Opinion hursday, September 6, 2001

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Hey God, remember me? People have sacrificed spirituality for society

Il too often in today's society, spirituality is crowded out by commitments and activities, a point of neglect that

has led our nation into a perpetual spin down the toilet bowl of morality. As our society continues to be driven toward seeking financial success



at all costs, spiritual guidance in the home has hit an all-time low.

This neglect can be seen everywhere. A glance at latenight television programming reveals nothing but sexual situations, while evening news programming revolves around the latest murders and rapes.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that during the last 40 years, violent crimes have risen to 3.5 times the 1960 rate, while rapes and assaults are up nearly 10 times since that time. Many blame our problems on explicit television programming and violent video games, but these are only symptoms of the larger problem.

America's ability to shut out indecent content has been lost. Choices are made based on the moral code that has been taught, and it is no coincidence that the family and societal values that America wants to reclaim are the same morals most religions are built on. As society puts religion further behind the pursuit of money, its morals have drifted accordingly. Unfortunately, this spiritual slump is not restricted to the working world. This trend has slipped into the life of the

average college student who often finds it hard to manage their time. The decision to attend church on Sunday morning has become trivial, hindered by long hours at the office and sleepless nights of school work.

Without the moral direction offered by the church, the average household becomes vulnerable to many negative influences. Society has become too busy to police itself and is allowing the media to dictate the moral code.

The average business person's schedule has become so full that he or she is no longer able to monitor what enters their household. Children are often left at home alone, too naive to turn off an explicit show. With no one home to guard their eyes,

As our society continues to be driven toward seeking financial success at all costs, spiritual guidance in the home has hit an alltime low.

America's youth are bombarded by shows like "Temptation Island" and "Jerry Springer" and left at the mercy of the TV networks for role models.

Growing up in a home where these shows are regularly watched has left many young adults craving sensationalism. People have become too interested in shows focusing on sexuality and shock value, and are nowunwilling to sacrifice just a little entertainment for the sake of moral decency. America is headed towards a state of moral

instability with little hope in sight.

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A new generation must repair the damage done by the morally lax policies currently in place. As soon-to-be leaders of the community, students must make the decision to develop their spiritual identity early, in order to make an impact in their own households.

Unfortunately, in college the decision to maintain spirituality becomes tough. Between homework assignments, organization meetings and work schedules. students barely have the time to attend religious activities. The tendency to start strong and finish weak is a common one. Students often begin the year by attending religious gatherings, but become overwhelmed by school and quit going

"Each year we see a drop off rate of about 20 percent from the beginning of the year to the end of the year," said Gregg Matte of Breakaway Ministries, which is a praise-and-worship ceremony held weekly in Reed Arena. Students often begin with the best of intentions only to be sidetracked by other commitments. People must make the decision to set aside the time for religion or otherwise risk becoming another person with a full wallet and empty morals. These problems will not improve

until people institute spirituality in their homes. The American lifestyle has become too busy for spiritual focus and is now paying the price by slowly destroying itself.

> Tim Dyll is senior electrical engineering major.

MAIL CALL

edge of past events, it is not incon- responsible. Surely, by hiding

TION Rowan was wrong

response to Rolando Garcia's ot. 4 article:

The Josh Rowan matter has

ceivable that those charges are these types of incidents and allowtrue as well. This leads to the real ing student leaders to continue intent of the response. Many peo- serving the student body, A&M is ple have complained that this mat- not training effective leaders who uld be made pr I disagree with this when looking at it from the MSC's perspective, and here's why. People make mistakes. People change. The first statement means that people sometimes do stupid things, sometimes repeatedly until they are caught No matter the circumstances, these people should be able to face the music with little publicity when possible. In this case, Rowan acted inappropriately on a trip to Italy. No one else besides the MSC and the other students and sponsors involved should have to know while a decision is made. This leads to the second statement - people change. It would be a shame for someone to make a mistake and then be branded for it forever. When the person changes, he or she could never regain what was lost. In the case of student leaders, the MSC and the University is trying to protect students from just this sort of thing

Small Town World President Bush visits small town America

generated a lot of discussion on the A&M campus. After reading article on Monday in which Rowan was interviewed. I was disgusted by his blatant attempt to fame other members and conbutors of his own organization. He gave no evidence to back up accusations, and then he lefamed himself by allowing the etter from Tom Fitzhugh to be published in part. Before I move into the crux of this response, I would also like to point out that the alcohol issue is probably one of the sser matters in this case. Alcohol s been deemed the central eme in this case because 1) that all that Rowan has admitted to d 2) that was a main theme of Fitzhugh's email. I believe the ther matters - drugs and inapproriate sexual behavior - are probamore relevant.

