

# The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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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 these risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

## Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong

It seems that everytime we open a newspaper or watch the television news we read or hear about another heinous crime committed by a teenager or a group of teenagers. Indeed, more and more serious crimes are being committed by younger and younger children, and none of the experts on teenage behavior seems to know why this is happening. After all, for years now the schools have been teaching kids values clarification and decision making, and for some unfathomable reason these wonderfully humanistic programs have not produced the desired results. Or have they?

These troublesome questions form the basis of William Kilpatrick's illuminating book *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*, published recently by Simon & Schuster (\$23.00). Kilpatrick, a professor of education at Boston College, believes that the reason why the schools are producing so many moral illiterates is because of the shift the schools have made from morality-based character education to nonjudgmental values clarification and decision making. He writes:

"The common feature [these curricula] all share is the assumption that children can learn to make good moral decisions without bothering to acquire moral habits or strength

of character."

Kilpatrick, for example, cites statistics and studies that indicate that sex education, supposedly taught to prevent unwanted pregnancies and venereal diseases, has actually had the opposite effect and has led to more irresponsible sexual activity with its toll of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Kilpatrick writes:

In 1986 *Family Planning Perspectives*, a publication of Planned Parenthood's Alan Guttmacher Institute, published the results of two large studies, both of which failed to show any reduction in sexual activity for teenagers who had taken sex-education courses. The larger of the two studies found that for fifteen- and sixteen-year-old girls, participation in sex education slightly increased the odds of initiating sexual activity. In the same year (1986) a Lou Harris poll commissioned by Planned Parenthood revealed that teenagers who had had comprehensive sex education had significantly higher rates of sexual activity than their peers who had not had sex education.

So one must ask why are the educators pushing sex education more strongly than ever to younger and younger children when the evidence is quite clear that it doesn't work, that it doesn't deter sexual activity among children? It in fact *encourages* it. Is it possible that the results the educators are

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getting are the results they want?

Interestingly enough, Kilpatrick opens his book by referring back to Rudolf Flesch's famous book *Why Johnny Can't Read*, published in 1955. In that book Flesch revealed that the cause of Johnny's reading problem was the look-say method of teaching reading. But, as Kilpatrick observes, the educators have persisted in keeping look-say in the schools, thus producing more and more functional illiteracy in America with its concomitant decline in SAT scores and academic proficiency. Kilpatrick believes that a similar situation exists in the area of moral education.

But those of us who have closely studied the literacy situation over the years in great detail are quite convinced by now that the dumbing down process is deliberate, and that the reason why the educators have not gone back to the more effective alphabetic-phonics method is because they want the results they are getting.

## Moral Miseducation

What is happening in moral education is similar. The educators want the results they are getting. The reason? It is far easier for a ruling elite to control a morally corrupt people than a morally righteous one.

Kilpatrick points out that there is no lack of ideas on how to provide true moral education for America's children. The problem is getting the schools to accept them. He writes:

The United States has an AIDS problem and a drug problem and a violence problem. None of this will go away until schools once again make it their job to teach character both directly, through the curriculum, and indirectly, by creating a moral environment in the school.

But how can a moral environment be created in a school system that passes out

condoms to kids, where kids are taught that they are little animals, the products of evolution, where God is not mentioned, where the teachers union endorses abortion and gay rights but fights parents' rights to choose where their children are to be schooled? In addition, the Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S., better known as SIECUS, and Planned Parenthood have embarked on a campaign to discredit all sex-education programs that promote abstinence. According to the *National Monitor of Education* of May 1993:

SIECUS issued a scathing critique in its SIECUS Report (Dec. '92-Jan. '93) in order to discredit 11 sex education programs promoting abstinence exclusively. Three abstinence programs, "Teen Aid," "Sex Respect," and "Facing Reality" have borne the brunt of legal assaults. Planned Parenthood of Northern Florida has filed a lawsuit against the Jacksonville School District and a group of parents assisted by a Planned Parenthood attorney has filed a lawsuit against Caddo Parish School District (Shreveport, Louisiana).

What are their complaints? The abstinence programs rely too much on fear and shame. According to Leslie Kantor, Director of the SIECUS Community Advocacy Project, abstinence programs omit critical information, contain medical misinformation, include a sexist, anti-choice bias, and have a foundation in fundamentalist religious beliefs.

