

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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What would Jesus teach?

If school curriculum includes religion, Christianity must be included



JOSHUA DWYER

speech and religion.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to sue schools that displayed signs that read, "God Bless America." It has also threatened legal action to remove depictions of the Ten Commandments from public schools, fearing some young impressionable minds might adopt the principles mentioned.

While groups such as the ACLU are actively trying to remove traditional Christianity from schools, the same organizations turn a blind eye toward other religions. According to its Web site, the school district in Brentwood, Calif., teaches seventh grade students to "analyze the origins of Islam, as well as the life and teachings of Muhammad," but does not give the same attention to Christianity. Further investigation reveals a concerted but unreported effort by others to establish a different religion in the same classrooms.

Apparently, promoting a particular religion in public schools by administrators, legislators, activists and textbook selections is only a violation of the Constitution if the religion is Christianity. Taxpayer-funded schools should not be "religion-free zones," but the advancement of one religion with the intent of excluding another is not only unethical, it is illegal.

The most subversive and pervasive culprit is not a new religion, but one that many observers have ignored: Humanism. With origins in the Enlightenment, the values and beliefs of Humanism are not found in a sacred text, but in collection of writings first published in 1933, entitled "Humanist Manifesto I, II and III." Charles Potter, a signer of the "Humanist Manifesto I," wrote, "Is Humanism a religion? It is both a religion and a philosophy of culture."

Harold Rafton, president of the Humanist Fellowship of Boston, Inc.,

published an essay stating, "Humanism is a religion dedicated to the ennoblement and enrichment of human life through human effort." In the same essay Rafton wrote, "Perhaps the most important characteristic of the traditional religions is belief in a supreme being. Do Humanists believe in a supreme being? Emphatically yes. That supreme being is man."

The fact that Humanism is a religion is further supported by a Supreme Court ruling in *Torcaso v. Watkins*, which in part stated, "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others." There is no difference between secular and religious Humanists; by their own admission in "Hu-

manist Manifesto I, "The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

John Dewey is considered the father of modern public education. An early member of the ACLU, he signed the Humanist Manifesto I and in his book *Education Today* wrote, "Our schools ... are performing an infinitely religious work."

Students recognize it as well. In a contest-winning essay published by *The Humanist*, John Dunphy wrote, "The battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being."

Charles Potter wrote in his book "Humanism: A New Religion," that "education is the most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of Humanism. What can the theistic Sunday schools, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanist teaching?"

The problem isn't just what is being taught, but what is being left out. Few, if any, history textbooks mention that 51 of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence were members of mainstream traditional Christian churches, while no more than three were deists, according to Dr. Bradford of the University of Dallas. Nor is it reported that the most widely cited source for the Founding Fathers' actions and beliefs was the Bible, according to a study of their writings by Donald Lutz in the *American Political Science Review*.

An individual's religious beliefs, whether they accept or deny the existence of God, should not preclude that person from teaching in schools built and sustained by taxpayers. Those same taxpayers should also have the freedom to influence the curricula in their local schools. Neither is the issue here. However, a systematic hostility toward Christianity and blatant endorsement of other religions like Humanism demands prompt attention and correction by offering equal access and representation in schools. Freedom of religion should not be interpreted by public schools as freedom of any religion except Christianity.



Christopher Jones • THE BATTALION

Joshua Dwyer is a sophomore political science major.

New York must put differences aside, build tower



JIM FOREMAN

Three years ago New York City was hit by the most devastating terrorist attack to ever occur on American soil. As the shock subsided, the whole country went into mourning, but gradually people began to ask what was to be done with the ruins that were once the World Trade Center.

While some believe the site should remain untouched or turned into a memorial in remembrance of those who died, many believe it should be rebuilt. In the fall of 2001 the official decision was made to build not only a new World Trade Center, but a visionary one as well. Over three years later, this plan has still not been carried out. It is time for action.

The 16 acres that once were an integral part of downtown Manhattan still lie in ruin. Although a design competition produced an innovative and symbolic master plan for the site, power, money and politics did not hesitate to tarnish it. Delays in construction that was supposed to begin at the

same time as the Republican National Convention in New York City have left citizens asking, "Where is our Freedom Tower?"

Daniel Libeskind, architect of the winning master plan, designed the Freedom Tower to echo the silhouette of the Statue of Liberty and stand 1,776 feet tall. He said the model was inspired by the first time he saw Lady Liberty when he emigrated from Poland after World War II, according to PBS Frontline. Libeskind's plan embodies the idea that the Freedom Tower should be built as a symbol of American spirit and in memory of those who were lost on Sept. 11.

