

# cape Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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## New Book on Government and Faith-Based Schools

It is a book played out against a paradox. That is the way scholar Peter Berger described Charles Glenn's *The Ambiguous Embrace* last month at a symposium on this important new treatise at The Brookings Institution in Washington, DC.

The paradox is that Americans are among the most religious people in the world, yet have the most absolute legal and judicial separation between church and state. It is a paradox that takes on increased significance at a time when the country is losing faith in government's ability to provide education and other social services and is debating with great passion the possibility of relying more and more on religious institutions to do the job.

Meticulously researched and carefully balanced, *The Ambiguous Embrace* examines first whether the state should indeed reach out to religious institutions to provide services such as education. It then turns to whether the state's embrace can be choreographed so as not to stifle that which makes these institutions attractive service providers in the first place: their distinctive religious mission and identity.

With compelling clarity, Glenn, a professor at Boston University, makes the case for giving faith-based schools a greater role in educating the public. (Although the book also covers social

services other than education, its, and this review's, principal focus is schools.) Glenn explains that government can pro-



Three of the six people who discussed *The Ambiguous Embrace* at The Brookings Institution on April 13. From left, James Skillen, director of the Center for Public Justice, and Peter Berger and Charles Glenn, professors at Boston University.

vide for certain services without delivering the service itself. It can, for example, ensure the education of the public while leaving the operation of schools to private agencies. And although there may be many legitimate reasons for doing so—cost, efficiency, administrative decentralization, organizational flexibility, and the merits of market forces—there are, for Glenn, two overriding reasons.

The first is that in a society with lots of answers to the question What constitutes the good life? government support for faith-based schools reflects diversity and shows respect for pluralism.

The second reason is that faith-based institutions tend to be more effective than government institutions. "Something about the nature of institutions that

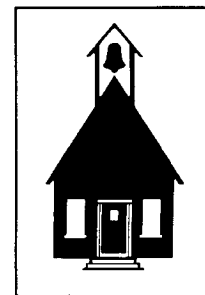
are based upon shared values and voluntary associations makes them able to have a more profound effect upon those

they serve than do their counterparts that function on the basis of bureaucratic criteria and procedures." The advantage of religious agencies is especially apparent when it comes to the deeper dimensions of life. Faith-based institutions can "transform lives and generate a sense of moral obligation" in a way that government institutions cannot.

Drawing on the thinking of an international circle of social observers, Glenn argues that religious institutions

are "able to have a more powerful effect in shaping character and giving direction to lives" than bureaucratically-based institutions precisely because they can deal with the deep values and overarching worldviews that ground human behavior. Religious schools dare to tackle issues of morality, virtue, character, the purpose and meaning of life, and one's obligations to God and others. These are the issues that serve to shape human behavior at the core.

For Glenn, the ability to hold and profess a particular view of human-



Continued  
on page 2

**Continued from page 1**

kind gives a religious school its strength. In fact, "[A] school or social agency that does not have such a view, shared by all or most of its participants, cannot be fully effective." That, of course, is the plight of public schools in a pluralistic society: they cannot properly profess a particular view of humankind. Indeed, when public schools try to promulgate a specific set of values in certain controversial areas, they often find themselves the target of parents who see their own values being undermined. And although government institutions sometimes try to portray themselves as secular and neutral, Glenn claims that the "myth that secularism is a neutral position between belief and unbelief" is, despite its wide acceptance, inherently absurd.

**Strings Without Money**

If, as Glenn argues, there are advantages to government involving faith-based schools as partners in providing education, how, then, can it provide public funds and ensure accountability without compromising the religious nature of the schools? As the starting point for a response, Glenn delivers an impressive chapter ("Strings Without Money") to review ways that government already regulates private schools that don't receive any funding. He provides a thorough review of court decisions on the matter, including the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (whose 75th anniversary is this year) that recognized "the power of the state reasonably to regulate all schools." Glenn's conclusion is that "it is generally conceded that government has a right and even a duty to oversee to some extent the activities of nongovernment organizations that provide human services." He also reports there is growing

conviction that "it is more desirable for government to hold nonpublic schools accountable for results than for the process by which they reach those results."

**Carefully Calibrated Cocktail**

When funding is involved, Glenn argues for a "carefully calibrated cocktail of approaches" to accountability, with "no one element allowed to overpower the others." The ingredients of his cocktail include delivery standards, outcome standards, peer accountability, government inspectors, and the informed choice of parents.

