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Why Private Schools Springing Up Fast

PROTESTANT schools are opening at the rate of three a day, The Christian Herald reports. "Emphasizing the teaching of Christian values, they are springing up in all sections of the country," the magazine says.

For years, enrollment in public schools has been going down while private schools have been gaining. This is an obvious challenge to public schools because it is estimated that it costs twice as much to educate a child in private schools as in public schools.

Forced busing for racial integration is blamed for part of the movement but it is by no means the only reason.

Reasons cited also include a desire to teach their children traditional academic skills — "readin', writin' and 'rithmetic" — instead of innovative classroom procedures used in some places. Apparently, parents also want a fourth R — religion — in the curriculum.

Permissiveness in dress, conduct and study habits that prevails in many public schools also irritates

parents. A Gallup poll last year asked 1,012 students 13-18 years old what was the biggest problem in their schools. "Lack of discipline" headed the list, ranking ahead of use of drugs, lack of interest and crime/vandalism.

Perhaps for those reasons, more parents are becoming apprehensive that quality of public school education will not prepare their youngsters for college, careers or life. It is claimed that this removes bright children from public schools.

Many parents also resent efforts of social reform groups to introduce explicit sex education and pornographic literature into classes.

The attitude in Washington may be changing now but in recent years there has been a strong trend, promoted by teachers' unions, to federalize local educational systems through a Department of Education.

Private school operators consider the Internal Revenue Service a threat to their existence. IRS rulings could remove a school's tax exempt status if IRS holds it was established to evade racial integra-

tion or if it does not have "significant" minority enrollment.

Many private schools hold strictly to high standards of education and discipline, while others may be headed by unqualified educators, and a few seem to be more fashionable than instructive.

The first schools in this country were private subscription schools. Youngsters were taught the "Three Rs," as well as right and wrong, some scriptures, and stern discipline.

As population grew, public schools came into existence along the same lines but spreading the cost over the community tax base. Now, those who send their children to private schools also must pay taxes to support public schools. There is considerable support for a plan to adjust this situation.

When parents are willing to pay double to have their children educated, they must see something "very wrong" with the lower cost public schools or something "very right" with the private schools chosen.