



On 'It's 10 A.M. on a School Day—Do You Know Who Has Your Child?'

With apologies to your chubby readers, Jane Greer's rundown of the National Education Association's July convention in Los Angeles in the December issue brought back memories of the glimpses of it I accidentally caught.

The NEA crowd had just hit town, and the delegates virtually had taken over the hotel. Generally speaking, they were very bland, mid-America looking, but what was really striking was their weight. About 25 percent weren't just fat or plump or obese but carried the sort of weight that routinely indicates serious health problems. An equal number were conventionally overweight.

I've been around large professional conventions and groups before, but I've never seen such a socially awkward group, judging from the talk in the hall. They seemed to have trouble striking up conversations, as if they were afraid others would see through them. I couldn't decide if they'd flunked Dale Carnegie or were waiting for an official NEA small-talk guide or were just displaying a natural professional fear of hall monitors.

I spent a fair amount of time wandering around, and I only heard sex education mentioned once. I think it was the only time I heard any methodology discussed. Then, it seemed to be an icebreaker. I slowed down to find out what a modern-day sex educationist looks like.

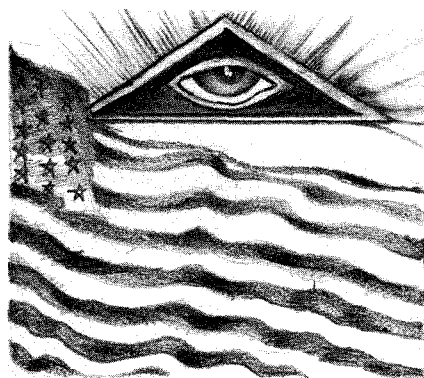
She was in her late 20's and had hair to her waist and was Asian, so you'd think she'd be too smart to be mixed

up with the NEA, much less sex ed. But she was fat.

—Norman Stewart
Hickory, NC

On 'Protestant Politics, Religion, and American Public Life'

In his excellent article, Mark Noll claims, "It was not theology that separated the Lutherans and the reformed as much as culture," and he mentions several of Calvin's and Luther's differ-



ing emphases. I really do not think these are cultural, but theological, and they relate mainly to the two reformers' differences over the law. Calvin taught that the principal use of the law is as a guide and spur to believers to obey God. Luther was at best suspicious of this so-called *tertius usus* and at times speaks very harshly of the law's positive function. This suspicion of the *tertius usus* leads to his distinction between the two kingdoms, which obviously militates against a Calvinist approach to culture.

I sense as well a difference in their

manner of theological thinking. Calvin always strikes me as linear in the structure of his thought, whereas Luther is bipolar, even paradoxical. He is always trying to hold together in tension two opposites. Witness his two kingdoms, his sharp distinction between the two covenants, and the hidden and revealed God. I think this theological difference is the chief reason Noll can speak so rightly of a "Lutheran irony," which is so lacking in American culture.

We are still shaped by Winthrop's reformed vision of a city set on a hill and are convinced that we are a nation chosen by God to bring redemption to the world. Consequently, our foreign policy can never be justified by legitimate self-interest alone, but only by some holy crusade for democracy, whether it be World War I, Vietnam, Central America, or South Africa.

A little Lutheran irony would be helpful, as well as a realization that the U.S. Constitution created our federal government for our mutual defense and general welfare. It did not and does not give the government license to save the world. Of course, one might add to the Christian right that democracy is not part of divinely revealed dogma. Theologically speaking, there was only one chosen nation, and the church, not any political, racial, or national entity, is the heir of that status under a different divine economy. The United States is a nation which has been tremendously blessed by God, but that implies the responsibility of stewardship and not divine election. We are required by God as a people to seek to do right and use our resources properly. We are not chosen by Him to conduct a holy crusade.

—William Isley
Loures, Portugal

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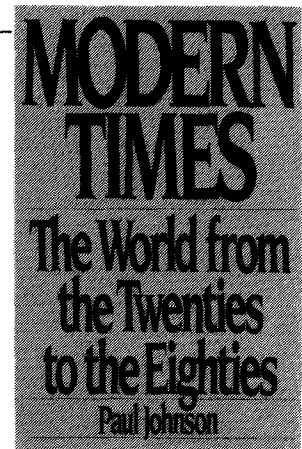
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How do you score on men and events?

Fill in the blanks with the people Paul Johnson is referring to:

"The _____ invasion [of Washington], one visiting statesman observed, was 'like watching the Borgia brothers take over a respectable north Italian town'." (Page 614)

"In the atomic field Soviet agents included Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Morton Sobell, David Greenglass, Harry Gold, _____ (alias Alexander Stevens), to whom Whittaker Chambers acted as courier, and Jacob Golos, as well as Klaus Fuchs, who had been cleared by British security." (Page 458)

"Yet _____ was not a statist. He said he was against any attempt 'to smuggle fascism into America through the back door'. On many issues he was a liberal.... He did not make anti-Semitic jokes, like Woodrow Wilson and his wife or Franklin Roosevelt. To a very wide spectrum of educated American opinion, he was the leading American public man..." (Page 243)

History Without Tears

We stick with many a book because it's good for us, because we ought to read it. *Modern Times* is a welcome change, compulsively readable. As the snippets above suggest, Paul Johnson is a pleasure to read.