Obviously, the humanist proponents of "safe sex" and condom distribution have an ideological agenda that is far more important to them than the efficacy of their programs to alter teenage sexual behavior. Even though their own studies have shown that the humanistic nonjudgmental approach does not work, they will go to all lengths possible to obstruct the implementation of sex-education programs that smack of religion based morality.

## The Problem With Quest

The same can be said for the drug education programs in the schools that are supposed to decrease drug use among students but seem to be having the exact opposite effect. For example, the most widely used drug education program in the United States is a humanistic, nonjudgmental program called Quest. The program bases its education techniques on the group-therapy model developed by psychologists Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and William Coulson in which the aim of the participants is to "get in touch with their feelings." When it was discovered by Coulson that this methodology was causing irreparable harm to many of the "patients" involved, he decided to go public. Kilpatrick writes:

Critics of the therapeutic approach claim that while it may be useful in therapy, it has no place in drug education. Coulson points out that the cardinal rule of the clinic, "I will never censor you—nor must you censor yourself," should not apply in schools, especially when the topic is drug taking. On the subject of drugs and other life-and-death issues, children need "authoritative guidance," says Coulson, not techniques designed to explore options and feelings. As Coulson points out, the teachers' guides for these various programs invariably urge the instructor to conduct discussions "free of right and wrong answers." Students, says Coulson, will gain the impression that the rightness or wrongness of drug use is a subjective matter. This, he claims, is a highly irresponsible message—especially in view of the fact that the law does not consider drug use to lie in the subjective realm.

But obviously the promoters of Quest and similar nonjudgmental programs disagree. They consider their programs to be part of the larger "self-esteem movement." Why is self-esteem so important? Because, according to California's Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem, "the lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation as we approach the

end of the 20th century." Self-esteem "inoculates us against the lures of crime, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and educational failure."

In other words, self-esteem, or self-love, is the cure-all for our social problems! No wonder the schools now place so much emphasis on the development of self-esteem among their students. Kilpatrick comments:

But there are some problems with this approach. Real self-esteem is a by-product of real learning and achievement. We feel good about ourselves because we've done something good or worthy. Most self-esteem-based curriculums, however, don't make any connection between self-esteem and achievement or between self-esteem and behavior. People are just simply good as they are. A central message of Quest and similar programs is "You're fine as you are." But, if that's so, there is no need for moral improvement or self-betterment. . . .

It is important to have self-esteem—but for the right reasons.

My own view, as a Calvinist, is that self-esteem—*self-like* rather than *self-love*—begins by first recognizing that one is made in God's image and, second, by living in obedience to God's law. Self-esteem does not consist of being madly and unconditionally in love with oneself. It consists, first, of the absence of self-hate which comes from the guilt that accompanies self-destructive, immoral behavior, and second, of having achieved something of value that can bring happiness to oneself and to others.

## Innate Depravity

Do Satanists and sadists have self-esteem? If having power over others is a source of self-satisfaction, then one can say that Hitler, Stalin, Josef Mengele, Saddam Hussein and other such murderers had the kind of self-esteem the schools are trying to inculcate in American students, a self-es-

teem based on unconditional self-love.

Psychologists might argue that the aforementioned individuals were examples of extreme pathology, of mentally diseased individuals who were clever and ruthless enough to gain power over others. Calvinists would claim that these individuals were simply acting out—to the extent that they could—their innate depravity, their basic sinful nature. For example, when Mengele escaped to South America, he could no longer act on his innate depravity to the extent he was able to as a Nazi officer, encouraged by his own government. Circumstances forced him to act as a normal human being, yet he remained as innately depraved as ever.

Are we, indeed, born with a penchant to do evil but are held in check by a knowledge of God and a desire to win His esteem? Is love of God a necessary prerequisite to or a negation of a love of self? What is love of self? Isn't the whole idea of love the notion that it is directed toward someone or something outside of oneself? Is not self-esteem or self-love simply another form of pride? And is not pride a sin? I have yet to read a love poem addressed to oneself. Yet, the psycho-educators tell us that you cannot love anyone else until you first love yourself.

Undoubtedly there are individuals, like Narcissus, in love with themselves, but we would hardly consider that a healthy state of mind. In fact, it can easily be argued that love of self is an actual obstacle to love of others, and that self-esteem based on unconditional love of self is probably a guarantee that one will never be capable of loving anyone else. After all, if you must love yourself before you can love anyone else, it will be necessary for the other person to think of us in the same exalted terms that we think of ourselves. How can we possibly love someone who doesn't esteem us at least as much as we esteem ourselves? Isn't that a denial of self-esteem? Perhaps it makes more sense to say

that you must love yourself before others can love you. But obviously that's not the way people fall in love. Love is an intense affirmation of another person regardless of their feeling toward us.

