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Suppressing minorities with religion

Hillary Montgomery
University of Maine

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Suppressing minorities with religion

While perusing the discussion folders in my FirstClass account recently, I happened upon the gender folder. For some odd reason, a number of files pertained to the subject of God and religion. Whatever the reason for using this folder to discuss such debated issues is no matter, rather the content of these messages really got me thinking.

Discussions and disagreements about God are nothing new, I

**By Hillary
Montgomery**



know, but what amazes me is the widespread interest and participation of students in religious activities on campus. My experience with religion lasted about 13 years and involved going to church on Sundays with my family, which is memorable because we were always late, and participating in activities for children. From what I remember, few of these outings involved reading the Bible or praying. Rather, the extent of involving God in our fun was through singing or playing hide-and-seek in our church. Looking back, those were fun times that have given me lasting memories.

My interest in church and God dwindled during high school and is signified now only by cel-

ebrating Christmas and Easter, depending how one looks at things. I do not attach a spiritual or religious meaning to these holidays, they are merely a time to be with family, eat good food and spend money none of us should. I don't know when I determined that my belief or faith in God was null and void; it wasn't the product of a negative,

life-changing experience. Perhaps through deep introspection and questioning I was able to arrive at this conclusion, not unlike how religious people decide their involvement with God.

This widespread, active interest in religion is not unique to the University of Maine. The better known Christian groups, Campus Crusade for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, have 650 and 700 campus organizations nationwide, respectively. There are a number of other groups on college campuses that promote the beliefs of Islam, Judaism and Hinduism, among others, but Campus Crusade for Christ and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship seem to be rather prominent at UMaine. From what I have gathered through talking with students involved in these groups, a sense of faith, belonging and security maintains a devout following.

I do not take issue with people who promote loving thy neighbor and all that (I'm a little behind on the terminology), but I have little tolerance for people who encourage stamping out "sinners" and "evil-doers," more specifically homosexuals. This insistence of wrongdoing is derived from the

Bible and is reinforced in many ways, subtle or otherwise, by the followers of God. This judgment of "deviant" lifestyles by Christian groups seems to go against everything they believe – love, forgiveness, acceptance... Where's the logic, if any?

It is mind-boggling to think some people believe everyone should live their life according to the words of the Bible (I use mine as a door-stopper, by the way). I owe my parents some credit for teaching me God is an internal strength people can draw on for their own survival, not a fanatical or angry element within ourselves.

Admittedly, I don't know a whole lot about these groups, but what I do know disappoints me. These same people who interpret the Bible to say homosexuality is wrong would probably never admit that certain areas of it are breeding grounds for male supremacy. That's fine for Promise Keepers and their wives, but I'll pass, no thanks.

One of the best things I have learned since coming to college is the importance of giving women a voice and a choice. I have to wonder if these Christian groups are stifling the creativity and boundless strength of women. I would venture to say students involved in Christ-loving organizations are worse perpetrators of enforcing gender roles than are fraternities and sororities. We won't go there, though....

This trend on college campuses looks to be long-lasting. One has to wonder if there is any place nowadays safe from religious influence. For my sake, I hope so. I don't want to be told how to live my life, and I certainly wouldn't tell anyone else how to live theirs.

Hillary Montgomery is a sophomore political science major and is a guest columnist for The Maine Campus.