

Persuasive letter to the editor Years 10 – 12

21-10-13

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To the editor,

I write in response to an article which appeared in your paper on November 1st this year. The article was about the growing numbers at mega-churches throughout the country. It carried with it an image of the Treasurer addressing the crowds at Sydney's Hillsong church/carnival. I'd like to pick up a more sinister undercurrent which can be seen in the current trend of politicians courting major Christian congregations.

We should all be worried about the breakdown of the traditional barriers between church and state. This well-tested distinction has served us and our predecessors well as a stop-gap between a vibrant, free democracy and an imposing theocracy. Politicians are free to practise and profess whatever religion or no religion as they so choose. The problem begins to be seen when large numbers of high-profile and prominent politicians consistently court votes from one religious group. This marginalises and tacitly supports the demonising of other religious groups, particularly smaller minorities. Our prominent politicians standing before a crowd of a particular group saying 'I support these values you uphold' is a divisive act. It also implicitly says 'I'm on your side, against those others' and serves to reinforce existing conflict between religious belief systems and their followers.

Between you and me, it is also an act driven not by religious rectitude, but by personal ambition and a desire to appear part of the righteous majority. Can we believe that such visible and staged events are merely natural manifestations of each leader's personal faith? That each of these men becomes more demonstratively religious in coincidental concert with burgeoning congregations? We know better.

Structural features of formal letter writing including date, sender and recipient address

Formal salutation

States the reason for the letter

States the issue being addressed and uses the adjective 'sinister' making the writer's position on the issue clear and positioning the reader to view it in a negative light

Use of the inclusive 'we' is paired with an appeal to fear for further negative emphasis and reader buy-in

Looks at the issue from both sides to create a reasoned and logical tone

Emphasis is created by the repetition of the alliterative phrase 'prominent politicians' Positions the reader to feel concerned through use of terms such as 'marginalises' 'demonising' and 'divisive'

Directly addresses the reader, building a sense of familiarity while launching a less subtle attack on the politicians in question Series of rhetorical questions coupled with an appeal to common sense is designed to arouse suspicion

There is some danger that this practice is giving rise to political-religious one-upmanship, with representatives of one, then the other major party appearing at religious rallies. Attempts to create what appears as a façade of religious consensus actually politicise religion and exploit the private for political, public ends.

For a democracy to be strong, its supporters must make a stink when it is challenged. We all need to realise that this is dangerous territory. This trend bolsters the conflict, existing behind the lectern smiles, between democracy and divisive pseudo theocracy.

John Bethson,
Millers Point

Labelling as a 'façade' further emphasises why the reader should be suspicious

Call to action using colloquial language, coupled with inclusive language and a final warning

From: Oxford VCE English 2011