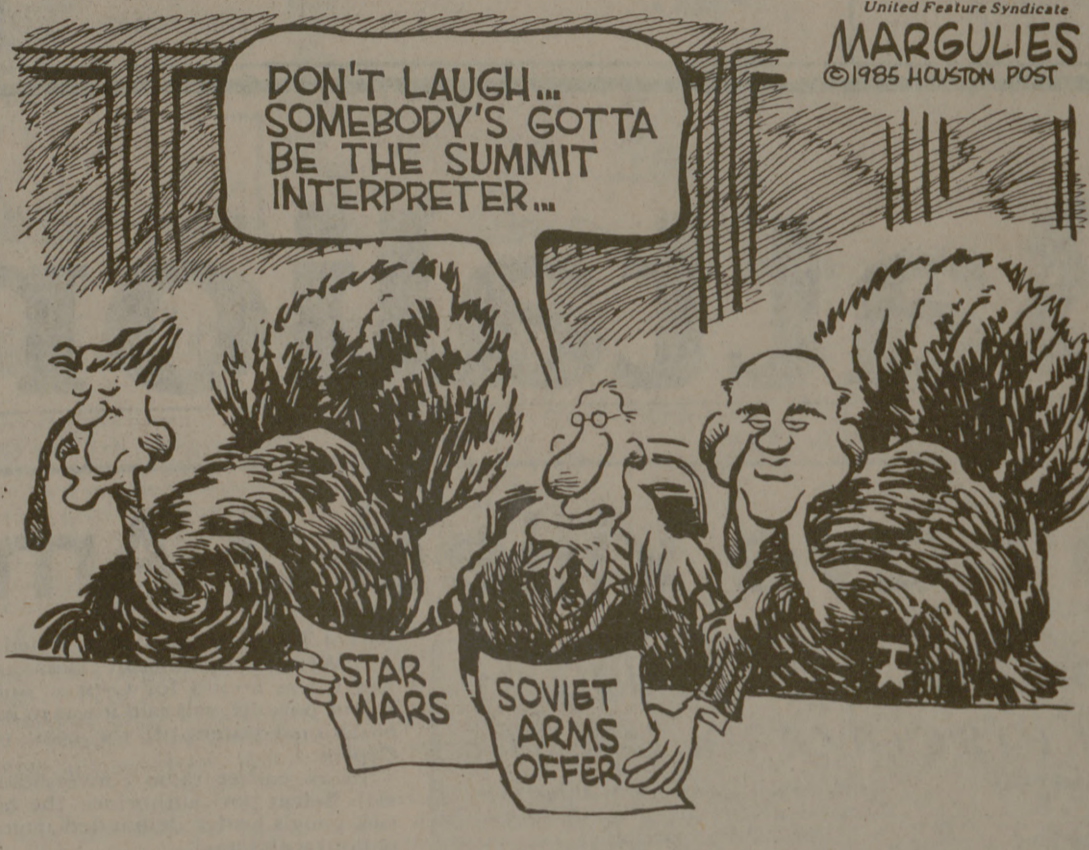


Opinion



Mail-order miracles exploit religion for sake of a buck

Some motifs in ancient literature are timeless. Religion is one of them.



Camille Brown

Certain elements of every civilization, such as government, sex and religion, are the basis of controversy, and thus addressed in the literature of that age.

One problem that is documented in literature through the ages is corruption within the church. Geoffrey Chaucer, in the 14th century, used religious vice as a theme in his *Canterbury Tales*, and it continues to plague us today. The problem, of course, has new twists, but the bottom line is still misuse of religion's inherent power.

A major religious problem today is centered in the religious propaganda that is mailed out by enterprising "ministers."

These elaborate brochures claim to deliver Godly blessings for a small price. I somehow ended up on their religious propaganda mailing list, and so twice weekly I am blessed with the opportunity to buy mail-order miracles.

When I find one of these letters in my mailbox, I make a straight line for the dumpster. But the last one I got looked like a sweepstakes contest, so I opened it, hoping not to find what I found.

