Jokes Not Intended To Offend

Recently, my posting of Jewish jokes to the computerized newspaper must jokes has become an issue on campus. I would like to apologize to the community for the pain the jokes have caused, and explain the situation, since it has been portrayed unfairly.

There is no defense for what I did. It was irresponsible and an act of extremely bad judgment. The jokes were submitted late one evening and were inspired by other "grabs" or jokes on the same newsgroup. I thought the jokes would fit in, and in an effort to keep people who might be offended from reading the jokes, I started the posting with the phrase "inoffensive joke about religion here," which probably did offend a lot of people. I was getting tired at that point of the night, so I didn't proofread the posting to see that it was insufficient as a warning.

The jokes were not meant as a statement about Jews or any other ethnic group. I had no idea that when I posted the jokes how offensive they would be to some people, and I feel terrible for having caused them distress. Had I known, I never would have posted them.

I think this issue has been blown completely out of proportion, though, due to the fact that Joseph Richards PhD '91 failed to fairly inform the community of the entire situation when he wrote his last column in The Tech.

After I posted the jokes, people were offended, and thought that the jokes were inappropriate, sent me e-mail and posted on the newsgroup Crazy Jokes. After a while, as it slowly occurred to me what I had done, I apologized on current jokes, and the issue was essentially closed.

At this point, Richmond stalked across the dialogue. He posted part of the discussion about my jokes from other jokes, taken completely out of context, on the mailing list jokes@jokes, and portrayed me as anti-Semitic. By then, my original posting had been on current jokes for a while and had been automatically removed from the servers, so most people on the mailing list were only made aware of the jokes because of Richmond's efforts. When I realized that another debate, on this mailing list, had been set off about my jokes, I apologized on jokes@jokes, too.

Just when it seemed that the issue had died down on the mailing list, Richmond wrote his column. The column presented only one side of the story, and nearly all of the quotes he used were taken out of context. He also did not mention in his column that I had only submitted one offensive posting, and that I had apologized both in the original posting, where I had posted those jokes, and the second forum where he dragged the discussion. When you don't judge me solely on the basis of Richmond's self-serving, year-end editorial, but let me have I feel I have been unfairly set up as a scapegoat for anti-Semitism and prejudice in general.

Yingke R. Raustein '94

Religious Need To Consider Their Own Beliefs

In his column "Religion Helps Some Survive Nuclear Age," Jan. 3, Swami Sarvapriyanandah, an Indian monk, said that the influence of different religions can lead to bloodshed. His solution is for everyone to accept all religions as true. This is clearly irresponsible; belief in one set of religious dogmas usually precludes belief in another set. This is fine, as the truth of all religions is not the problem; rather, the arrogance of fanat-icism is the problem.

A clear and accurate statement of this arrogance was a recent letter ("Christianity Cannot Be Reconciled with Other Religions," Feb. '92) in The Tech. The author of Clausewitz's "The Road He offers is not one of "many paths"; it is the only one." The author goes on to say that Christianity is the only path. Rather, the author knows Christianity is the only path. They don't say, "We believe it is the only path." They instead say, "It is the only path.""What's the matter with you guys? If Christianity is the "only path," what do you think of the rest of us? Are we just stupid? Are we all just damned? Are Jews wrong? Are Buddhists wrong? Are Muslims wrong? What a nice feeling it must be to know that you are right and everyone else is wrong."

I think, think, think! Please consider that your beliefs, whatever they are, are not the only ones out there. Shake yourself, and think, I might be wrong."

James Fleming C

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters printed in a distinctive format, are the opinion of the Tech. They are written by members of the editorial board, which consists of the editor in chief, managing editor, associate editors, and editorial advisory board. Letters and cartoons are welcome. They must be typed, double-spaced and addressed to Letters, The Tech, PO Box 29, MIT Branch, Cambridge, Mass. 02139. E-mail submissions in plain text format may be mailed to tech@alum.mit.edu. All submissions are due by 4 p.m. two days before the issue date.

Letters and cartoons must be the author's signatures, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters and cartoons printed anonymously without the express prior approval of The Tech, The Tech reserves the right to edit or delete letters. Shorter letters will be given higher priority. We regret we cannot publish all of the letters we receive.

Free Speech Needs Consideration in Religion

Religious tolerance at MIT doesn't mean anything on everything. Last summer our Baptist group sponsored an outdoor concert performed by a youth band from Tennessee. They sang and their choral repertoire religious theme was front of the Student Center. We enjoyed a beautiful July afternoon as we sat in the grass listening and talking with them. I also remember a student seeking me out to say, "Who are you? Did you get per mission to sing out here?" It became clear that the event offended someone simply because it was religious.

So religious events should be allowed in public? Every student at MIT should be required to attend services? "Yes!" I think you are "religious" or not, the issue is wrapped up in our right to freedom of speech. Religious tolerant policy play a major role in the creation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

That of my favorite lines in Boston is the statue of Mary Dyer sitting humbly on the corner of Beacon and Bowdoin streets in front of the State House. She was a Quaker martyr hanged on the Boston Common in 1660. At the time, Massachusetts did not tolerate religious other than that practiced by the Puritans. Dyer was converted by the Quakers on a trip to England. She returned to preach the faith she had found. She was burned at the stake by the Boston Common but continued her public proclamation in an act of civil disobedience. The tech to the court, "She believed in what she did not in comparison to the liberty of truth." Roger Williams became counselor of bap- tisms by immersion after studying the scriptu re. He was arrested in 1635 but was not tried in comparison to the liberty of truth.

A worthy goal in the Freedom of speech is the quest for truth — a quest characterized by honesty, integrity, and kindness. And I suppose that the Baptist students will continue to voice their convictions.

The "will of separation between church and state" made America more than a land of economic freedom; it was a land of religious freedom. We are provided a means to maintain honest dialogue on personal conviction without giving up the elements that gave us individual dispositions. For example, the Christianity that allows itself the authority of the New Testament can never accept the position that Jesus is the only one of many prophets, and is a source of peace in life. However, I believe, according to Scripture, that Jesus is the only born Son of God, both human and divine, and is resurrected. Having said that, I will defend the right of my Hindu friends and colleagues ["Religion Helps Some Survive Nuclear Age," Jan. 3] to voice their convictions without the fear that they will be disagreed with and debated them publicly. Thus began the quest for "equal freedom" by the Baptists.

John Leland, a Baptist preacher, worked with James Madison and Thomas Jefferson in the formation of the First Amendment. The