

CHAPTER 11

A WAY OF DIVORCEMENT

IF IT IS in the interest of freedom that the Church and the State be kept apart, it is equally in the interest of freedom that the school be divorced from the State. That is so because it is impossible to immunize education against religious values.

To begin at the beginning, the substance of freedom is the right of the individual to make choices, without let or hindrance. That right is most highly cherished in the field of spiritual values. How we shall worship God, or whether we shall worship at all, is a matter we deem most private. For that reason, we insist that it must be outside the scope of political power; we know that if any religious order should possess itself of political power, it would be inclined to use it for the propagation of its dogmas and the suppression of

others'. Nothing else can be expected, because every religious organization must logically consider dogmas other than its own erroneous, if not sinful.

So, then, it is to insure to us complete freedom in our choice of religious values that we have ordered the separation of Church and State.

Can we separate religious values from secular education? A religious value rests on faith. We accept it even though we cannot demonstrate it, because we cannot explain other demonstrable facts without this basic acceptance. In the earliest grades, the child learns that 2 times 2 is 4; that is true; but, what is Truth? That is a concept the philosophers have never been able to define, and in the final analysis we must accept abstract Truth on faith. The child could not get along with his education without it.

When the child gets to college, he is constantly confronted with basic acceptances; especially in those subjects that deal with human affairs: economics, political science, history, sociology.

II

There is, first of all, the question of "rights." Even the sixth-grader runs head-on into this concept. He feels—without understanding—that the teacher has invaded his "rights" when she shows favoritism. He hasn't figured out the origin of "rights," and he certainly cannot appreciate their religious character, as enunciated in the Declaration of Independence. But, without accepting the fact of "rights," independent of him and the teacher, he cannot make sense of his experience.

When the child becomes a sophomore he first learns that "rights" are merely permissions granted to the individual by a policeman, the State. If the sophomore should ask where the State gets the "rights" it hands out, or withdraws, he

might be told that the "rights" were originally deposited with the State by the individual, on call. But, then, the question comes up, where did the individual get the "rights" in the first place? There is no answer, except the unsatisfactory one that the fellow with the big club gives or withdraws "rights" at will, simply because of the club. And the residual impression is that there is something divine in power. It is a religious impression.

A more important religious value that plagues secular education is the one we call "natural law." When education starts, the mother finds escape from the interminable "why" by replying; "that's the way it always is." She's got to take recourse to that vague acceptance after exhausting the plausible explanations, like the stork brought the baby, or the chair that hurt the child is a bad chair. Later on, the teacher goes to "the nature of things" for her final explanation; or, she might say, "it is the will of God." The final answer to all questions is an assumption.

But, the college professor is not so naive. He flatly declares there is no such animal as "natural law," that it is just an old-fashioned myth. The fact is, says the professor, that science is uninhibited by any rules of nature. Given enough time, the scientist will figure out answers to all the unanswered questions. That, of course, is an unprovable assumption, and calls for an act of faith, in the infallibility and omniscience of science.

The rejection of the theory of "natural law," however, has a very important bearing on our lives, besides opening the way for a new religious idea. If, for instance, there are no "natural laws" in economics—no fixed and immutable causal relationships—then what's wrong with economic planning? The all-important matter of making a living can be manipulated to bring about any results you want, and nature be damned.

To take another example, from the field of social science, those who begin with "natural law" will tell you that society is an organism that gestates, just like a baby, and you cannot do anything about changing the procedure. That is, society is not an artifact. On the other hand, the planning pragmatists come up with a Morgenthau Plan.

But, have we eliminated religious values—basic acceptances—when we reject "natural law"? Not a bit of it. We have simply replaced one unprovable axiom with another. "Natural law" calls for faith in an unchangeable pattern of things; when we drop that, we must have faith in something else, and that something else always turns out to be political power. Even the all-knowing scientist, in the field of human relations, finds it necessary to implement his wisdom with political power; it can do all that God is presumed to be capable of doing, and then some.

The point is, you cannot divorce basic assumptions—or spiritual values—from secular education. This fact, however, did not bother our forefathers when they put the State into the education business. In those days, not even the agnostic questioned "natural rights," and while the philosophers quibbled over the meaning of "natural law," it never occurred to them that freedom was in any way involved in this discussion. The religious concepts of freedom were so strongly imbedded in the hearts of our forefathers that they could not imagine the possible perversion of these concepts by the school.

III

The greatest phenomenon of the Twentieth Century is the rise of the secular religion of Statism. Just why and how it got going is not germane to this argument, but it is a certainty that the spread of Statism was facilitated by our

schools. The votaries of this religion, whether by design or easy slithering, got themselves on the school payroll and, as evangelists have always done, went in for proselytising.

In the course of time, the students, indoctrinated in the schoolroom, manned the State; most naturally, they took their religious beliefs with them. So, we have a State religion coming in, so to say, by the back door.

Statism is a religion. It is a frame of thought based on unprovable hypotheses. Its primary assumption is that the State is a living entity, independent of its personnel. You can change the laws or the basic constitution, say the devotees of Statism, you can make a democracy into an absolutism, you can throw out the old crowd and vote in a new one—but the State is immutable. Mortals come and go; the State is.

The State, then, is supra-personal. It has an intelligence of its own, and this is not the combined intelligences of living men; it is *sui generis*. Even its ethical standards are unrelated to those of men. It is made by men, to be sure, but it transcends man.

Statism has its rituals, its prayers—"the State can do no wrong"—its hierarchy and its holy edifices. It even has the inevitable schisms and sects: Communism, Fascism, Socialism, New Dealism. The differences between them are ritualistic, in the main, and follow from the degree of power achieved; as between Communism and New Dealism, for instance, the difference is that in one private property is abolished outright while in the other private property is taxed outright.

Regardless of these schismatic differences, all the sects are agreed on the basic assumption that "divinity doth hedge" the State.

This is the religion that is being taught or insinuated in our schools, from the lowest grades to the post graduate

courses. A junior high school teacher (in New York) is required to take her "social science" class each week to some municipal department and explain its workings. Her explanations may be objective, but the multitude of desks in the tax department, the magnitude of the water works, the complicated mechanism of the sanitation department all have an educational influence. The glory of the State is the constant obligato of such teaching. (This, by the way, is a technique of what is called "progressive" education.)

And, the medical student cannot but regard with reverential awe the State that teaches him a trade and promises him a job—in the army.

Thus, a spurious religion, one that threatens our freedom more than any the Founding Fathers had in mind when they laid down the doctrine of separatism, has invaded our political institutions. For the same reasons that impelled them to bar the Church, the school should now be barred. In the interests of freedom, the public school should be dropped.

But, how? It seems to be an impossible operation; and yet, the legislature of South Carolina has inadvertently hit on a way. It has passed a law permitting local communities to go out of the business of education and to rent their buildings and equipment to private institutions.

If that idea were generally accepted and put into practice, neither Protestants, Catholics, Jews nor atheists would be compelled to support schools teaching the new, secular religion. The Statists, if they could find paying customers, could have their own schools, and be welcome. Every group would be free to teach whatever values seem best to them.

Under the South Carolina plan, the citizenry would be relieved of school taxes. Parents could then support schools of their own choice. And those parents who now suffer "double taxation"—support of the schools that furnish the education they want, and taxes for the other kind—would be in

position to provide scholarships for children whose parents are less fortunate.

South Carolina has shown us the way to improve our educational system—a way that could lead us out of the clutches of Statism.