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Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty  
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## Conservatives Taken In by Williamsburg Charter

By D.L. CUDDY, Ph.D.

**A**LTHOUGH conservative U.S. Sen. William Armstrong declined to sign The

Williamsburg Charter concerning the place of religion in American life because of reservations he had regarding some of its language, many other conservative leaders unfortunately did sign the compact. They were concerned about our First Amendment rights and the fact that the role of religion in our history had been excised from textbooks.

However, although our nation was founded upon Judeo-Christian principles, The Williamsburg Charter expresses a fear that our laws will establish a Judeo-Christian America and it opposes governmental favor of such beliefs, instead advocating the development of "a common vision for the common good."

**THIS SOUNDS VERY MUCH** like the current "cultural conservative" movement, which favors governmental policies and laws based upon a consensus among conservative secularists and conservatives with religious beliefs, and which therefore necessarily lacks any ultimate moral authority (God) to which



atheists would object. Thus, laws against abortion, for example, could only be enacted if there were a national consensus which included secularists. It also sounds very much like educator John Dewey's desire for a "common faith," and thus it is important to recognize that many non-conservative signers of the Charter wish to use it as a means of teaching about the beliefs and practices of religions in a pluralistic manner in the public schools of Manchester and elsewhere in the nation. This would mean all religions would be taught equally (Christianity and Judaism on a par with others) even though, frankly, I have heard no great public outcry for students to learn Buddhist chants, Islamic rituals or Jain prayers!

**THE WORLD** Curriculum Development Center in the U.S. developed a course titled, "Religion in Human Culture," to develop attitudes of respect for the legitimacy of others' beliefs and practices, "safeguarding against dogmatic 'right answerism,'" with pre-test and post-test instruments used to test attitudinal change. While those of other faiths should not be persecuted and we should respect their right to hold whatever beliefs they choose, this does not automatically translate, in my opinion, into an obligation to respect all of the beliefs and practices themselves of all religions. Jews, for example, should be under no obligation to

respect the atheistic views and practices of Adolph Hitler. Similarly, Jews and Christians should not have "respect for" witchcraft (recently given tax-exempt status by the federal government), nor should they be required to have an "attitudinal change" to respect for Hindu reincarnation when the Bible claims "It is appointed unto men once to die."

**LEST PEOPLE THINK** there is no possibility objectionable religious beliefs may become part of their children's education, one might consider the following. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's world core curriculum is to be based on proposals put forth by former U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Robert Muller, who has a world core curriculum in The Robert Muller School. The underlying philosophy of the school is based upon a Tibetan disciple's teachings in Alice A. Bailey's (religious syncretist) books of several decades ago which mention a New Age "life dedicated to service," the need for "steadily shining points of light," and which were published by Lucis Publishing Company, called Lucifer Publishing Company in 1922. It is hoped that our nation's curriculum planners do not plan to subject Christian and Jewish students to education based upon Luciferian principles.

**EDUCATION WHICH** places Judeo-Christian principles on an equivalent basis with other religious and non-religious

principles leads to a neutralization or syncretization of students' beliefs, or even worse to a questioning of their own faith through "critical thinking." Some students in Connecticut taking a high school course on world religions recently said the knowledge gained had encouraged them to re-examine their families' beliefs, and one student stated: "I found out I agreed with a lot of religious ideas, and I wasn't supposed to. It didn't weaken my faith in God but brought me out of Roman Catholicism into a more basic philosophy of religion." (The New York Times, March 10, 1989)

Eventually, many students' religious beliefs might even be destroyed, as Sidney Hook (signer of the Humanist Manifesto) said in "The Humanist" magazine: "Human beings can be influenced to examine critically their religious beliefs only by indirection. By indirection, I mean the development of a critical attitude in all our educational institutions that will aim to make students less credulous to claims that transcend their reflective experience. . . ." This undermining of the religious principles which conservative Christians and Jews want to protect and promote is the primary reason they should withdraw their signatures from The Williamsburg Charter.

—D.L. Cuddy, Ph.D., is a national commentator.