

Opinion

Religion is becoming a good standup routine

A religious storm is about to sweep the nation. When it does, things are going to be a lot better for both the religious and non-religious peoples of America.



Karl Pallmeyer

Currently, the headlines are being dominated by the doings of various religious leaders. These leaders have two things in common: they claim to be doing the work of the Lord, and they are getting very rich doing that work.

Oral Roberts raised over \$8 million by saying that God was going to kill him if he didn't get the money. After a few days in his elegant prayer tower, Rob-

erts claimed that God told him he would have to raise the same amount every year or he would die. That's the trouble with terrorists — you give them money and they just want more. It's interesting to see that God is continuing this form of religious blackmail.

Jimmy Swaggart says that he knows that the Devil is alive and well and working against God. Most religious people will agree with that statement, but Swaggart will go as far as to name those people who are doing Satan's work. It's funny that those who oppose Swaggart are the ones he claims to be in league with Satan.

Robertson says he has received "divine inspiration" to run for president. If God is telling people to run for president, is he also going to tell people who to vote for? Is God even a registered voter in this country?

Jerry Falwell has often provided the media with several humorous episodes. His Moral Majority has done little to spread the word of the Lord and has opted to spread bigotry, prejudice and narrow thinking in the name of God. His role in the recent PTL scandal shows his true motive — gaining power.

Jim Bakker and several major figures of the PTL show have been caught doing some unchristian things. It seems as if Bakker got carried away with spreading God's love and tried to spread it to someone besides his wife, Tammy. And it seems Tammy tried to use a few chemicals to help her find a way to heaven.

With the likes of Roberts, Swaggart, Robertson, Falwell, Bakker and all the other polyester-suited, Styrofoam-haired TV evangelists hopping around like monkeys on a hot plate, religion has

been getting a bad name. With the fundamentalists suing every school that uses a textbook other than the Bible, religion has been made to look like a disease of the mind.

But the problem is not religion. It's the people using religion for their own purposes. It's hard to see the homes and buildings owned by the TV evangelists and believe that God is the primary interest in their lives.

Despite the image of the so-called religious leaders, the religious people of America are not that bad. There are millions of Americans who are good, religious people who go to church, work for the community, help their neighbors and lead a good life. These people are able to balance their religious lives with their secular lives without losing out on either aspect. These people spread the word of God by presenting a good

image instead of trying to force their views upon others.

The real religious people of America are getting tired of some of the crap being shoveled in the name of God. Every time someone goes on national TV and says "give me money for my God," the truly religious person feels ill. Whenever someone who claims to be doing the work of God does something ungodly like, the truly religious person is hurt because religion has been made to look bad.

This garbage can only go on for so long. Before long, those who have been using religion as a means to gain earthly power and wealth will be forced to answer for their crimes. It won't be the secular public who will change things — it will be the religious people, fed up with the way religion has been perverted.

Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for The Battalion.

Farmers Write!

Don't let sex ruin your life

Good. Now that I have your attention, it's time to talk about a very grave matter — literally. By now you have all heard of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). You know basically what it is, what it does and how it is spread. But do you know how to avoid it?

Dave Martin
Guest Columnist

You may be saying, "What, me worry? I'm not gay, and I don't use needles, so I won't get it." Wrong. A common misconception is that you must be in a high-risk group to get AIDS. If you are having sex, regardless of who you are with, you are in a high-risk group. It's as simple as that. While the number of cases of gay males with AIDS is higher than the number of heterosexuals with the disease — males and females — heterosexual cases rapidly are increasing. This is due mainly to lack of education about having "safe sex."

AIDS is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which is spread through the exchange of body fluids such as blood, semen, urine and possibly saliva. It does not discriminate about who it affects. No matter your sex, age, sexual preference or shoe size, you are at risk unless you follow safe sex practices. This primarily means you should USE A CONDOM. No, Dr. Ruth hasn't taken over *The Battalion*. If you aren't going to follow President Reagan's advice — complete abstinence from sex — then a condom is necessary equipment.

"Why?" you ask. Remember Mom's wise words, "Don't touch that, you don't know where it's been." Can you be certain that whoever you're in bed with is healthy? Sure, she said you were her first as she threw off the feather bra. Or maybe he told you that he's been saving himself for just the right girl. You can trust them, can't you? No. It has been said that nowadays when you take someone to bed, you're also sleeping with everyone they've had sex with in the past five years. And vice versa. How can you be sure that you haven't been exposed already?

Many places in the Bryan-College Station area perform blood tests for the HIV antibody. This is not a test for AIDS. It can only detect the presence of antibodies that indicate infection from the virus sometime in the past. A positive result does not mean you have or will contract AIDS.

