

Homeschool ruling reveals educational double standard

By The Rev. Paul Viggiano

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It didn't bother me that President Barack Obama addressed all the kids when public school began. They are, after all, government schools and he is the head of our government. Courts ordering parents to send their children to government-run schools, however, is an entirely different matter.

If I, as a parent, choose not to have my 10-year old exposed to a presidential speech or a naturalistic, secular-based, amoral method of education - a method I believe to be confusing and irrational - a judge shouldn't force it on me and my child. But this is precisely what happened to Brenda Kurowski Voydatch and her daughter Amanda this summer when New Hampshire Judge Lucinda V. Sadler ordered the homeschooled 10-year-old to attend public school full time.

Judge Sadler's decision was not based upon Amanda's academic performance. The objective, measurable standards of academics placed Amanda well within the acceptable boundaries. It was the subjective and bedraggled issue of "socialization" that motivated the judge's action. As a former middle-school, high-school and college instructor, I remember struggling through the socialization issue as we considered homeschooling our four children. I guess I thought there weren't enough people in Southern California with whom my children could interact.

Socialization notwithstanding, we chose to homeschool our children nonetheless. Ten years later I must say that socialization is the primary reason I would advise parents to homeschool. Homeschooled children certainly do test higher than government school children, but academics are a secondary consideration when one ponders the general well-being and proper upbringing of a child.

Another term for socialization in the government schools is a thing we used to call peer pressure, of which there is plenty. Certainly children need to learn how to properly respond to peer pressure, but is the highest method of guiding them through this accomplished by dropping them off at 8 a.m. and picking them up at 3 p.m.? Do I not have a right, if not an obligation, to govern that to which my child is exposed, helping him or her walk through an appropriate response? Judge Sadler apparently thinks not.

Amanda, according to the judge, lacks "some youthful characteristics." A definition of youthful characteristics was not

forthcoming but it is apparently related to Amanda's imitation of her mother when it came to "rigidity on questions of faith". A biblical word for rigid might be unwavering or standing firm - attributes historically viewed as admirable. Just how malleable need our children be in order to satisfy our civil system of justice? Is a child's steadfastness regarding the convictions of his or her parents now cause for the courts to educationally redistrict our children?

The apparent remedy for Amanda's problem is governmentally engineered exposure to "other worldviews as she matures." This is where the double-mindedness of today's government school system hits critical mass. I remember, as a teacher, being escorted out of a local classroom by men with walkie-talkies and sunglasses for encouraging students to read classical Christian, religious literature. Apparently that is not one of the other worldviews Amanda will be exposed to in a government school.

If government schools are to be devoid of religious instruction (an essentially impossible proposition the moment you instruct them not to cheat or speak profanely to one another) then how is Amanda to be introduced to other worldviews which will, apparently, challenge her mother's Christian convictions? Is the judge suggesting that it is the responsibility of government schools to provide thorough religious instruction of all the world's major religions and philosophies? If that is Judge Sadler's suggestion, I say "amen."

It is not the Christian who is arguing against teaching evolution; it's the evolutionist who is arguing against teaching creation. It is not the Christian who resists giving children a proper education regarding the Koran, Confucius, the Torah, the Bhagavad Gita, naturalism or positivism. It is the secular culture seeking to put its collective feet upon the neck of anything that remotely resembles a Christian life and worldview. Like ladling table gravy upon the entire meal, they pour their contempt upon all things biblical.

Do we truly expect that a committed secularist who homeschools his or her child would be ordered by the court into a government educational system in order to challenge the parents' atheism or naturalism - in order that the child would be met with proclamation of Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected? If that's the direction, I think it's grand.

There is a basic biblical proposition that the truth will win out. "Let the dreamer tell his dreams" the Scriptures teach, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord, "Is not my word like a fire...and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"* I say put all the world systems of faith and

practice on the table for the kids to see; but until we're committed to that, at very least, our courts should be consistent.

*this portion was part of the original but edited out.

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