

On 1st Amendment

By M. Gregg Fager

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Those who oppose school prayer apparently are saying the issue is whether the First Amendment rights of an offended minority are such that government lacks or must be deprived of power to establish religion in authorizing public prayer in public schools.

The issue includes the improper presupposition that government-authorized prayer constitutes governmental establishment of religion. Government no more sets up or entrenches religion or a particular religion within public schools merely by allowing public expression of various prayers than government sets up or entrenches social clubs or a particular social club within public schools merely by allowing public expression of various social views.

Until a trend is established wherein some give prayers in public schools with the intent to harm other's feelings, we the people (we the government) may anticipate devout prayers which are decent and wholesome. Thus, instead of asking whether prayer in school is offensive to some and is, therefore, censurable, the issue should be whether the First Amendment imposes upon an offended minority the First Amendment *responsibility* to tolerate prayer in public schools as a decent and wholesome practice of free speech which cannot be severed from the free exercise of religion. (Here, the issue is sound because it includes the proper presuppositions that prayer [in public schools] is decent and wholesome, is free speech and cannot be severed from the free exercise of religion.)

To those who prefer the first issue, I suggest the following: We the people (we the government) have the responsibility to understand and protect the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, itself. Read it (again). Notice what it says and what it does not say.

M. Gregg Fager

[True and virtuous principles in this article should be applied in analyzing modern attacks on virtuous religious principles and practices.]