**Pressures from Within**

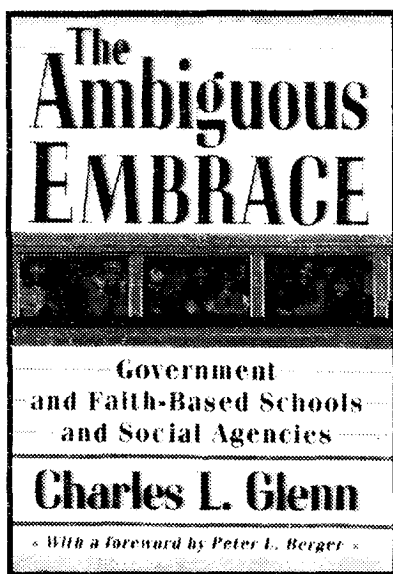
Ironically, the pressures an institution faces to surrender its distinctive religious character may come from

within, says Glenn. In accepting popular standards of professionalization and "the dominant understanding of good practice," a religious school may be tempted to sacrifice its identity voluntarily. One way to counterbalance the temptation to "conform to the norms of its secular counterparts," is for the school to have a "strong and engaged board" that understands, and is willing to protect, its unique mission.

**Magisterial Contribution**

Within the world of private education the idea of government funding is generally greeted with mixed emotions. For anyone interested in the complex issue of state assistance to private schools, *The Ambiguous Embrace* provides an intelligent and balanced evaluation of the pros and cons.

In his forward, Peter Berger calls the book "a magisterial contribution," and adds it should be "required reading for anyone who is concerned with the future of social policy and the well-being of religion in America." We agree.



**New Web Site for Teacher Jobs**

Private schools are wonderful places in which to teach. That's the central message of a new page on CAPE's Web site geared toward attracting teachers for religious and independent schools.



The site presents a wealth of information about the advantages of teaching in such schools and provides convenient links to the various job banks established by CAPE's member organizations.

With emphasis on the eternal dimensions of the teaching vocation, the site notes that private school teachers touch not only the minds but also the hearts and souls of their students. Serving in schools that emphasize a child's complete development, such teachers have the privileged opportunity to transmit the core academic skills as well as the lessons that count most in life: lessons about God, love, virtue, value, and character.

The site explains that private schools offer caring, orderly, safe, and nurturing environments; they emphasize the development of the whole child; they insist on academic excellence; and they treat teachers as professionals, giving them considerable autonomy and independence in matters of instruction. The disciplined environment, rigorous curriculum, caring communities, and high expectations private schools provide make them some of the most effective schools in the country. What's more, teachers in private schools can spend their time doing what they are supposed to do: teach.

Offering data from a host of studies on issues ranging from job satisfaction to community support, the site should be of value not only to prospective teachers but also to school administrators and private school officials at the regional and state levels as they develop teacher recruitment campaigns.

You can visit CAPE's newest Web page at [www.capenet.org/teach.html](http://www.capenet.org/teach.html).

# Russert Says Nation's Top Problem is Kids Having Kids

## Calls for education that provides "confidence, dignity, and values"

NBC newsman Tim Russert posed a problem and suggested a solution in an address to Catholic educators last month.

The problem, which he called "the most important economic, national security, and moral issue facing our country," is the staggering number of children with only one parent. Twenty-five million children — 35 percent of the population under the age of 18 — were born to single parents. Many unmarried parents are poor and young, and the life that awaits their children is often plagued by drugs, gangs, violence, and death. "Fifteen children a day are shot dead in the streets of America," Russert said.

And he had another discomfiting statistic: "If you are 18, unmarried, without a high school education, without a job, and you have a baby, the chances are 80 percent the child will grow up in poverty." He warned that unless we "dramatically reduce the number of kids having kids," and "change what is in the hearts and minds of our children," we will soon not recognize our society.

### Solution

Delivering the opening address at the annual convention of the National Catholic Educational Association in Baltimore, Russert offered an antidote for the alarming wave of out-of-wedlock births. Asserting that "these children desperately need direction," he recommended they be given the same chance he was given in Catholic schools in Buffalo, NY: "a chance to study hard and to make it; to go through life with confidence, and dignity, and values." He thanked the assembled teachers and told them, "You do change lives, and I have no doubt you have saved lives."



NBC Newsman Tim Russert

Russert, the chief of NBC's Washington bureau and host of *Meet the Press*, told the Catholic educators that the secret of their success is obvious: "You believe in something. You believe in your God, your family, your self, your values, your students, and your schools." He said his own teachers taught him how to read and write, but also taught him right from wrong. "Those schools changed my life," he revealed. "And I would not be here this morning but for my Catholic school education."

Russert noted that many children of poverty receive "an education devoid of any social skills and cultural values so vital to success and even survival." They are not taught basic discipline or "a basic respect to love one another as our selves." The country's central mission should be to convince young people that "they must finish school, learn a skill, get a job, get married, then have a baby—in that order." We cannot afford to write off these children, he warned. "They are either our future workforce in a competitive global economy, or they are our future crime statistics. It's that simple."