In other words, self-esteem is a phony issue. Obedience to God is not. But don't expect the schools to teach obedience to God. That's why the humanists are against abstinence programs, because they are based on the imperative to obey God's law. Self-esteem is a phony issue because it is based on humanism's false notions of man's innate goodness and his moral perfectibility. After all, it's the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem that believes that lack of self-esteem is "central to most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation."

Hardly. What is central is man's sinful nature, his innate depravity, his natural attraction to temptation, his propensity to impose his corrupt will over others. Our Calvinist forefathers understood this very well, and that is why they created a form of government that would place as many obstacles as possible before men desiring the power to lord it over others. They had no illusions about man's basic nature. And they assumed that this nature would do all in its power to break out of the restrictions placed on it, and that unless God-fearing men were constantly vigilant in the defense of their freedoms, they would eventually lose them to man's tyrannical impulses.

## The Corrupt Heart

Rev. Nathan Strong, pastor of the North Presbyterian Church in Hartford, Connecticut, at the time of the American Revolution had this to say about man's depravity in one of his sermons:

Mens depravity is often described by their love of what is wrong, and their want of love or enmity to

that which is right and good. They love sin—delight in departing from God—choose not his ways nor his law, and endeavor to put far away his character and the duties they owe him. They prefer or love their own will, more than his holy will. The law of holiness is to love the Lord with thy whole heart. The depravity in sinners is a love of themselves and the creatures, with the whole heart or supremely; and hence it comes that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. And that, the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Enmity to God, his law, and government is the necessary consequence of their supreme love being turned on themselves. The natural structure of the human mind is such, that a want of love to God, terminates in a supreme love of himself, and the creatures as they are adapted to gratify the lusts of a sinful heart. Let a love of God cease from the heart, and enmity to his character, his law and government, and the whole system of holiness will of course follow. So that the heart must be considered as the primary seat of man's depravity. . . .

When God acts to enlighten spiritually, he does it, not by a revelation of truth which was before unseen by the understanding, or giving any new power to the perceiving faculty; but solely by changing the heart. In the heart there is a new creation, new moral qualities infused by the holy spirit, and this is regeneration. When the heart is made holy, the beauty and glory of holiness is perceived; and until there be this change of heart, the sinner whether he lives in a heathen or christian land, is in total spiritual blindness. (Vol. 1, Sermon VI, pp. 104-5, 108, published 1798)

Is it not interesting that Rev. Strong asserts that "The depravity in sinners is a love of themselves and the creatures, with the whole heart or supremely." But our psycho-educators are telling the children that self-esteem, self-love, is the solution to their problems. According to Rev. Strong it is the royal road to a depraved life! Strong writes:

The heart, the will, the moral taste can be changed only by the power of God.—Hence the scriptures speak of a new birth—a renovation—a new creation—a new heart—and the necessary action of the Holy Spirit to make the change. (p. 110)

But since love of God is a no-no in the public schools of America, the children there

are condemned to lives of hopelessness and despair, with no way out, for the only way out is through the power of God.

Another excellent theologian of our early days, Rev. Elijah Parish of Newbury, Massachusetts, had this to say about man's depraved nature after quoting Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked":

Is it not a proof of human depravity that a constant series of efforts are necessary to maintain a pure and holy course of conduct? Were the heart good, free from the poison of sin, would it require any self-denial, any effort to be dutiful, obedient, and holy? I speak not of those who commit iniquity with greediness, who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, who cannot cease from sin, but of the more sound and decorous portion of society. Is it any reproach to the pure and excellent of the earth to suppose, that they make some effort to be good and holy? . . . Must you not be ever on your guard, ever attentive, sometimes resolute, not to wound your consciences? Does it not require some fixedness of purpose, to turn away from an alluring temptation? . . . Is all this self command natural and easy? Have you always moved spontaneously along the narrow path of life? . . . Do not your wayward passions call you to resistance and exertion, as if you were running a race, or carrying on a warfare? . . . Did not prophets and apostles call on the people to "gird up their loins," "to run," "to fight," "to crucify their passions?" Does not this prove man to be a fallen, sinful, depraved creature? Were you not sinful, were not your heart desperately wicked, it would be as easy to be good, to love and serve God, as to breathe, to sleep, and eat, and love the world. Every effort to be good, every struggle, every painful act of self-denial, proves the heart of man to be desperately wicked. (Sermons by Elijah Parish, Boston, 1826, pp. 209-10)

I rest my case. But obviously 18th century theology, even though it shaped our form of government, has no place in the public school curriculum.