There was Rev. Ewing and his "Bible

Study In The Home By Mail" brochure. With outstretched hands he urged me to buy a special book, which, he promised, would bring me happiness and amazing financial rewards. Hallelujah.

But I must send money NOW, he said.

Just to prove he wasn't lying, he included these and other unbelievable—but true—testimonials:

"I believe God has blessed me because of the Gold Book Plan and Rev. Ewing's teachings and prayers. God has blessed me with a home, several rent houses, two warehouses, four cars, three trucks and a mobile home. (Three Cadillacs and one Buick.)—E.E.R., Houston."

Mrs. H.S. from Little Rock wrote, "I requested a financial blessing... the Lord blessed me in an unexpected way with \$1,800,000. I never have received that much at once before. Here is my Gold Book Payment."

An image of Rev. Ewing flashed into my head: a gold-chain covered, Mercedes-driving entrepreneur who had found a golden opportunity to make a few extra bucks.

This type of scandal in an institution that is supposed to be holy is a sure way to ruin its reputation. Again, the problem is not new. Chaucer wrote about religious fraud in his *Canterbury Tales*. He describes his character, the Pardoner, as a hypocrit who exploits Christian principles to enrich himself.

The Pardoner: "Thus can I preche again that same vice. Which that I use, and that is avarice."

Rev. Ewing has just modernized the game, revised the rules. The spirit of the Pardoner lives on.

So people will continue to receive Ewing's pamphlets, and mail-order miracles will continue to give hope to gullible mailbox owners throughout the nation.

Meanwhile, others like Ewing soon will catch on: invest in a four-color brochure, make a few intangible promises, back them up with Bible quotes and a few lines of "God loves you" and watch the cash roll in.

If we watch this happen, then we can watch the principles of a dignified institution get shot to hell.

Religion, by definition, is the spiritual and emotional attitude of one who recognizes the existence of a superhuman power. Ewing's type of propaganda is the stuff that reduces the dignity of peoples' attitude toward religion.

It's unlikely the problem will ever be solved. It has been around for centuries because there is always someone around finding ways to cheat to get ahead.

But societies in the past didn't have consumer protection agencies. I propose an all-out attack by consumers on this degradation of religion. We must end this practice of using the power of religion as a tool in the rat race for profit.

Amen.

Camille Brown is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff has the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

Campus Police deserve no respect

EDITOR:

Robert E. Wiatt never mentions the impression that most students have toward the University Police. Well, I can't blame him—I'd be embarrassed too!

Apart from the obvious lack of parking, excessive ticketing, and excessive towing problems on campus, the police have yet to show us how effective they are with real police work: solving the other great problems on campus—theft of student's bicycles and backpacks.

Every time that the column "Police Beat" appears in *The Battalion*, about ten bikes and three backpacks have been stolen. The only time I have ever seen a case solved was when some students (not officers with their big guns and speed-loaders) caught him red-handed.

It is this that has given the Campus Police names such as "KK" and "Rent-a-pig," and a reputation that varies from ineffective and useless to downright embarrassing! I am impressed with how well College Station police officers do their job—yet they are not despised one-hundredth as much as our department. How does Wiatt expect any respect if the University Police haven't earned it?

Benito Flores-Meath '83

Views on 'evil' differ

EDITOR:

This is in reference to David Ross' sermon from the Sept. 27 issue of *The Battalion*, concerning the "evils of rock and roll." First, let it be said that no one in the Senate has, or will, attempt to draft a bill towards rating records, regardless of their wives' grievances, due to its ridiculous connotation.

Next, quoting Ross, he seems to have trouble believing that songs concerning "lust, war, rape-murders, drugs, immorality and sex" are artistic expressions.

Songs concerning war? Bruce Springsteen's title song and concert opener, "Born in the USA" is considered patriotic by the majority of music lovers, who don't listen to the words anyway. Actually, it deals with the Vietnam War.