Some of the labs that offer these tests are:

- Beck Biomedical (776-7777) \$30, takes three days for results.
- Brazos County Health Dept. (361-4440) \$3, high-risk groups only, 10 days for results.
- Cen-Tex Life (776-6050) \$35, takes 3-5 days. Uses Western Bloc test to confirm positive results.

There are others (listed under LABORATORIES, MEDICAL in the phone book), but these three offer

the highest degree of anonymity. Only your first name or initials are used, and no records are kept.

The question now is, how do you talk to a potential sleeping partner about practicing safe sex? What if it scares them away? Or if they tell you not to worry about it, what should you do? First, you should ask yourself, "is sleeping with him or her really worth dying?" If your answer is "yes," you had better start digging.

The best way to handle the situation is to simply express your concern about AIDS, and discuss the ways to decrease your chances of contracting it, i.e. — safe sex. Remember, you must both follow the safe sex guidelines if they are to do any good. Don't let your partner convince you not to bother "just this once." This is your health they are risking, and possibly even their own.

Many people believe that talking about AIDS or using a condom takes the romance out of love-making. Yes, perhaps it does a little, but how romantic is the tale of the man who killed his lady with his love? Actually, safe sex need not detract from the romance. The general rule is to use your imagination, as long as you keep your fluids to yourself.

Just what is safe? Basically, there are four categories of safety. "Safe" sex includes dry kissing, mutual masturbation, oral sex with a condom, massage and fantasy. Vaginal and anal intercourse with a condom are "possibly safe."

Those practices classed as "risky" include oral sex without a condom, cunnilingus, wet kissing, and use of drugs or alcohol. Drugs and alcohol decrease judgment ability and also lower your immune system defenses. Unprotected vaginal or anal sex, intravenous drugs, sharing needles and rimming are considered "dangerous" and should be avoided.

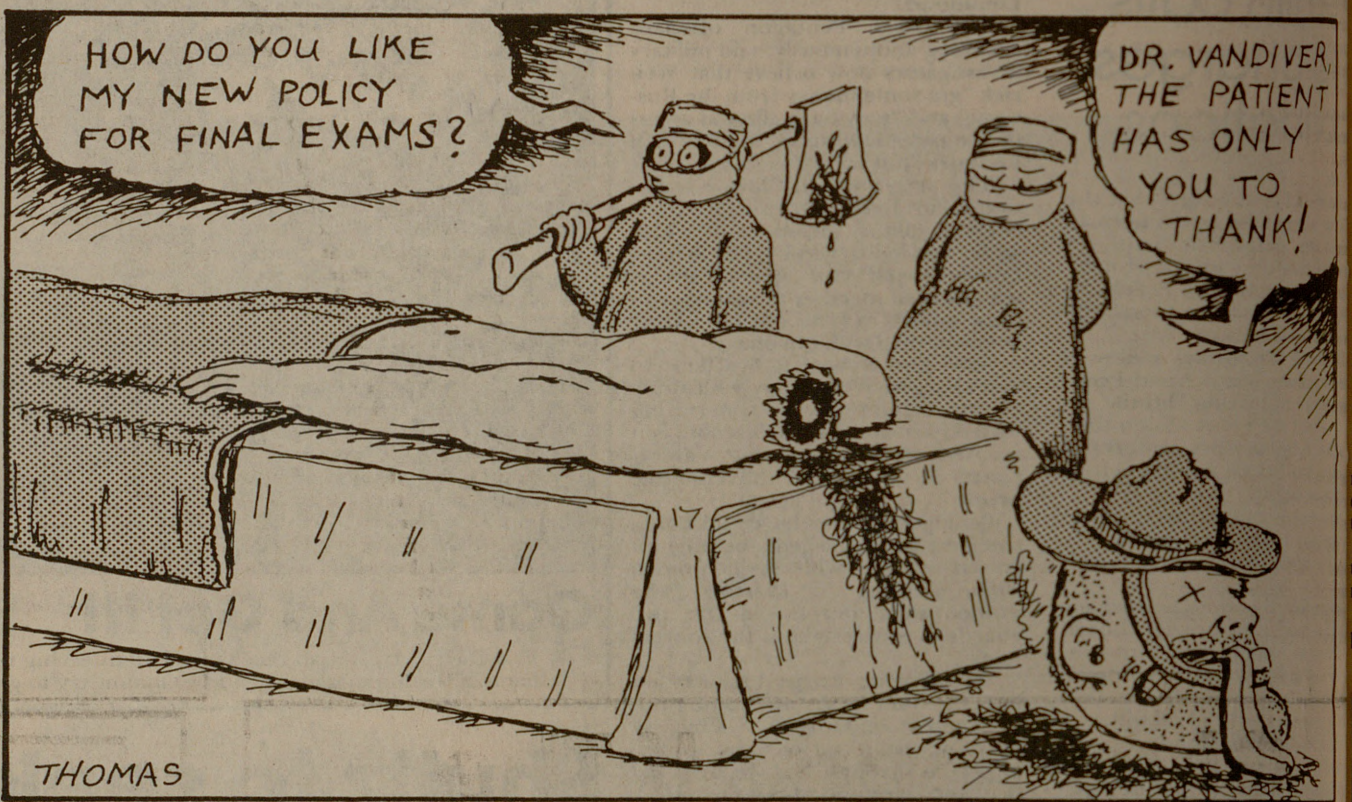
Some numbers you can call for more information on AIDS and safe sex are:

