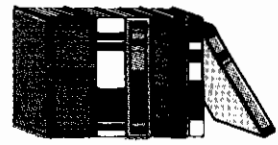


The Blumenfeld Education Letter



"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

Volume 2, Number 4 (Letter # 8) EDITOR: Samuel L. Blumenfeld

April 1987

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce those risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

Court Rules Secular Humanism Is A Religion

The ruling handed down in Mobile, Alabama, on March 4, 1987, by U.S. District Judge W. Brevard Hand, that secular humanism is a religion, is perhaps the most important court victory for Christians to date in the ongoing struggle between the two opposing world views.

The landmark 172-page ruling in this case of Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County, Ala., affirmed what Christians have been saying for years: that the government school curriculum is based on and teaches the tenets of secular humanism and that this, therefore, constitutes an establishment of religion sponsored and sanctioned by the state, which is expressly forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

Secular humanists for years have used the establishment clause to rid the government schools of any Christian practice or content. Christians are now using the same arguments to rid the public schools of secular humanism. What is particularly gratifying is that a federal judge in our humanistic judiciary system was, first of all, willing to hear the case, and second, willing to judge it fairly on the basis of his own examination of the evidence.

The case really boiled down to determining what is a religion. The plaintiffs contended that secular humanism is a religion; the defendants argued that it is not.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court has never stated an absolute definition of religion under the First Amendment, the judge wrote that "any definition of religion must not be limited, therefore, to traditional religions, but must encompass systems of belief that are equivalent to them for the believer."

He then wrote: "... all religious beliefs may be classified by the questions they raise and the issues they address. These ... may be grouped as [follows]: (1) the existence of supernatural and/or transcendent reality; (2) The nature of man; (3) The ultimate end, or goal, or purpose of man's existence, both individually and collectively; (4) The purpose and nature of the universe."

What then follows in this ruling is Judge Hand's lucid, logical, and concise examination of secular humanism as a belief system that easily qualifies it to be regarded as a religion. He wrote:

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. . . All of the experts, and the [plaintiffs], agreed that [humanism] is a religion which: makes a statement about supernatural existence a central pillar of its logic; defines the nature of man; sets forth a goal or purpose for individual and collective human existence; and defines the nature of the universe, and thereby delimits its purpose.

It purports to establish a closed definition of reality; not closed in that its adherents know everything, but in that everything is knowable: can be reconciled by the human intellect aided only by the devices of that intellect's own creation or discovery. The most important belief of this religion is its denial of the transcendent and/or supernatural: there is no God, no creator, no divinity. By force of logic, the universe is thus self-existing, completely physical and hence, essentially knowable. Man is the product of evolutionary, physical forces. He is purely biological and has no supernatural or transcendent spiritual component or quality. Man's individual purpose is to seek and obtain personal fulfillment by freely developing every talent and ability, especially his rational intellect, to the highest level. Man's collective purpose is to seek the good life by the increase of every person's freedom and potential for personal development.

In addition, humanism, as a belief system, erects a moral code and identifies the source of morality. This source is claimed to exist in humans and the social relationships of humans. . . .

Secular humanism . . . has organizational characteristics. Some groups are more structured and hierarchical, others less so. . . . These organizations proselytize and preach their theories with the avowed purpose of persuading nonadherents to believe as they do . . .

. . . The entire body of thought has three key documents that furnish the text upon which the belief system rests as a platform: Humanist Manifesto I, Humanist Manifesto II, and the Secular Humanist Declaration.

These factors . . . demonstrate the institutional character of secular humanism. They are evidence that this belief system is similar to groups traditionally afforded protection by the First Amendment religion clauses.

Furthermore, the movement has leaders, alive and deceased, who are acknowledged, even revered, as authorities on its purposes and application in daily life. These include John Dewey, Sidney Hook, Paul Kurtz, and Corliss Lamont. These men do not present a monolithic front, and this is another factor evidencing this as a religious movement. There is a diversity of views and philosophies within the humanist community very similar to the schisms and deviates existing within the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities.

. . . For First Amendment purposes, the commitment of humanists to a non-supernatural and non-transcendent analysis, even to the point of hostility towards and outright attacks on all theistic religions, prevents them from maintaining the fiction that this is a non-religious discipline. . . . Secular humanism is religious for First Amendment purposes because it makes statements based on faith-as-assumptions.

. . . The court is holding that the promotion and advancement of a religious system occurs when one faith-theory is taught to the exclusion of others and this is prohibited by the First Amendment religion clauses.

