

Mail Call

Religion . . .

EDITOR:

I think that Mr. Butler, in his letter of Jan. 23, probably misunderstood what is wrong with professors discussing their Christianity in the classroom.

The problem is not with the belief itself—it is with the attitude about the belief. You see, it's okay when professors digress to discuss a speeding ticket, because they present it as either a fact everyone agrees is true or as their opinion which students can choose to agree or disagree with.

It's this attitude that offends people. Many Christians refuse to admit that religion is just an opinion, and that people choose the religion that best expresses the views and morals they already have.

Some people see religion as opinion, and some rightly see A&M as nothing but an institution of learning where what is fact is shown to be fact, and what is theory is properly labeled "theory."

Yes, Christians have a right to express their religious beliefs in the classroom, but as an opinion or a theory or a philosophy to a better life. No one has the right to express theories and opinions disguised as facts or obvious truths and to expect those of us who disagree to swallow them without a fight.

Would Mr. Butler feel it was an atheist professor's right to tell his or her mathematics class flat out "God is dead and Jesus was a joke."?

Mike Freeman '91

. . . and more religion

EDITOR:

The first point of Brian's Jan. 23rd letter seems to be that we should not be concerned if professors go around witnessing Christianity to their classes.

I realize that many Christians feel a burden to expose the world to Jesus. I believe the old biblical adage is that he who doesn't make the heathen aware of his sin will share in the punishment.

So, Brian's position is understandable. But perhaps we should be asking whether it is appropriate for an agent of a (theoretically) secular state to be endorsing a religion on the job. A salesman's actions are representative of his company. A religious salesman is no different. . . .

I also want to address the other portion of Mr. Butler's letter. Obviously, Brian is neither an atheist nor an agnostic. So, how can he really know just what they are compelled to do?

Several atheists I know are quite compelled to share their beliefs because, like Brian, they think that they have something of great value to offer the world. Like Christians, they have told me of their life-changing personal experiences. A friend tells me he's been "Born-Again"—again! How does Brian know Hope Warren isn't a Christian? Did it ever occur to him that some of us may hold to the faith, yet still not want to listen to witnessing, especially from one of our professors?

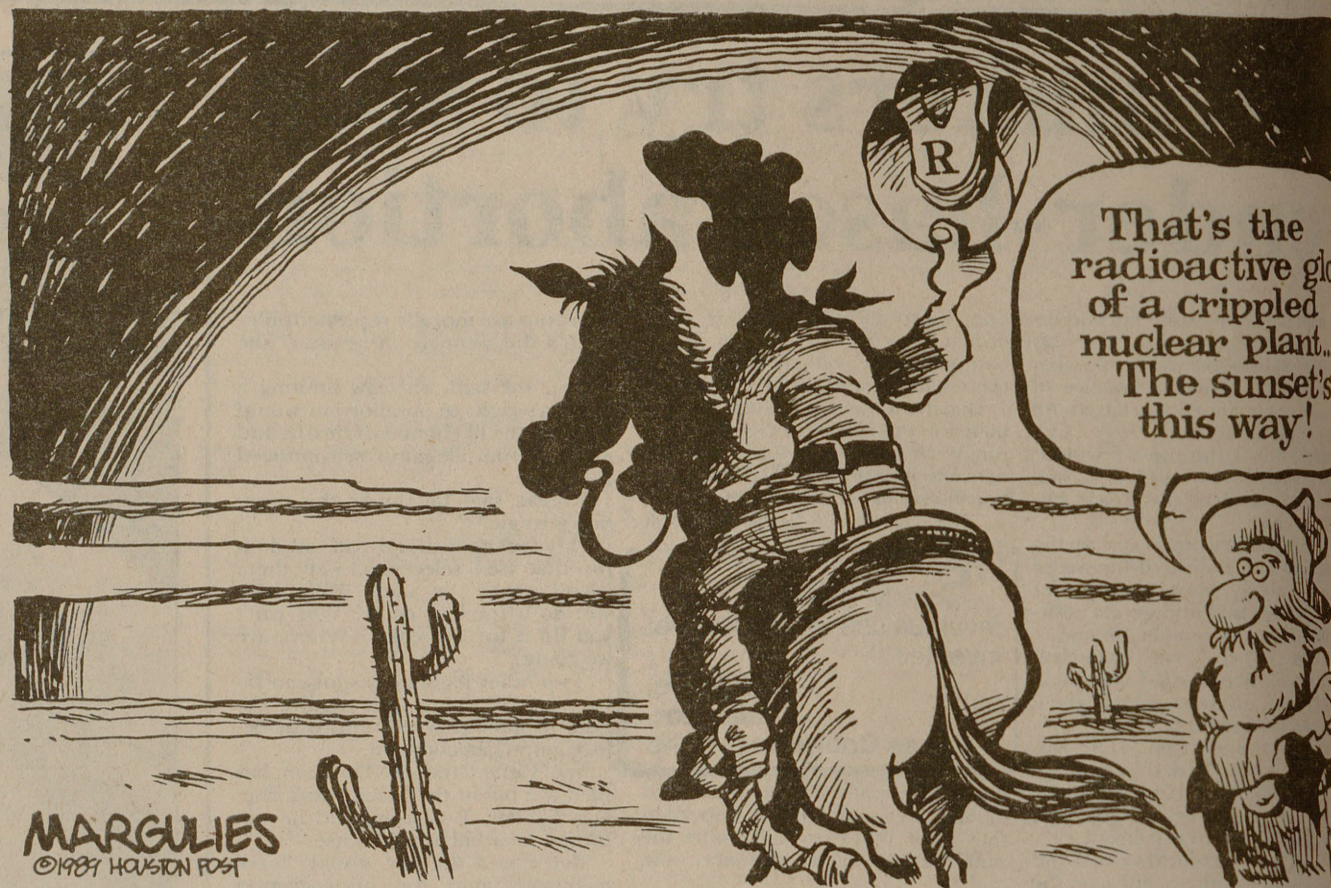
For Brian, Hope, myself or an atheist to share his views in class is not wrong. We are here to learn. It would be a pity to condemn the practice of sharing ideas amongst the students. But please understand that for an agent of the state to preach religion is a different matter.

