

# God save us from religious McCarthyism

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The rule of thumb for discussion topics is to never talk about politics or religion. It appears we are being forced to talk about religion, even though I consider it a personal issue. Many people who label themselves "Christian," today almost make me want to forsake my life-long association. I don't want to be in the same category as these people, and if being a Christian means following the example and teachings of Jesus, then those pretending to be the most righteous are not Christians.

The word "Christian" is bantered around by the press, describing conservatives, Republicans, and in my opinion, a lot of nut-cakes. If one is a liberal, or Democrat, and they often are not the same, it is assumed we are "secular." and don't attend church. This display of ignorance and irresponsibility on the part of the press and the right-wingers is frightening. Frankly, the aggressive mood of the conservative Christian right smacks of Fascism. After years of losing freedoms, unless some of us liberal Christians stand up and be counted, we'll be hauled off to a prison camp like so many other innocent Americans.

There is a place for secularism – in the schools, public places and public meetings. The lack of respect for people of other faiths and life-styles is appalling. Even Laura Bush says that in our democracy we aim to be tolerant of all religions and beliefs. I'm embarrassed that prayers are said before government meetings that exclude Jews, Muslims, Hindus and anyone else in this county who isn't of the Christian faith. Arrogant, judgmental, self-righteous. These are hardly adjectives that describe Jesus Christ of the Bible's New Testament.

The terrible violence and horror perpetuated in past centuries in the name of Christianity equals the kind of terror

we see today from Mid-Eastern Muslims. They just happen to still be back in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Remember, in our own country's recent history, women have been burned at the stake for supposedly being witches and blacks have been enslaved, murdered and treated like cattle, all by people who probably considered themselves good Christians. Hitler's persecution and murder of millions of Jews was a religious movement not condemned by the Vatican until recently, and rather weakly at that.

The inauguration of the new Pope hasn't helped my attitude about organized religion. How startling it is to hear comments about the "Secretary of State of the Vatican." Good Lord, the Vatican is a country, no less and the thought of that much power and money vested at the top of any church is not comforting.

Even though I have been a Lutheran since the age of 22, I grew up in a Congregational Church, where just the mention of any hierarchy in the church is blasphemous. In fact, if our minister turned around to face the front of the church while praying, he was criticized for implying he was praying to some object or that God was in some specific location.

The whole subject of faith and religion is increasingly disturbing to me because, 1) I'm afraid our country is becoming a Theocracy, which describes the oppressive governments in the Middle East and 2) organized religion is a product of mortal men and still discriminates against women. 3) The Bible is used as a weapon against so many human beings who don't conform to the likes of people in power. 4) Too many "Christians" advocate policies that are irrational and life threatening, such as not providing condoms to African countries where 6,000 people a day are dying of



AIDS. --Such as not approving of stem cell research, which could cure diseases and paralysis. --Such as saying they want the natural death of Terry Schaivo, but not wanting the feeding tube to be removed. ---Such as wanting our government to make personal health decisions for us because as individuals we aren't capable of making our own.

And this false "concern" for life is certainly apparent in our failed government policies resulting in the slaughter and maiming of thousands of American troops and Iraqis.

Let's not be sucked in by the religious McCarthyism that is festering in our country. It is the antithesis of freedom and reason.

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