. . . For purposes of the First Amendment, secular humanism is a religious belief system, entitled

to the protections of, and subject to the prohibitions of, the religion clauses. It is not a mere scientific methodology that may be promoted and advanced in the public schools.

Having rendered his judgment that secular humanism is a religion, Judge Hand then determined to what extent secular humanism is promoted through the textbooks adopted by the state of Alabama:

The pattern in these books is the omission of religious aspects to significant American events.
...

... To what extent can omissions constitute a violation of the First Amendment religion clauses?

First, the Supreme Court has recognized a right to not be prevented from learning material if it was excluded for religious reasons and there is a legitimate secular or non-religious (as opposed to anti-religious or irreligious) reason for teaching the material. Thus an omission can constitute a First Amendment violation. Second, a number of commentators contend that sufficient omissions violate religious freedom. Furthermore, there is no doubt that adherents to the religion of the Humanist Manifestos affirmatively seek the exclusion of influence by theistic religions in the public schools. ... The vast majority of Americans, for most of our history, have lived in a society in which religion was a part of daily life. ... One would never know it by reading these books. Religion, where treated at all, is generally represented as a private matter, only influencing American public life at some extraordinary moments. This view of religion is one humanists have been seeking to instill for 50 years. ... These history books discriminate against the very concept of religion, and theistic religions in particular, by omissions so serious that a student learning history from them

would not be appraised of relevant facts about America's history. ... The texts reviewed are not merely bad history, but lack so many facts as to equal ideological promotion.

On the matter of morals education, the judge had this to say:

Teaching that moral choices are purely personal and can only be based on some autonomous, as yet undiscovered and unfulfilled, inner self is a sweeping fundamental belief that must not be promoted by the public schools. The state can, of course, teach the law of the land, which is that each person is responsible for, and will be held to account for, his actions. There is a distinct practical consequence between this fact, and the religious belief promoted, whether explicitly or implicitly, by saying "only you can decide what is right or wrong." With these books, the State of Alabama has overstepped its mark, and must withdraw to perform its proper non-religious functions.

In granting relief, the judge wrote:

The court, having concluded that the challenged textbooks violate the establishment clauses of the First Amendment ..., is thus compelled to grant plaintiffs' their requested relief barring the further advancement of the tenets of the religion of secular humanism. The court will enter an order and judgment granting an injunction ... to prohibit further use of the books listed therein and set out as Appendix M of this opinion.

The most significant aspect of this opinion is that it finally provides Christians with a clearly worded definition of secular humanism, one that will no doubt prove quite useful in the future. Previous to this, humanists have played dumb, claiming that trying to define humanism is like trying to nail jello to a wall. Well, the "jello"

has finally been nailed, and it turns out not to have been jello at all, but just another piece of humanist deception and intellectual dishonesty.

Textbooks Banned by Judge Hand

Following is a list of the textbooks that U.S. District Judge W. Brevard Hand last week ordered removed from the Alabama public schools.

Home-Economics Books			
Book	Principal Author	Publisher	Editions
<i>Caring, Deciding and Growing</i>	Helen McGinley	Ginn	1983
<i>Contemporary Living</i>	Verdene Ryder	Goodheart-Wilcox	1981, 1985
<i>Homemaking: Skills for Everyday Living</i>	Frances Baynor	Goodheart-Wilcox	1981, 1984
<i>Teen Guide</i>	Parnell	McGraw Hill, Webster Div.	1985
<i>Today's Teen</i>	Valerie Chamberlain	Bennett & McKnight	1981
	Joan Kelly		
History Books			
Book	Principal Author	Publisher	Editions
<i>America Is</i>	Frank Freidel	Charles E. Merrill	1978
<i>The American Dream</i>	Law Smith	Scott, Foresman	1980
<i>Exploring Our Nation's History</i>	Sidney Schwartz	Globe	1984
<i>History of a Free People</i>	Henry W. Bragdon	Macmillan	1981
<i>A History of Our American Republic</i>	Glenn M. Linden	Laidlaw Brothers	1981
<i>Our American Heritage</i>	Herbert J. Bass	Silver Burdett	1979
<i>People and Our Country</i>	Norman K. Risjord	Holt, Rinehart & Winston	1978
<i>Rise of the American Nation</i>	Lewis Paul Todd	Harcourt Brace Jovanovich	1977
<i>These United States</i>	James P. Shenton	Houghton Mifflin	1981
Social-Studies Books			
Book	Publisher	Edition	Grade
<i>You and Me</i>	Rand McNally	1980	1
<i>Here We Are</i>	Rand McNally	1980	2
<i>Our Land</i>	Rand McNally	1980	3
<i>Where on Earth</i>	Rand McNally	1980	4
<i>Across America</i>	Rand McNally	1980	5
<i>World Views</i>	Rand McNally	1980	6
<i>Social Studies Series</i>	Scott, Foresman	1979	1-6
<i>Our Family</i>	Speck	1981	1
<i>Our Neighbors</i>	Speck	1981	2
<i>Our Communities</i>	Speck	1981	3
<i>Our Country Today</i>	Speck	1981	4
<i>Our Country's History</i>	Speck	1981	5
<i>Our World Today</i>	Speck	1981	6
<i>Understanding People</i>	Laidlaw	1981	1
<i>Understanding Families</i>	Laidlaw	1981	2
<i>Understanding Communities</i>	Laidlaw	1981	3
<i>Understanding Religions of the Earth</i>	Laidlaw	1981	4
<i>Understanding Our Country</i>	Laidlaw	1981	5
<i>Understanding the World</i>	Laidlaw	1981	6
Judge Hand also ordered the following books removed, but they were inadvertently omitted from the list in his opinion, according to court officials.			
Book	Publisher	Edition	Grade
<i>At Home, At School</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	1
<i>In Our Community</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	2
<i>Ourselfs and Others</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	3
<i>Our Home, The Earth</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	4
<i>America: Past and Present</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	5
<i>Around Our World</i>	Houghton Mifflin	NA	6

