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Pleasant R. Hightower
State University of Iowa

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIBLICAL INFORMATION AND CONDUCT

PLEASANT R. HIGHTOWER

The question of the influence of Biblical information on conduct has been discussed considerably the last few years. Some think that merely to know the facts of the Bible will solve the many perplexing problems in the conduct of boys and girls. On the basis of this claim they argue that the Bible should be included in the public schools and read to the children without comment or that the children should be required to commit portions to memory and tested for perfect recitations. Others claim that a mere factual knowledge will not solve the problems of conduct. They think that something more fundamental is essential.

The writer has undertaken the task of getting some definite information on the question by scientific methods. He has done this by testing a large number of pupils in both public schools and schools for delinquent boys and girls, by carefully validated techniques. The tests used for testing Biblical information were devised by the writer under the direction of Dr. Edwin D. Starbuck of the Institute of Character Research, and are published under the title, "Information-Attitudes Tests." The reliability of the tests, as determined by correlating one-half of the items against the other half, for a public school population is .91.

The techniques for getting a check on conduct are those which test cheating under different situations, different types of lying, loyalty to the group, and service and altruism. Due to the lack of space, it will be impossible to discuss the various techniques here, but a description and copies of all techniques used in the study will be published in the near future in the Character Series of the University of Iowa Studies.

The study has advanced to the point where a definite answer to the question can be given. A few tables of representative statistics are given which make the answer more concrete.

This table may on first thought seem to have too many different items, but therein lies the value. It is arranged in this way so that the reader may, at a glance, have a comparative view of the picture.

Table I—Average Scores on Intelligence, Socio-Economic Status, Biblical Information, Cheating, and Lying for the Seventh and Eighth Grades of Four Public Schools and Two Schools for Delinquent Boys and Girls

	AVERAGE I. Q.	AVERAGE Soc. Ec.	AVERAGE BIBLE	AVERAGE AMT. OF CHEATING	AVERAGE FACT CHEATING	AVERAGE LIE INDEX
<i>School A</i>						
Grade 7	95.3	9.	44.9	25.9	1.88	2.40
Grade 8	94.7	8.7	53.	22.2	2.18	2.54
<i>School B</i>						
Grade 8	106.7	17.9	60.	20.2	2.24	2.54
<i>School C</i>						
Grade 7	118.4	24.2	59.3	11.24	1.26	1.72
Grade 8	116.9	24.4	66.5	20.2	1.71	2.41
<i>School D</i>						
Grade 7		17.8	64.3	7.07	1.33	1.77
Grade 8		16.5	57.3	7.3	1.38	2.60
<i>School E</i>						
Grade 7	99.7	15.7	81.5	7.29	1.78	
Grade 8	106.1	17.4	89.2	2.65	1.82	
<i>School F</i>						
Grade 7	83.4	12.2	57.5	17.14	2.58	
Grade 8	79.7	13.5	70.6	18.9	1.94	

In order that the picture may be as clear as possible, a brief description of the population follows. School A is an elementary school located in one of the poorest areas of a large inland city. The morals in the community are at low ebb. In many instances the houses are very small and in a bad condition. The community is not the kind to stimulate high ideals. It should be said, however, that the principal and teachers in the school are high grade characters. School B is located in the same city but in an area that is representative of the middle class from the standpoint of wealth. The opportunities are much better for good conduct, but a study of the table will suggest that there is probably not as much difference as there should be when the first three items are taken into consideration. At least, the difference in conduct scores does not seem to be what it should be to correlate with the difference in the Biblical information scores. That is what we find to be true as will be seen later in the correlation table. School C is located in a very wealthy section of the same city. Banking and big business houses are well represented in this community. The items in the table will give all the information that will be needed at this point. School D is located in a much smaller city in the same state. The groups tested present a cross section of the population as they are representative groups of the only junior high school in the city. It will be interesting when comparing the items in the tables to know that the school has a character education program with which it is experimenting. School E is a school for delinquent

girls, and school F is a school for delinquent boys. It should be stated that the school for girls has an organized and systematic course in the study of the Bible. The school for boys does not have an organized course but each boy is given a Bible upon his arrival at the institution and is permitted to read and study it as he chooses. Outsiders hold Sunday School classes which the boys may attend.

