

SPECTRUM

METANOIA

BY JOHN VALK

CULTURE OF BELIEF

In his challenging book, *Culture of Disbelief*, Stephen Carter, professor of Law at Yale University, states: "More and more, our culture seems to take the position that believing deeply in the tenets of one's faith represents a kind of mystical irrationality, something that thoughtful, public-spirited American citizens would do better to avoid."

These views, he continues, send an unmistakable message to individuals in society: "pray if you like, worship if you must, but whatever you do, do not on any account take your religion seriously."

In our culture, black and white media polarizations frequently shape our view of the world. It affects our notion of religion, for example. Many believe strongly in the sacred-secular split; that we can choose or not to be religious.

As a result, some argue strongly for maintaining a secular society. Religion is private, it is asserted, and should not be forced on anyone. Best keep it out of the public forum, and not least out of the public educational system.

That argument has begun to cre-

ate problems, however. First of all, it fails to recognize that we are *all* religious. We all believe in something. And, that something shapes and motivates our thinking and acting, also in the public forum.

Secondly, the failure to treat seriously religious or spiritual matters has consequences. Perhaps that failure is related to the increase in discipline concerns in the schools. There are not a few students caught in the vicious cycle of meaninglessness. Schools, as well as many parents, have failed to communicate spiritual values to their children, focusing instead solely on secular concerns: careers, autonomy of the individual, relativity of morals and values. But the currently acknowledged "spiritually hollow curriculum", and the confusion over morals and values, have produced a generation of educators who grope solely for secular solutions.

When the matter of religion and the spiritual is raised, many argue for the separation of church and state. That is a weak argument for the separation of church and state. That is a weak argument, if not a false one. First of all, it

erroneously equates religion exclusively with the church. It assumes that those who do not identify with it are, therefore, not religious.

More seriously, it fails to understand the intent, and importance, of the original constitutional amendment. It was not, as Carte points out, the state that needed to be protected from religion. It was the free exercise of religion that needed protection from the state.

No doubt, anyone is able to attend places of worship unhindered. But church attendance does not exhaust nor exclusively constitute religious expression. Are we then still free to exercise our religious views? Are we free, for example, to exercise the tenets of faith in politics or education, without being dismissed as religiously fanatic or intellectually naive?

Have we maintained an environment where students are encouraged to explore their religious sensibilities, in the arts, business, engineering, history? Or have students subtly been encouraged to ignore them? Why, may we ask, do most younger people have the impression that religion is irrelevant to

daily life; when it comes to career choices, selection of courses of studies, relationships? who has taught, or perpetuated, that belief?

Not a few teachers, instructors and professors commit intellectual dishonesty in their portrayals of the role and impact of, for example, Judeo-Christian principles and values in the shaping of Western history, culture and ideas. One need only examine curriculum materials and class discussions to get the impression that it had little if any bearing. But that is largely a secular bias.

That is ironic, for the very founders of public education taught otherwise. John Strachan, first Anglican bishop of Toronto and a strong school promoter, stated that "knowledge if not founded on religion is a positive evil." Egerton Ryerson, first superintendent of public schools in Ontario, argued that religion remained at the core of education. Both Strachan and Ryerson advocated a non-sectarian school system. They did not, however, intend a secular system.

Today, in our plural society, the teaching of one particular religious viewpoint is inappropriate. That includes the teaching of the secular viewpoint. But by not teaching about traditional religions, have we not replaced the teaching of an earlier "Common Christianity" with a current secularism?

That should concern us, given the fact that 78% of Canadians identify themselves as Christians, according to the Angus Reid poll of April 1993. George Rawlyk, who conducted the poll, stated that media and academic elites have failed to concern themselves with this. They have acted as if religion, and particularly Christianity, didn't matter to Canadians.

We are hardly a "Culture of Disbelief". In fact, we are the opposite. It is just that we have permitted a certain belief to creep in the back door and begin to dominate the public square. It has begun to crowd out the free exercise of traditional religious beliefs — in politics, education, business.

Is it time that the state protect its citizens — Christians, Jews, Muslims, Natives — from the dominance of one particular religious belief, namely secularism? Perhaps it is time we, and especially the young, are protected from the belief that, when it comes to public life, the only important concerns are the consumption of material goods, the making of a profit, the absolute autonomy of the individual, and the relativity of morals and values.

If I have it correct, the faith tenets of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Native religions advocate no such thing. And, statistics tell us that those who identify with these traditional religions overwhelmingly outweigh those who don't.

THE WIMMIN'S ROOM

BY HEATHER

IS YOUR NAME SALLY?

