

Teaching God or Preaching it?

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What happens when a state decides the Bible belongs on the same wall as the alphabet chart? When do the lines between belief and education begin to blur? Each dollar marked with the words, even our national motto, “In God We Trust,” each pledge echoes “Under God, indivisible”, every court ruling beginning with “God save the United States and this honorable Court”, all until faith is no longer personal, but policy. Religious liberty remains in a precarious situation within its First Amendment confines, but it poses the question: How much expression is too much when it elevates one religion above all others?

Sometimes, it’s as subtle—and unsettling—as a billboard.

The other day, I came across a billboard that read, “Are you committing idolatry? Scripture says God is One... not three-in-one.” Idolatry is the worship of idols, strictly prohibited in the Ten Commandments of the Bible: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” It had stuck out to me as being worship content, which seemed to remain popular in the media from evangelical preachers on every corner of the city to the encroaching grasp of Christianity in particular within America, whether it's to substantiate political stances or argue moral authority. “God is One... not three-in-one,” a message meant to imply a theological superiority subtly, dismissing polytheistic beliefs like Hinduism, Roman, or Greek ideology. Yet, the pattern didn’t stop there. Other billboards began to appear, more unapologetically dismissive. One read: “Do you trust God? Scripture says... Earth does NOT Move.” It was backed by a radio ministry that proudly rejected science in favor of biblical literalism. On their website, they explained: “Pseudo-science teaches theories that contradict facts taught in Scripture. God created a motionless world. We honor our Creator when we believe His word over pseudo-scientific lies.”

The message was clear in relation to all their numerous billboards: not only was their version of God the only truth, but even observable reality should bow to it. 'May His matchless Name be glorified forever,' it's clear that this was no longer about freedom of religion; it was about the supremacy of one interpretation of religion, presented as fact, and projected across the American landscape.

But can we blame them? When Christianity is constantly framed as the only "right" option, it's no wonder people feel entitled to assert it everywhere—from billboards to policy. To be Christian has become synonymous with being “good,” “pure,” or even “American”, as a relic of our past which increasingly dominates our present. When the legal system repeatedly favors religious supremacy, those ideas stop being opinions and start becoming doctrine. Although the effect of a simple billboard didn't shake me much, personally, it would be a different case if imposed on younger, more impressionable minds, at a higher intensity. Teaching God in public schools may seem blatantly unconstitutional, at least from a logical standpoint. And yet—it's happening.

The Hill, a state news broadcaster, reports: “Texas is set to become the largest state in the nation to mandate that every public school classroom display a copy of the Ten Commandments.” To forcibly push Christian ideology onto children cannot only be extremely oppressive and wrong, but can also cause religious confusion for already pre-aligning faiths. When one religion is elevated above all others in public education, equality gives way to indoctrination. Reciting scripture in a classroom, without space for any other beliefs, turns school from a place of learning into a government-funded Sunday service. Worst of all, religion-immersive schools already exist. But this move sets a disturbing precedent, one that traps our youth not in enriched knowledge or education, but in coerced devotion. With the Bill

already passing the Senate and a strong inclination to pass the final senator, it puts religious liberty in danger, as fifteen more states look favorably upon this decision of theological dominance and pursuing this Ten Commandments bill. Moreover, this fails to be the only instance of prioritizing superiority over equality.

The case of *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania*, paired with *Trump v. Pennsylvania*, demonstrates how easily religious liberty can become distorted into religious privilege. Under the Trump administration, the federal government expanded exemptions allowing employers and universities to deny contraceptive coverage based on religious or moral objections. Not only does this disregard the First Amendment, but also the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and the Affordable Care Act's mission of equal healthcare access, as argued in the ACLU amicus brief. By allowing this behavior by employers to impose their beliefs on employees' health care decisions, it's a weaponized religion to justify inequality. This case was a transparent attempt to enshrine a particular moral view under the guise of religious freedom, taking away a lot of choice from others.

The more America drifts from its core values, the more damaged an America we accept through ignorance and belief turned fact. Religion itself is incredibly vast and essential to various cultures, to make one "American" dissuades our entire ideals and undermines what it means to even be "American." It may start from billboards, from speeches, from small statutory bills, until it becomes a national debacle of equality and a threat to its people. The more our justice system permits these unchecked actions, the more we watch religious liberty erode, not as freedom of belief, but as an imposed national order.

So I ask a simple question to answer so many others: how much longer will we pretend we're teaching God, when, in truth, we're preaching Him?

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