### Prepared As Well As Anybody

Russert emphatically rejects the notion that success is reserved only for the rich or privileged. He urged the audience not to let their students believe that. "People with backgrounds like your students can and will make a difference in this country and in this world," he said. Future leaders will be born "not to the blood of kings but to the blood of immigrants and pioneers." He told the teachers to tell their students they have the opportunity to be whatever they want—"doctors, nurses, therapists, lawyers, accountants, social workers, jour-

nalists, business people, teachers, and more." And their work will yield enormous contributions "if they only accept the simple premise that their family and their values and their Catholic school education have prepared them for this challenge as well as anybody in this country."

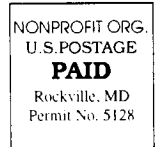
### Kinder, Gentler

Known for his hard-hitting and persistent questions on *Meet the Press*, Russert showed a kinder, gentler side in his remarks to Catholic educators. And although his comments were targeted to a specific audience, they more often than not applied to the broad scope of religious and independent school educators in America. To wit: "You have given hope and opportunity to millions, and for that this Catholic school kid from Buffalo, on behalf of all the children of this nation, thanks you so much for your service."

Russert implored the educators to continue to inspire, motivate, discipline, and educate children. "It is not always easy, but it is so essential." Equally essential, he said, is to help children understand that they are always loved. "The respect and dedication that flows from that love is truly the most important thing in this entire world."

He left the group with a final thought: "When you return to your classrooms, there will be a little boy or little girl, no doubt in the last row, who probably talks too much, is a bit of a mischief-maker, and whose smile is part angelic, part devilish. But behind those sparkling eyes is someone who is searching and yearning, someone who really loves and needs you to show him or her the way. For I have no doubt it is the next little Timmy Russert. And because of you, he or she will be the next host of *Meet the Press*."





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## capenotes

• A persistent myth in the debate over school choice is that only wealthy children attend private schools and only poor children attend public schools. But statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau show that 81 percent of U.S. K-12 students from families with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more attend public schools. That means, of course, that the entire cost of the education of those children is covered by taxpayers. The Census Bureau also reports that families in the \$75,000+ income bracket account for less than one-third of all families in private schools.

A wealth of information like the above is available on the much-expanded Private School Facts page of CAPE's Web site at the following address: [www.capenet.org/facts.html](http://www.capenet.org/facts.html).

• The Institute for Justice reports that children in failing schools in Florida won at least a temporary victory last month when a county circuit judge ruled that the state's voucher program can continue until the state's Court of Appeals rules on the program's constitu-

tionality. The opening brief for the Court of Appeals case is due on May 30, and oral arguments will be scheduled this summer. A decision could be issued before the start of the school year.

• In March 2000, the National Center for Education Statistics issued a report entitled *Youth Service-Learning and Community Service Among 6th- Through 12th-Grade Students in the United States*. According to the report, "Involving America's students in community service activities is one of the objectives established under the third National Education Goal for the year 2000, which seeks to prepare students for responsible citizenship."

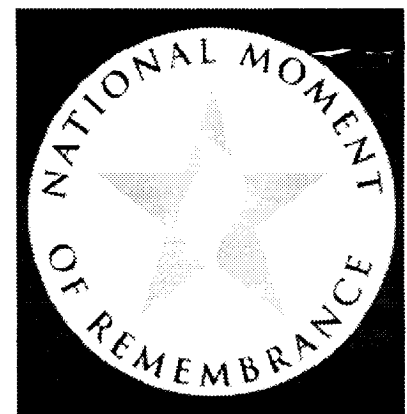
The report notes a significant difference in levels of community service between public school students and private school students. "For both 1996 and 1999, students attending church-related private schools (42 percent for both years) and nonchurch-related private schools (31 percent in 1996 and 41 percent in 1999) were more likely to say their schools required and arranged community service than students attending public schools... (14 percent in 1996 and 17 percent in 1999)."

• "Freedom is not free." That succinct truth, which dignifies the Korean War Memorial in Washington, serves as a reverent reminder of the heroic American men and women who have paid for freedom with their own lives.

On Memorial Day, May 29, at 3 PM local time, Americans are asked to join together in one minute of silence to pay homage to those who have died to make freedom possible. One of the purposes of the remembrance is to make Memorial Day relevant, especially to younger Americans.

For further information on The National Moment of Remembrance, visit the following Web site:

[www.whitehouse.gov/remembrance](http://www.whitehouse.gov/remembrance).



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