Sally walks through the hall. She passes by a group of attractive and popular girls and they say "hi." Sally then continues down the hall past a group of guys who smile and also say "hello."

Sally continues down the hall, head down looking at the floor, and then down the steps.

Sally feels terrible. Everyone stared at her, probably laughed and made fun of her behind her back, all because she was fat.

Sally is 5'5" tall and weighs 125lbs. She must be at least 20lbs. over weight. She is fat, she must be, her thighs almost touch together when she stands with her legs together. She can pinch fat under her arms and she also has a few inches on her stomach.

Sally feels terrible about what happened in the hall, but people always look at her and stare. How couldn't they, she's fat.

Sally's next stop is at the cafeteria. She feels miserable and hates her-

self. She then tries to find some solace in a burger, fries, shake, an ice cream sundae, and a large chocolate doughnut.

After Sally finishes eating she feels even worse. How could she have eaten all of that? She's fat enough now, what will all of that do to her?

Sally leaves the cafeteria feeling embarrassed because the person across the room watched her pig out. They must have been disgusted at what she ate, just think, someone her size eating like that!

Sally next finds herself in the washroom... crying. Being her size is so depressing. She feels so empty, almost nauseous, and disgusted with herself. She enters the stall, like last time, and knows what she must do.

It isn't hard, it was the first time, but after a while you get a little more used to it. It's not all that bad really, it's better than knowing all the calories, fat, and grease you just shovelled into

your body is still there. It feels better knowing it is gone and you're not going to get fatter from it.

For the next week Sally is so angry with herself that she limits herself to an apple, a pepsi, and a few cups of coffee a day. She knows she can't get out of control like she did the week before. She was doing so well before that, but she's back on track now. She knows it won't happen again.

Sally knows that in order to lose the fat on her body she must not eat too much. For the next month Sally keeps control of her diet. She is quite impressed with herself, for she has lost 13lbs. The problem is she still has fat thighs, flab on her arms and her hips seem a bit too big.

Sally then continues on like this for a couple of more weeks.

On her way to class Sally feels a bit dizzy, a bit faint...Sally wakes up to find herself in a bed. Sally is in the hospital, but is not too sure how she got

there, or why.

Sally is now hooked up to an iv. The doctor comes to see Sally. She tells Sally that she is slowly starving herself to death. She tells Sally she will have to stay in the hospital until they can get her body weight back up to a healthy weight; Sally now weighs 107lbs., at 5'5" tall with a large frame.

Sally did not realize it but she had an eating disorder. Sally was not fat, she never was in the first place. People were not always staring at her like she thought they were.

While in the hospital Sally began to learn how to cope with her eating disorder. She knew that she had to learn

to like herself and not to care about what others thought.

It would take Sally a while to recuperate and get better. Sally learned that eating healthy was important in order to stay healthy. Through counselling Sally eventually began to cope with her eating disorder.

Eating disorders are very serious. If this scenario reminds you of yourself or of a friend you should contact counselling services or your family doctor.

Anyone interested in joining the Wimmin's Collective may leave us a note with your name and phone number in our mail box in the SUB Help Centre.

WANTED

Submissions for Blood & Thunder and Spectrum.

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST INCLUDE THE AUTHORS NAME, PHONE NUMBER AND STUDENT NUMBER.

(If they are not included, your submission will not be printed!)

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

ATTENTION: STUDENTS AND FACULTY

THE AWARD is dedicated to the late Dr. Allan P. Stuart and is to honour persons who are representative of outstanding teaching achievement at the University of New Brunswick.

ELIGIBILITY: A candidate must teach at least one 3-credit hour undergraduate course, and at least one 3-credit hour course each term, during the academic year in which the nomination is made. It is not expected that the nominees should excel in all criteria listed on the nomination form, but they should be qualified in most categories. Individuals are not eligible if they have been previous recipients of the Award.

NOMINATION: Candidates for the Award are proposed and recommended to the Senate Committee on Quality of Teaching by students and faculty of the University.

The basic information required is contained on the Nomination Forms, which are available from the University Secretary, Fredericton; the Vice-President (Saint John); the Student Council, Saint John or Fredericton; and Faculty offices. No one may nominate or support more than one candidate. The form must be signed by two nominators. The Committee places little value on long lists of signatures supporting a nomination. However, signed letters or paragraphs of support from a variety of sources (current and former students, faculty members, Department/Division Chairs or Deans) can enhance a nomination.

Send nominations to the University Secretary, Room 110, Old Arts Building, UNB Fredericton, or to the Vice-President (Saint John), Room 111, Oland Hall, UNB Saint John.

ON OR BEFORE 4:00 P.M., ON FRIDAY, 18 MARCH 1994