

Confirmation and Indoctrination

by E. Christian Kopff



Anna Mycek-Widdecki

Institutions survive because the old teach the young. The Quakers who founded Haverford and Swarthmore colleges in Pennsylvania had to admit that the Holy Spirit could use the help of explicit teaching to back up His direct conversation with the human heart. For ages the Church has asked the young to memorize its basic teachings before their first communion. The creeds and catechisms are memorized because it takes maturity to understand the meaning of these age-old formulas, often translated from Greek into Latin before finding a more or less comfortable home in English. Recitations of the Lord's Prayer or the Apostles' Creed are an empty chatter unless we are told what they mean. These phrases stay with us our whole lives. God commanded, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." Martin Luther explained that He is not only forbidding lying, but enjoining us "to put the best construction on everything."

The word "religion" comes from the Latin *religare* ("to bind"). The new religion which binds together the globalist New World Order promised us by President Bush needs to instruct its children, too. Like Catholic and Lutheran schools, public schools provide a place where eager, slightly hyperactive children may learn the lessons of their community. The ideals of traditional American education were "liberal" in the old sense, appropriate for a free citizen. Its opposite was servile, banalistic, practical, training for a craft. A free man learns to think and speak freely through the study of languages, his own, other peoples', and that complex and abstract language which is mathematics. This is the education sketched in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. It can be found elsewhere in modern times, from Luther and Elyot's *Governour* to Mill's

"Inaugural Address" at St. Andrews. It is today, of course, hopelessly obsolete. Free citizens needed to know foreign languages and mathematics. The subjects of the New World Order do not.

When the National Center for Educational Statistics reviewed recent scores on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), they lamented, "These figures show that many students appear to be graduating from high school with little of the mathematics understanding required by the fastest growing occupations or for college work." David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle responded in their book *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995):

In an unusual display of agreement, dozens of economists have predicted that growth is likely in the service section of employment—and this means more jobs for janitors, limousine drivers, word processors, sales clerks, and the like. We've also seen estimates that the hospitality industry—e.g., tourism—is now employing more people than any other and that the Wal-Mart chain will soon be the largest single employer in America. But most jobs in hospitality and retail sales do not require high-level mathematical skills. So if schools do not prepare everyone to perform high-level mathematics, perhaps it is because students and their teachers are responding sensibly to the looming job market.

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. In 1990, Motorola announced it was investing in a computer chip plant in Sendai, Japan, because it could not find enough American workers with the necessary mathematical skills. American students have the education to serve as Wal-Mart checkout clerks, and their downsized customers cannot afford to shop anywhere else as manufactur-

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ing jobs continue to flee the country. In the 1950's, 33 percent of jobs in the United States were in manufacturing. In 1996, the figure is 16 percent. Much of this job loss is due to our reckless leap into the global marketplace, but some of it, as the Motorola example shows, is due to the implosion of our education system in the 1960's.

So much for what the New World Order does not teach. What does it teach? A good sample of what goes on in classrooms can be gleaned from *dear author*, a book of letters written by junior high and high school students to the authors of books they have read. Mark Mattox of Portage, Michigan, hurt his foot jumping on a trampoline and was stuck at home for two weeks. In boredom he began reading Johann David Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*. Mark loved the book and wrote Wyss (via Our Weekly Reader's *Read* magazine and the Library of Congress' Center for the Book). "Mr. Wyss, you have certainly succeeded in making an incredibly sad environmentalist out of me. Your work is definitely one of the strong outcries against pollution and overpopulation I have ever seen, heard, or read in my entire life; what is contained within your book is an entire world that our self-centered race has taken up in its massive hand and squeezed to a cruel and unneeded death." Mark's letter is a tribute to the success of our educational system. Adventure, danger, loyalty, a fast-paced tale. What do these all add up to for a well-trained catechumen in our schools? Why, a strong outcry against pollution and overpopulation, naturally! All we need, to show intellectual diversity, would be a letter from a young "conservative" praising the book as an argument for the importance of family values.

Linetta Alley of Bridgewater, Virginia, thanked Bette Greene, author of *The Summer of My German Soldier*. "This book gave me such a different perspective on how prejudiced our country is." Discovering American prejudice is an important part of our educational system. Astum Khan of Rolling Meadows, Illinois, in a letter to Alex Haley about *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, described his situation. "I was Indian and Muslim, and everyone knows how Americans feel about those who are different. You are an outsider. A stranger. Nobody wants you. You can make as many white friends as you want, but when it comes right down to it, they're American; you're not." (You may have been wondering how grateful immigrants are for our immigration policies.) Ginger Brandeen wrote to Lois Lowry, "I live in a small town in Oregon, where I see bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination every day."