After many of Rowan's coments in the article on Monday, on, TX ecifically his last ditch effort at nging other MSC members in with him, and from knowl-

> **C**ARTOON OF THE DAY SMART DUMB HH HH #11 HTH THE UNCARTOON ist C

Finally, there is the problem of teaching student leaders to be

integrity. By making these incidents public and forcing student leaders to take more responsibility. the likelihood of producing such leaders increases dramatically. I personally favor this latter approach to the forever.

> Ryan Riley Class of 2001

The tradition is lost

In response to Sommer Bunce's Sept 5th article.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that there wa such a poor response to the request for ideas on 2002 Bonfire. When the committee's were established they instituted a wall between those who passionately love the tradition of Bonfire and the MSC politicians.

With the design committee chaired by Josh Rowan and outnumbered by staff members 8 to 6, there are inherent flaws here and this is evident in the response. I have personally met the engineer and think he is a great choice. He wants all the input he can get and is very receptive however all input must go through the University's head of the physical plant.

If he is working for us and for our tradition why can we not submit ideas directly to him at a forum here on campus? There are many ideas out there that people are willing to submit as well people who want to get involved. It is time to overhaul the Bonfire 2002 student leadership to include those who are passionate about it. When you allow unbiased and even student input the walls can be torn down and Bonfire can once again unify our campus.

> Joe Dyson Class of 2002

(U-WIRE) MADISON, Wis. — "It was cheesy, and he knew it."

That was the reply of my associate after taking pictures of President Bush sawing boards and laying tiles during a photo opportunity. The pseudo-carpentry took place during a Labor Day rally at a carpenters' union trading center in Kaukauna, Wis.

The comment encapsulated my feelings about campaigns in general. I could not understand how rallies, commercials, and cheesy photo-ops could be very effective. They certainly had no effect on me. I actually found these traditional campaign tools rather humorous and the blatant pandering a bit embarrassing. But then I remembered a realization I had just a few weeks earlier upon my return from a summer in Washington, D.C.

After picking me up from the airport, my father was kind enough to take me out to eat at the nicest restaurant in my hometown. I soon realized that two months in Washington was enough to induce culture shock over the fact that a meal could cost only \$15 (remember, this is the nicest restaurant in town!).

Soon after being seated, I overheard a gentleman at the next table ask what the price was for the "Catch of the Day." I reflected that not only would I be too embarrassed to do the same in Washington, but also I would definitely order "The Catch," regardless of price. It would be mortifying to do otherwise, even if I was a poor college intern. Suddenly it hit me. A mere two months in Washington and I had already forgotten about small town America. Of course, I was not alone. Few, if anyone, in Washington remembers small town America.

Small town America is awed and deeply appreciative when the leader of the free world takes the time to visit. In Kaukauna we witnessed the president make an appearance in front of 1,700 union members, traditional Democrats. who cheered for nearly a minute and a half and chanted "George Bush" as he was introduced. Signs and billboards up and down the highway welcomed him to Green Bay. All listened attentively to the president's speech, and the intermittent cheering suggested that the crowd agreed with a quite a bit of it, or at least they did now.

Needless to say, our critique during the car ride home was not quite as kind. But once I took a step back and realized the position from which we were making our critique, I realized the

speech was not for us, but for those carpenters who care infinitely more about the Green Bay Packers than they do about Washington politics.

In fact, small town America usually notices Washington only when they are directly affected. And the number of issues that fall under this classification may be small, but the feelings provoked are not. In short, while Washington is pragmatic, small town America is principled.

For example, the congressman I interned for comes from a very pro-life district, and thus it is no surprise that he himself is pro-life — quite avidly so. But the reality is that he has no choice. I witnessed this by reading constituent letters during President Bush's prolonged deliberation on stem-cell research. The vast majority equated stem-cell research with infanticide — an extreme position, regardless of your views on the issue. But such sentiment is widespread, leaving the congressman with no viable political option other than opposing the research (I do not know his personal feelings on the issue).

Similarly, those that support gun control often seem puzzled why they are unable to enact more legislation. The answer is that there are millions of pro-gun Americans who vote for politicians solely on their stance on guns. Polls may indicate that most Americans favor gun control, but polls do not reflect the intensity of those that favor guns. But the starkest difference between Washington and small town America is that while Washington sees money in millions and billions, small town America sees money in dollars and cents.

For those in small town America, the "Catch of the Day" may just break the budget. In Washington, politicians fight for earmarked pork, and are concerned that they have not "gotten anything" for a major town in their district.

This fundamental difference in the perception of money is the most compelling argument for local government and lower taxes. I thought I spent money liberally when I was in Washington - I can only imagine my behavior had the money not been my own.

Small town America is impressed by the president sawing a board. It is about time for Washington to understand the voting power and be impressed by the fiscal sanity of small town America.

Ben Thompson is a writer for the Badger Herald at the University of Wisconsin.