Kilpatrick suggests that good moral education is possible in the public schools by giving the children good books to read that illustrate and dramatize the values of virtue and moral behavior. He provides an excel-

lent list of books for parents, teachers, and homeschoolers. He writes:

The books on the list have been chosen because they are the kinds of books that help youngsters to grow in courage, charity, justice, and other virtues. But they would not be included if they were not also good stories. Since good books do their own work in their own way, it is not necessary or wise for adults to explain the "moral" in each story. Shared reading may prompt youngsters to ask questions about moral issues, but adults should be careful not to treat books like doses of moral medicine.

Sound advice from a sound educator.  
But will the psycho-educators buy it?

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## Student Stabbed to Death In High School Classroom

Jason Robinson, a 16-year-old freshman at Dartmouth High School in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, was stabbed to death on 4/12/93 during an early morning social studies class by three teenagers who burst into the classroom toting an aluminum baseball bat and buck knife. A feud was said to be the motive behind the killing. The three assailants were Gator Collet, 16, Karter Reed, 16, and Nigel Thomas 15. Two of the accused were Dartmouth High students, while Reed is a student at New Bedford Vocational Technical High School.

Judge Ronald Harper ordered the three held without bail and also ordered Reed and Collet to undergo psychiatric evaluations in order to establish whether they are competent to stand trial and assist their attorneys with a defense. Thomas will undergo his evaluation when the court receives consent from his father.

School officials said the defendants, part of a group known as the Skateboarders, had been feuding for weeks with at least two of Robinson's friends and fellow students,

Shawn Pina and Dwayne Silva, both 15. The nature of the feud was unclear, but some students said the Skateboarders, a close-knit group, looked down on those not part of their group.

Officials said Pina, not Robinson, was the intended victim. When the assailants appeared in the classroom, demanding, "Where's Shawn?" witnesses said Robinson stood up and asked why they wanted his friend. Apparently, Pina and Silva had been involved in a fight with the skateboarders earlier that morning, after which the skateboarders left the school. Pina and Silva were immediately suspended for three days because of the fight. But the skateboarders returned to the school shortly thereafter, seeking revenge.

Robinson's uncle and godfather, Walter Watson of New Bedford, said that Jason had just purchased a used car with money he had earned from a part-time job busing tables in the student cafeteria at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth.

"I don't want him compared to the kids who wiped him out. They seem too pathetic. At 16, they have no remorse about what happened," he said at the courthouse.

Reed, with cropped blond hair and wearing a striped T-shirt, was charged with murder; two counts of carrying a dangerous weapon, a pipe and a buck knife. Collet, clad in jeans with his shaven head showing a dark growth, was charged with murder; assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. Thomas was charged similarly.

Neighbors, family members, students and residents familiar with the characters in this drama said that the one thing that bound the defendants together before the crime was skateboarding, an obsession that set them apart from many of their peers in this middle class New Bedford suburb.

Kevin Costa, a sophomore at the technical school, said he stopped being Collet's

friend because Collet was "hanging around with the wrong crowd. He was always getting into trouble, smoking in the bathroom, talking trash to the teachers. He was always getting into fights for no reason."

At Dartmouth High, students remembered Collet as quiet and serious. A couple of weeks ago, he, like others in an English class, was asked to do a biography on a subject of his choice. He chose Charles Manson, convicted California cult killer, a fellow student in the class said.

At the 1,140-student high school yesterday, 26 social workers and counselors, some of them members of the school's death and dying team who are trained to provide help in such situations, sprang into action. They worked to calm students, particularly those who witnessed their classmate's slaying.

A one-hour meeting of townspeople hastily called at the high school last night attracted some 300 parents and students, who pressured officials to look at school safety. Known for its good schools, attractive shoreline and plenty of open, undeveloped land, Dartmouth is home to 27,000 blue-collar and middle-class residents, many of whom moved into town during the 1980s to escape urban ills.