(Educ. Wk. 3/11/87)

Educators, PAW & ACLU Denounce Judge's Ruling

"It's laughable, and it's so outrageous, I have no doubt it will be overturned on appeal," commented Gwendolyn H. Gregory, deputy general counsel for the National School Boards Association.

"It is terribly disappointing that the courts have chosen to commandeer the educational curriculum," said Phyllis L. Blaunstein, executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education.

"Today's order is judicial book-burning. What is created here today by this ruling is nothing less than government censorship of the school curriculum," said John H. Buchanan, chairman of People for the American Way.

"This is the first time to our knowledge that a federal judge has declared ideas unconstitutional," said Alabama ACLU director Mary Weidler. "The decision confirms our worst fears of federal censorship over local public school matters."

Both People for the American Way and the American Civil Liberties Union joined the Alabama state school board in defending against the lawsuit filed by the 624 parents, teachers and students.

The suit originated after the Supreme Court struck down an Alabama law permitting students to begin their school day with a moment of silence for prayer or meditation.

Alabama B. of E. Appeals Decision

The Alabama Board of Education voted 5 to 4 to appeal Judge Hand's order banning 44 textbooks from use in the state's public schools. Subsequent to the issuance of the order, school officials had begun removing the books from classroom shelves. In Mobile County students and teachers turned in their copies of the books.

Although Gov. Guy Hunt, chairman of the board, voted against appeal, the board's vice president, John Tyson Jr., pushed strongly for appeal.

Lawyers for the board filed a motion to delay implementation of the order to remove the books. Judge Hand

agreed on March 17 to allow restricted use of 4 of the 44 textbooks for the remainder of the school year. The 4 books are in the field of home-economics.

Appeals Court Suspends Textbook Ban

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit has temporarily suspended Judge Hand's order removing 44 textbooks from Alabama public schools. After the March 27 ruling, the state board directed officials to return the books to students.

In ordering the stay, the appellate court granted a request by the Alabama Bd. of Educ. and a dozen parents to block Judge Hand's March 4 order until an appeal could be heard. The court also agreed to expedite the appeals process.

Charles S. Coody, a lawyer for the state board, said the appeals court's decision was a sign that the court may overturn Judge Hand's ruling. (Educ. Wk. 4/8/87)

NEA Lies About Humanism

In Feb. 1985 the National Education Association published a pamphlet purporting to tell "the truth about 31 of the most common charges leveled against NEA members by right-wing extremists." Here's what the pamphlet says about "Extremist Accusation #9 - NEA members indoctrinate students in secular humanism," on page 7:

Not true. NEA neither endorses nor practices "secular humanism." Nor does NEA support the indoctrination of students to any religious or non-religious doctrine.

The whole notion of secular humanism is, in fact, entirely the invention of Radical Right leaders, writers, and fund-raisers. They've conjured up the concept, defined it, villified it, and then attributed it to teachers.

Nation Shocked by Teen Suicides

The suicides of four teenagers in Bergenfield, New Jersey, in March once more put the subject of teen suicide in the headlines. The two girls and two boys parked their car in a garage and killed themselves by carbon monoxide poisoning. The four requested in a note that they be buried together.