The books these children read are often mentioned as school assignments. Out of 75 letters in *dear author*, two are written to Alex Haley, two to Anne Frank, and three to John Steinbeck. Five letters are on books concerning the holocaust, including Jane Yolen's *Briar Rose* and Jerzy Kosinski's *Painted Bird*. Emily Judge of Wheaton, Illinois, wrote to Elie Wiesel: "I was assigned to read *Night* and literally groaned when I discovered it was about the Holocaust. I felt that I had heard enough about this horrible time period and didn't understand why teachers persisted in making me read such graphic accounts. . . . As I finished the book, I threw it across my room, angered and disgusted." Some parents have similar reactions. I once talked to a parent who could not understand why his daughter was assigned Anne Frank's *Diary* two consecutive years in public school. Eventually Emily repents and there is a happy ending. "Thank you for the courage you had to write *Night*. Never again will I shut myself off from reality."

Religion is not totally lacking from the modern public school. For example, *dear author's* index includes entries for "Judaism" and "Muslim." The entry, "ancestors," refers to a letter by Betty Chu of San Francisco, thanking Laurence Yep for his *Child of the Owl*. "Now I understand why my mother prayed to my ancestors with me," she writes, in one of two references to her family's ancestor worship. The absence of "Christian" from the Index is a slip, but perhaps not an accident. Lacey Murphy writes to thank Janette Oke for *The Calling of Emily Evans*, which helped Lacey in her decision to become a missionary. She mentions church and Vacation Bible School explicitly. Breeann Songer of Ellicottville, New York, is more discreet in her letter to Madeleine L'Engle. "From your books I can tell that you believe in God and His ways the same way I do. I thought it was wonderful when you said He makes sure each star has a name so they won't feel unwanted." Exceptionally, these last two authors seem not to have been read as school assignments.

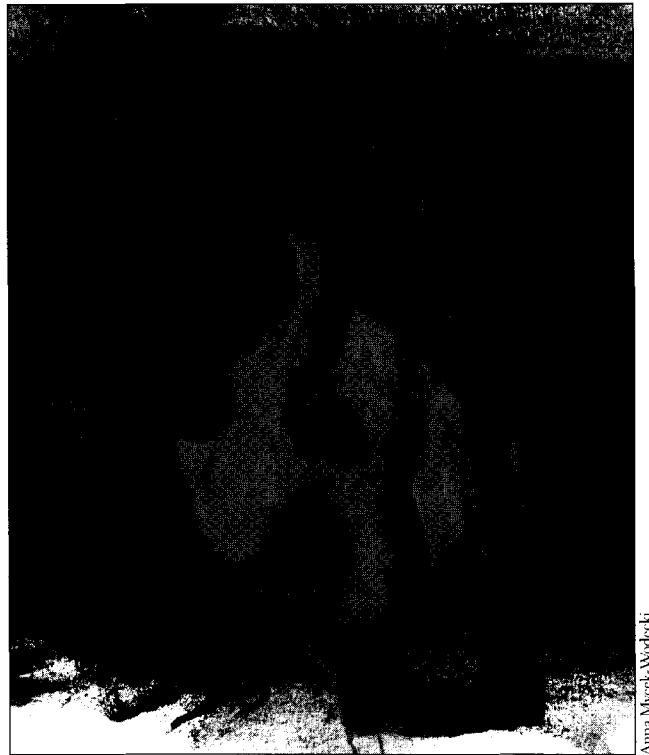
For these students, politics are, in Thomas Short's phrase, "Oppression History." No one thanks Jefferson or Madison or Tocqueville for making sense out of our system, or Winston Churchill for telling the story of the English-speaking peoples. Jason A. Booms of Ubly, Michigan, wrote to Leon Uris: "I can relate to the peasants in the *Trinity* book in many ways. Like them, I am growing up in a farming village. I am Catholic, and I too feel the pressures of a foreign rule. The major difference is that my foreign rule is my parents and the teachers who grew up in a different world." The lesson Bill Campbell of Flint, Michigan, learned from Niccolo Machiavelli was that politicians have not changed since the 16th century and Bill no longer wants to be one. At least he learned an intellectual lesson, although his response to it was typically emotional.