I am not fully aware of the details of Hope's incident. What was said might actually not have been inappropriate. Brian may well be correct when he says that witnessing does not force anyone to think about what's being said. However, it is rather effective at ingraining religious doctrines. (These two features are what alarm a lot of people.)

Regardless of the case of Hope Warren, there is a principle I wish to make clear here. Religious indoctrination should never be part of our curriculum. We have churches for this purpose. If nothing else, it is my hope that this does cause people to sit back and think.

Bud Cox '90

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.



'Burning' promotes awareness

It embarrasses me to admit this, but I think the movie "Mississippi Burning" is a terrific movie.

The reason I'm embarrassed is that many deep-thinking pundits say it's a terrible film. So do most civil rights activists.

They don't like it because it doesn't present the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And they're right; it doesn't.

In case you haven't been following this controversy, the movie is loosely based on the murder of three young civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964.

The young men—two white, one black—were murdered by Klansmen who didn't think they should be encouraging Mississippi blacks to register to vote.

That part of the movie, the murders, is reasonably accurate. So is the portrayal of the killers and their red-necked sympathizers as a bunch of ignorant, sadistic, racist terrorists. And so are the church-bombings, the beatings and other violent acts that were an almost daily event in the South during those times.

So what's the gripe? Basically, it's because the movie's heroes are two dedicated FBI agents who eventually solve the crime, using a combination of "Dirty Harry" muscle and "The Sting" trickery.

Mike Royko
Columnist

The critics say the movie is dishonest, even immoral, because everybody knows that J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, was a racist himself and loathed the civil rights movement.

And they say it's wrong to make heroes out of fictional FBI agents.

There are other complaints. But they boil down to the fact that the movie is not a factual documentary. Instead, it is an action thriller that exploits a genuine tragedy and monumental period in American history.

No, the movie isn't a documentary. Yes, it weaves fiction with fact. And J. Edgar was a louse.

But the movie's violence, terror, bigotry and ignorance are realistic. The beady-eyed boobs had seized control of a big part of this country. They were America's version of the beer-hall thugs who followed Hitler in Germany. Decent Southerners, and there were many, feared speaking out. Those who did could be clobbered, and many were.

How do I know? I was in the South during the great voting rights drive. Not in Mississippi, but in Alabama. And the same breed of clods were killing civil rights workers there, too.

What puzzles me most about the com-

plainters is their demand that a movie give an accurate recitation of the facts and only the facts.

If they want facts, here's one. It is a fact that making movies is a business. And documentaries are not good business.

But if they insist on facts only on the screen, they should get together with some investors, come up with about \$2 million, make such a documentary and put it in the theaters.

Then they should get their lawyers and file for bankruptcy when the movie bombs at the box office.

You don't go in a movie theater expecting to see and hear facts. The hope you can have for is a sense of reality. And that's what "Mississippi Burning" provided.

Actually, it's a bit ironic that so many civil rights activists are panning the movie for bending facts.

As I recall, Jesse Jackson didn't mind mixing fiction with reality when he showed up on TV in that blood-stained shirt the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered.

So, it didn't happen exactly as Jesse described it. He wasn't the last person to talk to Dr. King. Dr. King didn't annoy him.

But, what the heck, it could have happened that way. And if there's ever a movie about Jesse, I'm sure it will.