When discussing reasons why four young people would commit suicide in this incredible way, the authorities were once again baffled, citing low self-esteem and depression as probable causes.

But anyone who read our February letter on teen suicide knows that the answers are to be found in what is being taught to our youngsters in the schools. As we explained, values clarification creates hatred of life, and death education creates love of death. When you put the two together you get teen suicide.

Until these two lethal subjects are removed from the curriculum, we can expect teen suicide to remain at its present high level.

Teacher Shows Death Video in Class

Bart Schwarz, 27, a math teacher at Escondido (Calif.) High School showed the gruesome "Faces of Death" to his students after a final exam in June 1985. The film, which has been banned in 28 countries, shows actual death scenes involving animals and humans and human autopsies. (See B.E.L. Feb. 1987)

When two students, Diane Feese and Sherry Forget, asked to leave the room, the teacher insisted that they stay and view the film. As a result both girls developed an unnatural fear of dying and suffered great emotional distress. When the parents complained to the principal, he refused to take any corrective action.

The two students sued the school district. The suit was settled in Sept. 1986. Feese received \$57,000 in damages and Forget received \$42,500. The teacher was suspended for 15 days but returned after 5.

Because of harassment by students who supported the teacher, Forget was forced to leave the school in the middle of her senior year. (National Monitor of Education, March 1987)

Christian Schoolers Jailed in Iowa

Sharon Taylor, 47, was jailed on March 24, 1987, one day after the release of her husband, the Rev. Todd N. Taylor, 45, from the same Henry County, Iowa, jail.

Both had been sentenced to 30-day terms for violation of Iowa's compulsory school attendance law by teaching their children, Nicholas, 8, and Stephanie, 13, in their own Blue Bird Christian School at their 30-member First Assembly of God Church.

"I am glad to be out," said Rev. Taylor, "but my convictions are even stronger now than they were 31 days ago." Rev. Taylor has refused to comply with state laws requiring state approval of Christian schools and state certification of Christian-school teachers.

The Taylors have become a symbol of the Christian schools' movement in Iowa. Largely because of their activities, about 1,500 Iowans gathered for a rally at the State Capitol in Des Moines in early March seeking an end to state regulation of home and church schools.

"We don't believe the state has a mandate to control our churches and ministries, and our school is a part of that," said Rev. Taylor.

"I am not about to give up this fight," said Mrs. Taylor. "I am going to continue doing what's right no matter what it takes." (New York Times, 3/25/87)

Seventh-Grader Kills Classmate and Self

A boy in the 7th grade walked into his history class at 8:25 a.m. on 3/2/87, shot a fellow student to death with a 45-caliber pistol and then killed himself in front of a dozen classmates and a teacher. The murder-suicide took place at De Kalb High School, De Kalb, Missouri.

The first boy, identified as Nathan D. Faris, 12, shot his classmate, Timothy Perrin, 13, in the stomach and then shot himself in the head. Perrin ran from the classroom with a bullet wound to the stomach and collapsed in an adjacent classroom, police said.

The two boys were pronounced dead at hospitals in St. Joseph. Both lived in Rushville. No motive for the shooting was established. Neither boy was known to be a discipline problem, said Bob Couldry, superintendent of Buchanan County R-4 School District.

De Kalb High School has 205 students in grades 7 through 12 and is located about 40 miles north of Kansas City. (Boston Globe, 3/3/87)

Pupils No Longer Asked To Write Own Eulogies

Junior high school students in Lincoln, Neb., will no longer be asked to write their own eulogies and epitaphs, after parents complained that the assignment was too depressing.

The assignment was one of 24 supplemental exercises included in the district's curriculum guide for teachers of 7th-grader health-education classes in the city's nine junior high schools. As part of a unit on mental health, the guide suggested that students write a passage describing what they would like to have said at their funerals and written on their tombstones.

"We just didn't think that this was appropriate," said Sharon Zamrzla, a parent who led the fight to have the assignment discontinued. "There are so many suicides going on."

Dean Austin, director of the district's health-education program, said the activities in the teachers' guide were designed to help students sort out their feelings about themselves. District officials decided to drop the exercise, he said, after concluding that it didn't "link into the major concept we were trying to examine."

The district is currently revising its entire health curriculum, Mr. Austin added. (Educ. Wk. 3/25/87)

Prayers Banned at High School Football Game

A federal district judge ruled on 2/3/87 that public prayers before high school football games in Douglasville, Ga., violate the First Amendment's ban on state establishment of religion.

U.S. District Judge Ernest Tidwell wrote in his opinion that the school district's custom allowing Protestant ministers to offer invocations before sporting events served no secular purpose.