In contemporary education, sympathy or revulsion is the required response, not critical assent or dissent. No one writes to thank C.S. Lewis for trying to puzzle out a rational basis for religious faith. Brad Lockard of Jackson, Kentucky, did write to Jim Garrison to thank him for teaching him to question authority. "By the time I finished the book, I had formed my own opinion: the government helped to kill Kennedy. . . . Your book inspired me to challenge even *your* view on the government and the assassination." Brad thinks that swallowing Garrison's hypothesis lock, stock, and barrel is his own opinion and is even questioning Garrison. This is the best example of a critical mind among the 75 letters. It will come as little surprise that there are no letters to George Orwell.

The confirmation classes of our public schools do not require high-level mathematical skills or reading knowledge of a foreign language. Critical thought itself is unnecessary for the travel agents and Wal-Mart clerks of the future. Perhaps someday they may be asked to memorize what seems to be the natural creed or international anthem for our day, penned and sung by someone who may turn out to be one of the great poets of the coming World Monoculture, Aspen's own John Denver. "I'm sorry for the way things are in China. I'm sorry for the way things used to be. More than anything else I'm sorry for myself." For the Christian, God is Love. For the product of our secular indoctrination, the individual is a god, and, like an emotional version of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, these gods spend eternity contemplating themselves in self-pity. Fortunately, in its infinite providence, the international community, the ground of all being, knows how to take care of these self-obsessed, self-pitying gods.

The Rise of the Profane

by Thomas Molnar



At some point in their development, civilizations cease believing in the sacred and plunge into a new set of absolutes. No community likes to speak of decadence and its usually harsh symptoms; no one may even grasp the meaning of such an upheaval. Yet new absolutes appear on the horizon which seem to be barbarous because they are denials of the earlier sacred. For the sacred, in the eyes of the people, appears to be an absolute; it affects their imagination and judgments—until a “thomaskuhnian” revolution (philosophical, scientific, moral, aesthetic) diverts their attention to something else.

So-called transitional periods experience a parallel mobilization of two currents: the old, stable center survives in name, with its symbols and rituals, while a new focus, as yet amorphous and without validity, emerges with its own discourse, its own art forms, and its own set of acts to be performed. For a while—it may be many decades—the two run on parallel tracks; we call the first “sacred,” the second “profane,” and justifiably belittle the latter, measuring it in the habitual terms of the former. At such times, we witness the transvaluation of the tradition toward the as-yet unknown, and remain perplexed while the new, the profane, occupies the center of loyalty. A new foundation is sacralized.

It is obvious that we now approach the end of the “Age of Faith,” and that our “profane” is the surrounding milieu of industrial, infinitely multipliable, objects and technological procedures that point to a kind of infinity in space and time. The new profane, on the way to sacralization, appears as a world of

surprises, even of miracles; it insinuates itself in our nervous system as a series of spectacular presentations for our industrially underlined comfort, from the Internet to biogenetics. New generations pay lip service to the old “values” (nobody knows what they are and what they mean), but accept technology and its mechanical procedures as a trusted new reality. Without necessarily knowing what they perform and achieve, the new generations organize their conceptual and practical life according to the rules of a changed liturgy. The profane has become the new sacred.

The consequence is the rise of “profane” ceremonies, manners, behavior. For example, marriage ceremonies of a secular nature in secular surroundings, performed by state officials, replaced the church’s blessing at the French Revolution, and received a new consecration from the Bolsheviks and in Western secularized states. Abortion and euthanasia mechanize—literally industrialize—the acts of birth and death, and we may expect that at some time both will elaborate their own secular rituals, as now accompany some divorce proceedings. Same-sex marriage will also do away with the ecclesiastical remnants in ceremonies and seek legitimation through profane rites. The presence of female personnel, from seaman to admiral, from private to general on navy ships, in army units, will also modify the initiation ceremonies of manhood and womanhood, since the centrality of the male principle in public affairs and in sacred matters had hitherto been taken for granted. In sum, we witness deeper changes in functions and rituals than mankind ever did before, but for the moment we are merely shocked by them, without measuring their civilizational impact. We are carried away by them, and ascribe them to a variety of causes:

Thomas Molnar’s Philosophical Grounds was recently released by Transaction Publishers as Archetypes of Thought.