- National AIDS Hotline 1-800-342-AIDS (4-minute recording); 1-800-447-AIDS (Live Operators); KS/AIDS Foundation, 1-713-523-AIDS (Houston); Gay Student Services, 846-6051.

Despite the occasional jokes, this is a serious subject. You should not only learn safe sex, but use it. You may think, "I can't change my habits." You can, and you had better. All it takes is one night to ruin the rest of your life. Protect yourself — and the one you're with. Play it safe and live.

Dave Martin is a junior psychology major and is vice president of Gay Student Services.

Columns submitted for *Farmers Write* should be between 700 and 850 words. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each column must be signed and must include the major, classification, address and telephone number of the writer. Only the author's name, major and classification will be printed.



THOMAS

Mail Call

It takes money

EDITOR:

I am writing this letter to address the problem of the computer system in the library — ALIS.

ALIS is not a very efficient or updated computer system. It falls short of what I would expect from such a vast and important library as A&M's.

Many times all the terminals are shut down, leaving students and other library users to thumb through the card catalog which is not as up to date as ALIS.

We are left stranded when important papers and reports are due because ALIS is down and the librarians have to hand check books that we need.

This process takes an extremely long time compared to using the computer to do the work. If these books are not checked back in, we cannot gain access to these important sources of information.

I find it strange that the reference desk's computer stays up when the rest shut down. If the school can keep one up, why not all?

If the school invested all that money in the installation of a computer system, why didn't it get a more reliable and efficient one — a system that could be updated easily. If they thought they were getting a good deal, they were sadly mistaken.

I say we trash ALIS and buy a new, more efficient system which can be updated and will work all of the time. A cheap computer is a waste of money if it does not work!

If this is totally unfeasible, then I wish the library's computer system could be fixed so as to serve the students and faculty the way it was intended.

Virginia Busby '90

We are fam-ily

EDITOR:

This letter is directed to the housing board in regard to a recent rumor around Aston Hall. Sources have said that our hall will soon be co-ed, which is fine with the majority of those residents I've spoken with.

But today I learned that if this proposal is approved, the residents of the third and fourth floors will be relocated. Speaking for those of us on third south, this idea is unacceptable. We have developed a tight-knit "family" on our wing. We go out together, borrow from one another, and watch out for each other. We invested in wing T-shirts this semester to display our spirit.

If you want to make Aston Hall co-ed, great, but keep the wings together. The obvious solution is to rearrange throughout the wing, and assign the girls to every other suite.

This is a tried and true method at other universities, such as the University of Texas. But if the choice between going co-ed or staying a group were to be made by us, we would just as soon stay together.

3rd Floor Blacksheep
21 residents of Aston Hall

Dear Frank

EDITOR:

(This is an open letter to Dr. Vandiver.)

I am writing this letter in regard to your recently announced policy on senior finals.

As a former student, I have no strong opinion as to whether graduating seniors should take final exams, but I am very much opposed to any plan that undermines the traditions surrounding Commencement and Final Review — the only events during the Spring semester that draw large numbers of Old A&M back to their alma mater.

The plan you have outlined punishes students and former students alike, and could only be agreeable to those transient, mercenary, have-lecture-will-travel faculty members who have no strong ties nor long-term interest in the future of our great University.

One would do well to remember that Aggie Muster, perhaps the A&M tradition looked upon most favorably by Aggies and others alike, would not have come into fruition had the student body not felt compelled to defend the traditional observance of the Battle of San Jacinto by marching on A&M President David F. Houston's house and burning him in effigy on April 21, 1903.

Dr. Vandiver, as a historical scholar, you should realize that one of the more important reasons to study history is to learn from our collective mistakes and not make them twice.

Alan Maples '85

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

The Battalion

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