

Opinion

The Battalion

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Catholic church too smart to sponsor TV evangelism

There's a nasty rumor going around that the Roman Catholic church will be forced to resort to television evangelism to save itself from certain financial and spiritual disaster. It's not surprising that the source of the rumor is a television evangelist.



D.A. Jensen

Jerry Falwell told the nation during the airing of "Catholics in America" that the Catholic church would be committing suicide by not beginning a television ministry. I hope he's wrong.

I think Pope John Paul II's decision not to celebrate Mass on television was a wise one considering the image of mass media evangelism in this country. It's cheap and it's true: Some entrepreneurs have decided to make a buck from religion.

The biggest argument for television evangelism is the easy access it provides for worshippers. It enables those who would not or could not go to Mass the opportunity to share in spiritual life, for a price.

Viewers are bombarded with pleas for money. They are threatened with guilt. In short, they are pressured into contributing to an institution about which they know little. They are coerced into buying faith and salvation.

I don't think mass availability is valid. The Catholic church has never relied on television to raise funds or gain membership. It is the largest religious

organization in the world with 628,990,900 followers.

The Catholic church offers followers individualized spiritual life. Parishioners have access to an emissary of the church at all times. People relying on television evangelism simply do not have the support structure necessary for a full spiritual life.

Television religion does not recognize the specialized needs of each individual viewer, but the parish priest can gauge his sermon to the spiritual community he serves.

The people who honestly find religion rewarding find the time and the means to attend Mass. Many churches offer transportation to Mass for those in need.

The inconvenience did not stop the handicapped from attending the papal Mass in San Antonio. Sometimes religion isn't convenient. Sometimes that is one of the reasons religion is so rewarding.

Contrary to popular belief, those unable to attend Mass are not abandoned by organized religion. In most denominations, spiritual leaders make house calls, person-to-person.

What other good arguments are there for television evangelism? None.

The television evangelists continually are bombarded with criticism over their money-hungry demeanors. In retaliation they point out that the Catholic church solicits more money than any other organization. They ridicule the use of bingo as a fund raiser, saying it is far more objectionable than their television pleas.

It's impossible to deny that religious

organizations need money to be a necessary evil. It is unfortunate so much of the money generated through religion is used for fine propaganda.

God did not take Oral Roberts but not because he didn't meet financial quota. Every time that deadline came closer Oral Roberts. What really amazed me is the contributions that were generated such obvious propaganda.

Then we have the good Rev. Falwell heading up the Moral Majority. Either you believe the Moral Majority right or you are damned to hell; there is no salvation for the half-hearted.

I'll avoid speaking about Jim Bakker. The poor guy is now not only put out as a crook, he is also blamed for giving all television ministries their name.

Television evangelists have become television stars. The word they rife with sensationalism. Their ministries are rife with sensationalism. Think anyone seriously looking for spiritual life can easily find one in a local church. The life they find will be more personalized and more worthwhile.

I am happy for those who have God through the television evangelism movement. I just hope they don't end up suffering the emotional pain Bakker followers felt.

I'm glad the pope rejected television evangelism. It just doesn't seem like the price.

D.A. Jensen is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Birthday of a vision

The 200th birthday of the U.S. Constitution this year may be slightly subdued. To some, the summer's Iran-Contra hearings were evidence that our government's checks and balances are unchecked and unbalanced. And the Founding Fathers could not have anticipated anything like the name-calling, ideological battle that has surrounded the president's nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court.

But the Constitution, thank goodness, is a hardy document. It has served our nation through 26 amendments, a bitter civil war, a multitude of interpretations.

The Constitution has shaped Americans' view of government, while at the same time the collective, kaleidoscopic view of "We the People" shapes the meaning of the Constitution.

"The framing of the Constitution has been a continuous process, rather than a purely episodic one," Harvard law professor Lawrence Tribe has said. "The real framers were not only the gentlemen who met in Philadelphia... but also the many people, who often in the roles of dissent and rebellion, sat in, or marched and sang, or sometimes gave their lives, in order to translate their vision of what the Constitution should be into political and legal reality."

The rough times may not be over yet, but the vision still lives.

Mail Call

Confederate flag an insult...

EDITOR:

In response to Mike Burkett's letter of Sept. 15: Mike, I STRONGLY suggest that you retake History 105 and bring your grade up from the D you obviously received, because your account of the Civil War is about as accurate as spelling dog "KAT"!

You are correct that the Confederate flag is part of the history of the South. A dark and ugly part of history. A part of history that millions of people are trying to forget. A part of history that prompted blacks in the '50s and '60s to lay their lives on the line to show America and the world that the mentality of the Civil War still existed in a country that prided itself on being the land of the free.

