Religion and Education: A Response

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A line from Hamlet, "The lady [read: the old liberal left] doth protest too much, me thinks," would suffice to comment on the article by Welch, Medeiros, and Tate.

The old liberal left (as opposed to "the new right" and "the conservative right" referred to in the article) has had its day for the past 50 years in trying to solve educational problems. Their solutions haven't worked. Parents are dissatisfied with the education their children are getting in the public schools; they want to see changes that will enable their children to receive a better education. [1] Welch, Medeiros, and Tate manage to raise a few smoke screens, but they avoid discussing the underlying educational problems. Their technique is typical of old liberal left solutions: work on the symptoms without addressing the more fundamental (and important) task of working on the root of the problem.

The authors say there is a large "movement" trying to influence the schools. But isn't that what the democratic process is all about? That certainly is the process the liberal left has used, too successfully perhaps, for the past half century.

Interestingly, the authors denigrate the "movement's" pro-family position and "strong support of traditional family values"; yet they expect these same families to support their manipulation of the schools to meet the goals of the old liberal left. The authors' sarcasm will do nothing to engender support for the old liberal left positions they enunciate.

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Parents and taxpayers are rejecting the old liberal left and demanding a return to Judeo-Christian values.

"Censorship" is a term the old liberal left and others use whenever selection of library books, textbooks, and instructional materials is discussed. But no school buys or approves for use *everything* that is available. Concerned parents in "the movement" are simply asking that schools select materials that reflect the mores of their respective communities.

The "movement's" concern about the increasing influence of humanism on teachers and on the curriculum is dealt with as though the "movement" is against humans or the study of the humanities, or both. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Humanist Manifestos I and II [2] clearly reflect a pervasive anti-Judeo-Christian philosophy. In our nation, an educational system that is not "contaminated" by traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs is, in effect, supporting religious humanism as described in the Humanist Manifestos.

The old liberal left position taken by the authors on the matter of teaching evolution and/or creationism is nothing more than an expected reaffirmation of religious humanism. The creationism-evolution controversy is interesting and complex. I like the comment by Ashley Montagu: "Science has proof without certainty. Creationists have certainty without any proof." [3]

The basic problem with our public schools, in my judgment, is the low level of productivity. Parents and taxpayers want a higher quality of education—education that includes basic skills competence and traditional Judeo-Christian values.

The old liberal left continues to tell parents and taxpayers what's best for them and for the students in the public schools. Parents and taxpayers, on the other hand, are saying they want their concerns and desires met. The public schools are the public's schools: they belong to the parents and the taxpayers. The future of the public schools is contingent on the degree to which professional educators respond to the needs of parents and taxpayers, including those of the "movement." ■

[1] George H. Gallup, "The 13th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 63 (September 1981): 33-47.

[2] Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1973).

[3] *Time Magazine*, 21 September 1981, p. 61.

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