Unfortunately, in the nation's largest city, the language of money and politics is spoken much more fluently than that of symbolism and remembrance. Larry Silverstein, a powerful real estate dealer who owned the lease on the former tow-

ers, has a different view of how the tower should be built. Silverstein collected the insurance on the Trade Center and feels it is his responsibility to rebuild it. Of course it wouldn't hurt if he designed his own tower, one that would naturally bring in an even higher profit than its predecessors.

Silverstein holds almost all the cards in this game, and though he claimed he liked Libeskind's master plan he eventually took away almost everything that made it distinctive—a classic example of big money walking all over the little guy. Nicolai Ouroussoff, architectural critic for the Los Angeles Times, said "The new design for the Freedom Tower at the site of the former World Trade Center is exactly what the public should expect from a process in which commercial interests push the public interest to the background: a slightly better-than-average de-

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sign that lacks imaginative power.”

All the while, New York Gov. George Pataki has been pushing to get construction started as soon as possible. PBS Frontline reported that Pataki needed to show progress because it was his decision to use the design by Libeskind. In hopes of pushing the project into motion before the Republican National Convention, Pataki had the 20-ton cornerstone laid for the tower. Three years of lies, compromises and politics and all we have to show for it is a glorified brick.

What the public thought would be an emblem of America's "show 'em what we're made of" philosophy and a memorial to those lost to terrorist attacks has turned into a power struggle between groups who view the tower as an opportunity for personal gain. The public has been waiting long enough for the closure that will come with the construction of Freedom Tower, closure that the American people need and deserve.

Jim Foreman is a junior mechanical engineering major.

Music review crossed the line

In response to Shawn Millender's Sept. 13 review:

There is nothing wrong with criticizing a football team or even its quarterback. However making a joke about the leader of our team in an article that has nothing to do with football is about as unsupportive and inappropriate as one can get.

Mr. Millender references other bands that released acclaimed first albums that were followed by lackluster efforts and says, "Truly these are the Reggie McNeals of music."

This is a music review column, not a sports recap column, and the comment was nothing but negative and, opposed to uninformed opinion, false. But this letter isn't about Reggie's performance, it's simply about being informed as to what is OK

joke material. I would say a joke about a superb athlete giving everything he or she has to represent A&M does not qualify.

John Ripley
Class of 2007

Some women able to serve on front line

In response to a Sept. 13 Mail Call:

"I believe in women's rights as much as the next person, but this is one issue too important to concede to political correctness." This last line of Paul Sims' letter showcases two points, the first of which is that he does not in fact believe in women's rights and secondly that he completely mischaracterizes the issue. The opportunity for women to serve on the front lines in this country's fight for freedom is not about political correct-

ness, it is a question of moral correctness and good public policy.

First, on average men are stronger than women, but that does not say that every man is stronger than every woman. There are some women (even if few) who are physically stronger than some men serving on the front lines now. Those women should have the same opportunity as those men. If gender-neutral requirements were set at a necessary level of physical strength, some women could effectively and safely serve on the front lines. Many women would not meet the requirements, but some would.

Second, on Sims' argument about morale: The same exact argument was made to keep black from serving with white soldiers, but was proved false. The unit evolved and became better for it. To imply that these soldiers would not be able to cope in combat is to insult their professionalism. Soldiers will tell you that watching any of their fellow soldiers

die, regardless of gender, is the worst sort of trauma.

Jennifer Harvey
Class of 2004

Aggies must respect others' beliefs

Believe it or not, I happen to be an Aggie for Kerry. Unfortunately, however, my "Kerry/Edwards" sign only lasted three days. I came home last night to a missing sign and to neighboring students who laughed and shouted, "Kerry sucks!"

What I want to ask of the student population is to please respect others' political views, even if they differ from your own. I'm not taking down any "W" signs, so please respect my right as an American citizen to have my own sign in my own front yard. What upsets me the most is that the majority of Bush fans also believe that our troops

are over in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting for our freedom. Are you not undermining the very thing you say our buddies are risking their lives for, by taking away my own freedom of speech here on our own soil?

Let's be honest. John Kerry does not stand a chance in our voting district. Bush signs, T-shirts and bumper stickers are everywhere. Chopping down a few oaks growing in a pine forest is not going to accomplish anything other than angering your fellow students and neighbors. Even if Kerry did stand a chance, however, it is still my freedom to be able to express my opinions. As election-time draws near, let us remember that we are living in a community filled with varying opinions, cultures, religions and races. In order to co-exist and, heaven forbid, learn from our differences, we must first learn to respect one another.

Ryan Elizabeth Stewart
Class of 2008

MAIL CALL