

# NEW YORK TIMES AD: CENSORING RELIGIOUS SPEECH

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## CENSORING RELIGIOUS SPEECH

It is no secret that many of our cultural elites harbor an animus against religion. What they desire is for people of faith, of every religion, to recede from public life. Not content to disagree with practicing Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and others, they seek to silence them. Whether the issue is movies they detest, e.g., "The Passion of the Christ," or words they abhor, e.g., "under God," their natural impulse is to censor.

Because this is an election year, the censors have targeted clerics and religious organizations. They seek to silence them by appealing to a metaphor, written by Jefferson, about separation of church and state. Jefferson, however, said that it was a "lie" attributed to him by his foes that he wanted a "government without religion."

It is also a lie to say that today's foes of religion are principled: they said nothing when former President Bill Clinton recently spoke from the pulpit at New York's Riverside Church imploring the faithful to remember that "Politics and political involvement dictated by faith is not the exclusive province of the right wing." But isn't it the left wing that has objected the most to any "politics dictated by faith"?

This election season, the censors have their sights set on Catholic bishops, especially those who threaten sanctions against Catholic pro-abortion politicians. While abortion is a public issue, disciplinary measures are an internal matter. To be plain, no non-Catholic has any business lecturing Catholic bishops on the house rules of the Catholic Church. If the bishops were threatening sanctions against racists or anti-Semites, it is a sure bet they would be congratulated, not condemned.

It does not help the cause of the censors to invoke the politics of multiculturalism. For all the talk about diversity, over 80 percent of Americans are Christian and over 90 percent believe in God. And that is why attempts to secularize our society in the name of diversity are intellectually and morally indefensible. To be blunt, were it not for our Judeo-Christian heritage, freedom would not exist. Not here, not anywhere.

Finally, religious speech is entitled to the same protections as political speech. For those who disagree, it would be helpful if they thought of religious speech the way they do obscene speech. Then our rights would surely be secured.

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