textbooks, and his peers exert pressure to make him believe that man evolved from apes. The religious child is clearly made to feel "different" regarding a matter that infringes on First Amendment rights.

Teenage pre-marital sexual activity is contrary to the principles of most, if not

all, religious denominations. The use of contraceptives is additionally objectionable to the religious principles of some denominations.

Yet, a major feature of the coed classroom sex training provided in many schools is a detailed description of the various methods of contraception. The use of contraceptives is affirmatively presented to teenagers as a means of "responsible" sexual behavior.

The same liberals who say that the atheistic child must be protected from the peer pressure of classmates who want to use a classroom to say a prayer will deny the religious child any protection at all against the peer pressure of classmates who use the schoolroom to discuss sexual activity as though it had no relation to marriage or morals.

The liberals rationalize this inconsistency by alleging that saying a prayer is obviously classroom "religion," but that teaching anti-religious attitudes about sex or evolution is "fact" or "science." But is that really so?

This column has previously discussed the fact that 99% of school sex-ed courses fail to warn students that Herpes is incurable, while falsely implying that antibiotics can cure all venereal disease. Now we learn that sex-ed courses are just as culpable in failing to warn of other physical dangers from sexual activity.

One of the contraceptives so attractively presented in sex-ed materials, the IUD (intrauterine device), has resulted in some 8,000 lawsuits or claims by women who believe they were harmed by its use. They claim that the IUD caused infertility, miscarriages, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), and 17 deaths from pregnancy-related complications. The women, some of whom got their IUDs from Planned Parenthood, said nobody warned them of the dangers.

A federal judge recently ruled that clinics distributing federally-funded contraceptives to teenage girls cannot be required to notify the girls' parents so they can help to rescue the girls from the religious, moral, psychological, and physical dangers of pre-marital sex. Yet nothing requires the agency to tell the teenagers of the dangers from incurable Herpes or from infection-producing IUDs.

The child has become a victim of the commercial contraceptive corporations and the leftwing liberal litigating lawyers. Who will speak for the child's right to grow up clean and chaste, with a conscience that knows right from wrong?