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Despite mistakes, Reagan was successful president

I remember the 1988 presidential election—or at least parts of it.

Mainly, I remember seeing George Bush massacre the Democrat, Michael What's-his-name, in the election. This was due in large part to the successes of his predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Reagan was recently attacked on these pages, so in the interest of fairness, and to present both sides of Reagan's presidency, I undertake to defend him.

Reagan was the most popular president of this half-century, and certainly one of the most popular peace-time presidents ever. He was by no means a perfect person, nor a perfect president, but Ronald Reagan gave to this country something it had searched for throughout the past two decades: a sense of good feeling about our nation. In my estimation, Ronald Reagan's most important achievement was making America feel good about itself again, bringing a new patriotism to our country.

Few critics are brave enough to criticize the Grenada invasion, Reagan's most visible foreign policy action. But it was criticized. The Grenada invasion was needed in order to protect the Americans on Grenada and back here at home. We don't need another Communist outpost in this hemisphere; we already have two (Cuba and Nicaragua). The Grenada engagement also helped to prove to the Soviets that Reagan was not being flip with Moscow about "getting tough."

Could we have tried to negotiate? With whom? Certainly not the persons that, with the help of Castro's Cuba, were about to establish a regime that was allied with the Soviet Union.

Should we have gone to the United Nations? It's bad enough we pay for the United Nations, we shouldn't have to pay attention to it. In the same year as the Grenada invasion, the U.N. refused to condemn the Soviet Union for shooting down a Korean airliner.



Timothy F. Doolen
Columnist

Turning to criticism of the bombing of Libya: Gadhafi should have known better than to support and instigate international terrorism. Libya paid the price for its actions. A few innocent Libyans might have died, but how many innocent lives were saved by the curb of terrorism that followed the bombing.

As for criticism of Reagan's handling of the economy, while Reagan was in office, he lowered the inflation rate from 13% to 4% annually, brought unemployment to new lows, created millions of jobs, and lowered taxes. I'll agree with his critics that he did do quite a bit of deficit spending, more than his predecessors, and only the future can tell what problems that may create.

A large part of Reagan's budget, the money spent on "tanks, missiles and jet planes," did more good than anyone could have imagined. It brought a Soviet leader, Gorbachev, to the bargaining table and ultimately resulted in a treaty that reduced nuclear arms for the first time in our history. Odd, I don't remember any criticism of the treaty by Reagan's critics on the left.

Of all the criticism I have heard of Reagan, I have almost never heard a strong word of criticism directed towards his supporters—the American

people. Reagan came to office on a landslide, and left as a more popular figure than he had been when he arrived. If Reagan's staunchest critics are correct, saying that Reagan was virtually unfit to rule, then that is an indictment of the American people. If Reagan was really as awful a President as the critics say, then the critics are saying the millions of voters who elected Reagan were either fooled by his charm, or were just stupid.

In 1984, well after Grenada, James Watt, and during the economic recovery, Ronald Reagan won 48 more states than Walter Mondale. Drat. His critics might say that the American people were not only foolish enough to elect the guy once in 1980, but four years and several mistakes later, they accidentally did it again, giving Reagan 40 times more electoral votes than his opponent.

Anyone will admit that Reagan made some mistakes in his eight years as president, but I'd bargain that he made a lot less errors than anyone else who would have been President during the same time. No president or his administration is perfect and there is always room for criticism. But when we take Reagan's career as a whole, and look at the good things he did along with his mistakes, we see he was overall a successful president. With over a 60 percent approval rating as he left office, Reagan left on a higher wave of popularity than when he entered office (he was elected by 50.7 percent of the electorate in 1980.)

As good a president as he promises to be, George Bush will never be able to equal Reagan on a personal level. Re-

gan was our hero. He was shot, survived, and told his wife, "Honey, I forgot to duck." He fought off cancer and Democrats, and he successfully survived Bittburg and the Iran-Contra hearings. Reagan has gone from the White House and so also goes the charisma he brought to the presidency.

When history can objectively look back on Reagan, it will not remember him as one of the "great" presidents. It took accidents of circumstance coupled with strong personal character to elevate men like Washington, Lincoln, Wilson, and the Roosevelts to that status. Yet Reagan will be at the top of the "next best" list—an extremely successful peacetime president.

That is the estimate of George Will, written in the best summary of Reagan years that I have read, "How Reagan Changed America" (Newsweek). Will concludes his brilliant yet surprisingly objective essay with this passage: "[America] needed reassurance. It needed to recover confidence in its health and goodness. It needed to recover what was lost in the 1960s and 1970s, the sense that it has a competence commensurate with its nobility and responsibility. Reagan has been a great reassurer, steady captain who calmed the passengers and, to some extent the sea."

Yes, Ronald Reagan, we miss you.

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The Battalion

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