Last September, after a preliminary injunction barring the prayers, the Douglasville school board adopted a policy allowing student-government leaders to select pre-game speakers from a pool that includes students, parents and ministers. Judge Tidwell is expected to rule on the constitutionality of the new policy. (Educ. Wk. 2/18/87)

Educators Organize to Fight Tennessee Decision

Several leading organizations of the education establishment have joined forces with the Hawkins County, Tenn., school board in its appeal of the recent federal-court decision allowing

Christian children to be excused from classes deemed objectionable by their parents.

A "friend of the court" brief filed in January 1987 was signed by the American Association of School Administrators, American Association of University Professors, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, National School Boards Association, and the Association of American Publishers. The National Education Association filed a separate brief.

The educators argue that the decision would create "religious segregation," distort the public-school curriculum, and place an impossible burden on teachers. (Educ. Wk. 2/18/87)

Computer Study Indicates Torah of Divine Origin

Researchers in Israel say data gleaned from special computer analyses of the first five books of the Bible, the Torah, shatter the notion that they were written by different people at different times. Scripture scholar Moshe Katz and computer expert Menachem Wiener of the Israel Institute of Technology say their unusual system of analysis indicates that the Books of Moses had a single author.

In fact, they say the statistical evidence strongly suggests that the material couldn't have been put together, in its odd patterns of "hidden" basic words, by a mortal at all.

The particular phenomenon "cannot be explained rationally," Wiener said.

The research was based on a theory mentioned in later rabbinic literature that significant words are concealed in the Hebrew text of the five biblical books, the words spelled by letters separated at fixed intervals.

Exploring that possibility by computer, the researchers say they did, indeed, find such coded key words distributed through the books. The statistical possibility of this phenomenon

occurring by chance is, according to Katz, as low as one to 3 million.

For example, he cited the Hebrew word "Torah," found repeated in the Book of Genesis by letters at 50-character intervals, while the word "Elohim" (God) is formed by letters at 26-character intervals.

Wiener says the remarkable aspect is not that words are found in the text by stringing together letters at regular intervals, but that in every instance, the disclosed, decoded words bear direct relevance to the text in which they were concealed.

For instance, he notes that the burial site of Adam and Eve is never mentioned in the texts, but by the letter-skipping method, the names of "Adam" and "Eve" appear in the text describing the burial place of the patriarch Abraham and his wife, Sarah.

Recognizing that many scholars and skeptics will question the conclusions that the text came only through divine guidance of Moses, Wiener conceded that "we have not scientifically proved this."

But he says the "preponderance of occurrences" of relevant words appearing at regular intervals of letters "certainly points" to such a conclusion by enormous statistical odds.

In any case, he says, "it is as reasonable a supposition, if not more so, than the theories claiming" the first five books have several authors. (Phoenix Gazette, 7/9/86)

Vital Reading

Christianity and the State by Rousas John Rushdoony, Ross House Books, P.O. Box 67, Vallecito, CA 95251, 200 pp. \$18.00, plus 10% shipping (add 6% tax in California).

This brilliant book is much needed, for it answers a much-asked question by Christians: given the political structure of our humanistic society, what is the appropriate strategy for Christian reconstructionists?

We can only know this if we know what the goal of Christian reconstruction is. One of Dr. Rushdoony's most important ideas is that law is an expression of religion. He writes: "The religion behind the law may be Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, humanism, or Christianity, but all laws, and their concepts of justice, are religious facts."

The logic of that idea leads him to the next, which basically sets the course for Christian reconstruction: "This makes obvious how dangerous and absurd it is to dismiss the need for or the idea of a Christian civil government."

What is a Christian civil government? One that applies God's law to the social order. "Because salvation and justification are from and through Jesus Christ, so too our law and justice."

And why is it so important to know this? Because "the more a state pursues justice outside of Christ, the more unjust it becomes."

In reaching these conclusions Dr. Rushdoony draws on his extraordinarily broad and deep understanding of history based on years of painstaking scholarship.

"Our present predicament has been over three centuries in developing. It will not disappear overnight."

Therefore the work of Christian reconstruction will be long and arduous. "In God's universe," writes Dr. Rushdoony, "walls are built from the foundation up. To expect otherwise is sin. . . . All too many churchmen . . . are prone to think of armed resistance when they have neither labored in terms of God's law nor used the legal avenues available to them. Such a humanistic shortcut is not honored by God."

At a time when Christians are finding themselves in increasing confrontations with the state, this book is a rich and valuable source of ideas and wisdom.

S.L.B.