Said Middlesex District Attorney Thomas F. Reilly, whose office recently prosecuted a Billerica teenager for stabbing to death a man over a pack of cigarettes and this fall will try three Cambridge teenagers charged with killing an MIT student during a robbery: "Yesterday's incident could have happened anywhere. It really gets down to teaching values. Sometimes we've painted with too much gray, with not much emphasis on what is right and what is wrong."

But the call for any kind of mandatory curriculum, particularly one that broaches the touchy subject of teaching "values," is sure to spark controversy in a state where local school districts have near-total auton-

omy in curriculum decisions and where, as elsewhere, the notion of teaching values in the classroom is laden with political, religious and cultural overtones. (*Boston Globe*, 4/14/93)

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## Students Plot to Kill Teacher

Seven 6th graders in Columbus, Georgia, were arrested in June for allegedly plotting to kill their teacher because she made them behave in class. The Georgetown Elementary School students were taken into custody after another student reported the plot to a school counselor.

Members of the group are said to have poured chemicals into their teacher's iced tea and grabbed at her ankles in an attempt to trip her on a staircase. One student allegedly brought a knife and a gun to school. The teacher was not injured, a school district official said.

Marquette McKnight, a spokeswoman for the district, described the incident as not "a school problem." "I hated my 5th grade teacher, too," she said, "but I knew I couldn't kill her, or my parents would kill me." (*Education Week*, 6/23/93)

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## ACLU Fights Expulsion of Gun-Toting Students

The Los Angeles school board should repeal its February decision to expel all students carrying weapons in school and should end or curtail the use of metal detectors, a report by a civil-liberties group advocates. The study, issued in June by the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Southern California, also concludes that the Los Angeles Unified School District expels Afri-

can-American students in disproportionate numbers. Black students make up 15 percent of the district's enrollment but account for 33 percent of its expulsions.

During a three and a half month period after metal detectors were introduced districtwide in early February, the devices did not uncover a single firearm, the ACLU reports. After observing metal-detector searches, ACLU lawyers contended that school staff members were inadequately trained and that the searches, in which hand-held detectors are used, were poorly conducted. Searches are conducted daily, on a random basis, at all 49 of the district's high schools. A school board member said the district would stand firm on its policies. (*Education Week*, 6/23/93)

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## Teen Shoots Family

In Atlanta, Georgia, a 17-year-old and his buddy skipped school and spent the day at target practice. Over the next four hours, with his friend watching, the youth shot and killed his half-brother, stepfather and mother as they returned home, authorities said. David Michael Thomas was in the Forsyth County jail yesterday (2/16/93) charged with three counts of murder. Investigators said they were still trying to figure out what led up to the killings in the suburban county. "We really don't know why yet," Sheriff Walraven said. (*Boston Herald*, 2/17/93)

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## Three Teens Held in Killing of Three Children

In West Memphis, Arkansas, a father's grief turned to rage yesterday (6/4/93) when he rushed at one of three teenagers accused of killing his son and two playmates. "I'll

chase you all the way to hell," he yelled. Court officers subdued Steven Branch before he reached the defendant.

The teenagers were arrested Thursday and charged with capital murder in the slayings of three 8-year-olds who vanished May 5 while riding bicycles in their neighborhood. The next day, authorities discovered the boys' bodies in a drainage ditch in nearby woods. Yesterday, police Inspector Gary Gitchell wouldn't discuss a motive or reveal what was found during a search of the teenagers' homes.

Reportedly, one of the teenagers gave police a 27-page statement saying the boys were murdered in a cult ritual, that he watched as his friends choked the boys unconscious, raped one, and sexually mutilated another.

Jesse Lloyd Misskelley, 17, Michael Wayne Echols, 18, and Charles Jason Baldwin, 16, were arrested Thursday. The teenagers did not enter pleas and were ordered held without bond until the case is transferred to Circuit Court on Monday. Gitchell said Misskelley was arrested at the Police Department on Thursday afternoon and Echols and Baldwin were arrested at Echols' home Thursday night.

Detectives in this city just across the Mississippi River from Memphis had gone door to door in search of leads. Gitchell said last month that a preliminary autopsy indicated the slain boys—Christopher Byers, Michael Moore and Steve Edward Branch—died of blows to the head. The slayings of the three second-graders stunned the city of about 28,000, and many parents have not allowed their children to play outside unsupervised since the bodies were found. Yesterday, a crowd of up to 200 people behind the courthouse shouted "murderer," "freak," "baby killers" and "shoot 'em" at the teenagers as they were taken away. (*Boston Globe*, 6/5/93)