



VITAL SIGNS Talked to Death

by Earl Appleby, Jr.

Death like sex, has evoked sacred taboos since the days of our very first parents. And so for the profane, as every mystery, it must be stripped naked for the promiscuous indulgence of the most innocent among us.

"It was the caring ones (members of the 'caring' professions: nursing, social work, religion, medicine) who stripped away the heavy curtains of hush-hush and secrecy and taboo of death and dying," *The Washington Post* reveals, praising "the people who brought this country the concept of hospice, (and) 'quality' of death."

"Death, or at least the fear of death, has just about been talked to death. The language of death permeates our airwaves."

The high priestess of the death cult is Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. She "gave the American people permission to talk about death," gushes Sister Ann, director of pastoral ministry at a Michigan hospice.

Death, or at least the fear of death, has just about been talked to death. The language of death permeates our airwaves. Yet, as Baruch College's Thomas Halper reminds us, "Earnest talk on the most serious of subjects. . . can still be insipid, if the speaker has nothing to say."

To the cadre of the "caring ones," we must add teachers, especially those teaching "death and dying" (or d-and-d, as the in-crowd call it). "When it comes to death, we are all children," observed Ralph Waldo Emerson. But like trainers house-breaking puppies, the perverse pedagogues of d-and-d are determined to rub our children's noses in it.

Not surprisingly, the same sensitive souls who cry "child abuse,"

when Mom makes Junior go to Sunday school, aid and abet the daily abuse inflicted on our children in the guise of education — described quite aptly by Malcolm Muggeridge as "a stupendous fraud perpetrated by the liberal mind on a bemused public."

Consider these examples of death education reported by the Associated Press:

- Children are shown a film of maggots devouring the flesh of a dead mouse until only his bones remain.
- Children examine an open coffin and the embalming fluid and make-up used on dead human beings.

Or these as shown on a recent "20/20":

- High-school students are taken to a morgue by a Jesuit priest to touch the dead body of an organ "donor" deprived of eyes, heart, kidney, liver, and, of course, life by the transplant terminators.
- A class is brought to a crematorium and invited to handle the deceased's ashes (or the cremains, as they're called in the trade).

Or the following cited by columnist Thomas Sowell:

- Florida first-graders are given a homework assignment to make their own coffins out of shoe boxes.
- Eighth-graders in Massachusetts are required to write a suicide note.

Writing in *The Washington Times*, Sowell recounts "one of the many emotional manipulations of children that go on in public schools across the country -- behind the backs of parents." He describes the ordeal of a little girl who had just lost her grandfather. Sitting in the magic circle, so "very common in

these fad programs," her secular humanist inquisitors demand, "Who died last in your family?"

"We should not be surprised that teenage homicides have more than doubled within a decade, or that suicide is the second leading cause of teen death...."

"Why?" you ask. "We have a commitment to children to make life less threatening," is the answer given by the "death and loss" exhibit at Boston's Children's Museum.

But desensitizing our children (and ourselves) to death doesn't make life safer, it cheapens it by trivializing its loss. No wonder our children kill each other for a pair of Addidas or "just to see what it's like." We should not be surprised that teenage homicides have more than doubled within a decade, or that suicide is the second leading cause of teen death, having doubled since 1972. After all, as one manifesto popular among the death educators declares, "Suicide is the signature of freedom."

Meanwhile, the Association for Death Education and Counseling has announced its 13th annual conference next April in Duluth. Its theme is "Changing Times, Changing Families: Challenges to Death Education and Counseling."

If talk is cheap, its cost can be more than a civilization worthy of the name can afford to bear. For the sake of our families and for the time we call life, I pray you will join CURE in challenging these anti-life miseducators and counselors of death.

[Mr. Appleby is director of Citizens United Resisting Euthanasia (CURE), 812 Stephen St., Berkeley Springs, WV 25411, a nationwide network dedicated to protecting potential euthanasia victims.]