Then what about those songs concerning drugs? Huey Lewis and the News sings a hit pop song titled "I Want a New Drug." For that majority who doesn't listen to the words, probably three-fourths of them do know the title. I found it hard to believe that either Springsteen or Lewis is engaging in any business with the devil, as David has implied with his article, due to the subject material in their songs.

Finally, how many songs deal with the topic of lust or sex? Maybe if we made those songs a little harder to get to, the birth rate may decrease. (HA!)

In conclusion, I think it's fair to say that Loren Steffy, Ross, the senators' wives, myself and everyone else have their own opinions. Furthermore, I hold nothing against any of you for speaking your mind, as I hope you hold nothing against me.

However, I have trouble justifying you or any board distinguishing between the different lyrical interpretations and determining which "artistic expressions" are beneficial and which are detrimental to my well-being.

So, let's leave the trust in the individual or parent and just pray that those rock stars that may be drinking from the devil's cup realize what destructive ideals they're provoking and maybe grow to earn your respect as real artists someday.

Leslie Molloy '89

Bonfire Bash blues

EDITOR:

The repots and the organizers of bonfire have let Texas A&M students down. It was 7 p.m. Friday and, after a week of tests, my roommates and I were ready for a night out. By 7:30, with collars but-

toned, shoes tied, and hair a source of concern change the hot water supply to dining's entertainment. Te-Roxz? MC? Phone calls made. Four dollars at an open bar till 9:00. Five dollars at Roxz, open bar till 10:00. We were debating the relative value of a dollar and an hour of free time.

Bonfire Bash? Of course all seen the signs: \$7 at the beer and barbecue. To a choice was obvious. However, my friend from San State University was saying "Dudes! Seven bucks just for I'd rather hose whiskey and Teazers for four!"

During the long drive to east Bryan we tried to understand Aggie Spirit friendliness. The Aggie Honor. The unity of the state in their support of bonfire each other.

Arriving at the pavilion we our \$7 and went directly to the table. No lines! Great! Unfortunately we soon found out when the beer guy informed that beers were 50 cents each.

Shocked and appalled, I thought there was a mistake you don't understand, we paid our \$7 at the door. A vote and cash count left no option. Though the beer guy the whole deal "sucked," I directed us to the gate for a ride to the gate. The man at the hereafter the "gate guy," took us back to the beer table to the redpot. Though the redpot irritated and rude, he eventually us, "the door swings both meet me at the gate and the care of you."

By the time we got back to the gate the redpot had come gone. However, we had again misled. "Sorry, guys," he said was told not to give you money back." By this time, we pretty mad. Angry words were changed and it was only through the mediation of the Bryan that a fight was avoided.

People waiting in line could what we were arguing about realizing that the deal was not at all, began to turn away. At this point that the redpot and judicious reappearance. "All right, give them their money and get them the hell out!"

The ride home was silent. Our friend from SHSU said, "I guess you were right. You are friendly and honest about that. Can we go to Teazers?"

Daniel John Reading

Wiatt unaware needs of bikers

EDITOR:

Once again, campus law enforcement bicycle riders has really head! I am referring to Robert E. Wiatt's letter in Friday's *Battalion* which he declares open waters bicycles not parked in racks. Perhaps Wiatt is unaware of the need for bike racks on this campus. Where are the racks near the bus stops? Has he ever seen a park a bicycle at Harrington room Building at 2:00 p.m. today, or at Zachry Engineering Center, at any time of the day? There are racks, but the ratio of bicycles to available slots is probably about 10-to-1.

I am not averse to walking 20 or 30 yards to the bus stop, but the shortage of racks is a campus-wide problem matter where I wish to park.

Wiatt should be more understanding of the bicycle riders of the situation and be willing help provide racks in proportion the thousands of bikes we have campus. Before Wiatt cracks on us "bikers," I suggest that find a more amiable solution to the problem by giving us access adequate number of racks to ensure he would find the magnitude the problem solved.

Lisa L. Palmer

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I feel morally obligated to write a letter in rebuttal to your letter to the editor that you're working on. Would you tell me which side of the issue you're taking so I can start mine?"

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