Innocent blacks have died by the thousands over the years (and some still do in South Africa) trying to obtain not what every American has the right to but what every human being should have the right to. These are the people who made the ultimate sacrifice — and continue to do so — not a bunch of white supremacists who fought to continue a system that oppressed people simply because they were darker-skinned. This is what the Confederate flag still stands for to us of Afro-American descent. It reminds us of a time when blacks were oppressed and treated as half-human. Asking a black person to tolerate a Confederate flag is about as insulting, outrageous, absurd and dehumanizing as asking a Jewish person to tolerate a Nazi flag. Yet according to your letter, you would defend this by arguing the Germans were fighting for the love of their country. It is a crying shame that a person who has had at least four years of college, has such a narrow-minded view of the Civil War. I ask you this: When you see news clips of the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazis, and other white supremacist groups, what is on their armbands and what flag do they proudly carry? I rest my case.

Wendall Gray '89

... or is it?

EDITOR:

Recently a number of people have complained about the presence of the Confederate battle flag at Texas A&M functions (March to the Brazos, bonfire, etc...) I would like to provide a rebuttal to these uninformed souls who seek to ban the "racist" Confederate flag.

Around 6 percent of the South's population at the time of the Civil War was slaveowners. The rest of the population fought, but not to protect the tenets of an institution (slavery) which was confined to a relatively small group of affluent plantation owners and which many believed to be a dying institution. Rather, they fought to protect their right to self-determination, which had been stripped from them by the Union states which sought to impose the will of the populated, industrial North on the agrarian South. They also fought in defense of that which every true American and Texan holds dear: their homeland.

Today we're all one nation, yet the Southern culture and heritage are as evident and unique now as ever. The Confederate flag stands as a symbol of cultural unity for Southern Americans much as the Scottish or Welsh flags do for those parts of Great Britain. The flag serves as a source of pride and a reminder of our rich history to most Southerners, yet the misperception of it being a racist banner is perpetuated by the Klu Klux Klowns displaying it prominently on the 6 o'clock news.

Texas A&M has its roots planted firmly as a Southern institution. Confederate Gen. Lawrence Sullivan Ross had a great influence on the school as its first president and is still remembered today through the Ross Volunteers and other events. The "Rebel Yell" is still heard today at our yell practices and football games. I'm proud of my Southern heritage, and the day I'm prevented from proudly displaying the Confederate battle flag will truly be a sad day in Aggie history.

Larry Cox '88

accompanied by five signatures

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 evanscam of TV's 'Rev. Ike'

People often send me solicitations they have received from an evangelist hot on the scent for money.

Falwell "must" have your money in 24 hours or PTL will be down the toilet (where it belongs). Swaggart needs a million here and a million there or he's going off the air, and Roberts is up in his prayer tower doing another deal with God that he wants you to finance.

But the Rev. Frederick J. Eikernkoetter II — known to millions as the "Rev. Ike" — still has to be, according to his enemies, the Number 1 hood-winker who ever stood behind a pulpit and looked at his Bible and saw dollar marks.

I wrote several months ago of Ike's "prayer cloth." You hung the cloth in your window, took it out the next day and sent it back to the Rev. Ike with your "seed offering" and somebody would be delivering your new Cadillac before you could say "aluminum siding."

Well, the Rev. Ike is back with a new, improved angle, a "prayer rug." A reader sent along the prayer rug he received in the mail.

It's not a rug at all. It's a piece of paper with a picture of what appears to be a bathmat. That's on one side.

On the other side is a drawing of someone the Rev. Ike identifies as Jesus. (Actually the individual looks more like a skinny Grizzly Adams, but let's not nitpick here.)

The message to the recipient of the prayer rug goes like this:



Lewis Grizzard

"1. Look into Jesus' eyes. They are closed. But as you look at them, you will see them open and look at you."

(Not really. Whoever drew the picture drew the figure's eyes closed and put eyeballs on top of the eyelids. A 4-year-old could figure it out, but people who send money to the Rev. Ike aren't that intelligent.)

"2. Decide what you want." (I want a Lear, a million-seller, a new pair of Gucci's and Kim Basinger.)

"Then go into a room ALONE and either kneel or spread the rug over your knees. It must touch both knees.

"3. Place it in a Bible on Phil. 4:19."

"4. In the morning, please return it to me so I can mail it on to another Dear Soul that (sic) also needs a blessing.

"5. Place your seed offering on Jesus' picture. Just like you are investing in what the Bible promises to you. PLEASE, DO NOT KEEP THIS. Another soul is waiting for it!"

I laughed at all that when I read it and probably you did, too. But individual raises millions with a prayer rug like that.

Not only is he scary, but think many people are walking around who are ignorant enough to fall for it?

What I can't understand is why somebody doesn't introduce legislation making such solicitations illegal. The Rev. Ike and others send out mail fraud, then what is?

I know someone who went on a three years for mail fraud. He's in peanuts compared to the revenue from flim-flam.

If you receive a prayer rug from Rev. Ike, don't send it back. Take your next camping trip to start with another use - which I can't see in a family newspaper.

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The umpire inspects the ball for foreign substances

BLOOM COUNTY by Berke Breathed