Table II — Per cent of Students Working for Class or Group as Opposed to Those Working for Self on Two Different Tests Involving Class Loyalty

	TEST 1			TEST 2		
	% WORK- ING FOR CLASS	% WORK- ING FOR SELF	% OF DIF- ERENCE	% WORK- ING FOR CLASS	% WORK- ING FOR SELF	% OF DIF- ERENCE
<i>School A</i>						
Grade 7	55	45	10	45	55	10
Grade 8	56	44	12	60	40	20
<i>School B</i>						
Grade 8	53.5	46.5	7	32	68	36
<i>School C</i>						
Grade 7	54.5	45.5	9	31	69	38
Grade 8	34	66	32	45	55	10
<i>School D</i>						
Grade 7	46	54	8	25	75	50
Grade 8	37.5	62.5	25	39	61	22

Table II should be studied along with Table I as the two present different pictures of the same groups, with the exception of the two delinquent groups, for whom no data are available on the last two tests. It will be observed that some of the populations cheating most are less selfish.

Table III — Averages on Tests of Altruism and Service

	AVERAGE ON TEST ONE	AVERAGE ON TEST TWO
<i>School A</i>		
Grade 7	2.11	1.16
Grade 8	3.84	.84
<i>School B</i>		
Grade 8	3.75	.33
<i>School C</i>		
Grade 7	3.00	.0
Grade 8	3.62	.0
<i>School D</i>		
Grade 7	4.05	.16
Grade 8	3.89	2.24

The first test of this series is based on the tests presented in the preceding table. In those tests the pupils worked for class and individual cash prizes. At the close of the tests with a class cash prize in view the children were asked to vote on how they should use the anticipated money. A graded series of five possibilities

were provided ranging from a high degree of selfishness to complete altruism. The scores range from 5 for the most altruistic down to 1 for the most selfish. The second test is a test of service. The children were asked to bring pictures which they thought would be interesting to the crippled children in the hospital maintained for such children of the state. The children of school A, in the poor district, present a better picture than those of any of the groups except the eighth grade of school D. The fact is that the good showing for school D is in a large measure due to two or three pupils as only five responded. One girl brought 87 pictures. The score in each case was one point for each picture presented. It is quite evident that one person can influence the class score considerably, but that is always so definite that it does not invalidate the test in the least. School C failed to respond at all on this test. In all schools only a few children coöperated. If a median were taken as a comparative measure, all schools in this study would be equal, as the median in each is 0. In order to have a comparison of any kind it was necessary to use the mean.

Table IV—Correlation of Biblical Information with Cheating and Lying, the Cases Being Drawn from Schools A, B, C, and D Listed in the Preceding Tables

GRADES	CHEATS		LIES	
	N	r	N	r
7	100	-.019 ± .067	100	-.181 ± .065
8	119	-.0005 ± .061	119	-.012 ± .055

It must be remembered that the correlations in Table IV are with negative phases of conduct. If the reader is interested in knowing what the relationship would be for honesty and truthfulness all he needs to do is to change the sign. The correlations are too low to be significant.

Table V—Correlations of Biblical Information with Class Loyalty and Altruism for the Same Groups as for Table IV

GRADES	CLASS LOYALTY				ALTRUISM	
	TEST V SPEED		TEST 2 FREE CHOICE		MONEY VOTES	
	N	r	N	r	N	r
7	100	-.013 ± .067	100	-.016 ± .067	100	-.029 ± .067
8	119	.008 ± .061	119	.053 ± .067	119	-.013 ± .067
8						

Table VI—Correlation of Biblical Information with Cheating for the Schools for Delinquent Boys and Girls

BOYS' GRADES	BOYS		GIRLS	
	N	r	N	r
7	80	.071 ± .972	50	-.199 ± .091
8	44	.092 ± .099	54	-.199 ± .091

The data presented in Tables V and VI show very definitely that there is no relationship between mere Biblical information and conduct. Correlations for high school pupils are similarly low.

The reader should not conclude from the data presented in this study that the Bible has no value. He is to understand that mere factual knowledge of it does not in any way insure moral conduct.

It is suggested that where the Bible is made a part of the school curriculum that it be given a place equal to the regular school subjects. The plan of having the teachers read portions of the Bible, without comment, to the pupils as followed in several school systems is not sufficient.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA,
IOWA CITY, IOWA.