

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:**  
Steven Asbury  
**MANAGING EDITOR:**  
Thom Schoenborn  
**NIGHT EDITOR:**  
Sarah Kickler  
**EDITORIAL EDITORS:**  
Ashley Bach & Brian Diamond

# OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

**BY MAIL:**  
P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403  
**BY E-MAIL:**  
ode@oregon.uoregon.edu  
**NEWSROOM PHONE:**  
(541) 346-5511  
**CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING:**  
(541) 346-4343

## Religion still the opiate of the masses

Religions suppress personal freedoms and deny individuals the opportunity to think for themselves

The first time I saw the Hale-Bopp comet I was stuck in a traffic jam on Highway 101, heading north to my parents' California home. As my best friend, who was driving, complained about being only half a mile from our exit, I looked out my window and saw what looked like an erased star. I wasn't quite sure what it was at first.

"Hey, isn't that the comet?" I said. My friend glanced up and started laughing at the circumstance of the sighting.

Soon, we passed a five-car accident. A woman was being pushed into an ambulance on a stretcher. Two children were sitting in the back seat of a car as a policeman knelt near the open passenger's door, scribbling in a notebook. Amidst all of the flashing red and blue lights, the last thing on our minds was the irrelevant white smudge in the sky.

Over the next few days, that white smudge would become quite relevant to the family members of 39 dead cult members. The mass suicide by the Heaven's Gate cult on March 26 was performed in order to reach a supposed UFO that was trailing behind the comet — the irrelevant white smudge in the sky.

Suddenly, Lt. Uhura's brother is dead. She appears on CNN's "Larry King Live" and all the callers are asking about is how she couldn't see it coming because of her affiliation with the Psychic Friends Network.

Suddenly, a man with wide-open blue eyes and white hair is entreatng from the cover of Newsweek: "Follow me."

### OPINION

By Nicole Kristal

Apparently, this scary man, Marshall Applewhite, the cult's founder, was the son of a Presbyterian minister. In the 1970s, Applewhite checked himself into a psychiatric hospital to be "cured" of his homosexual desires.

I believe his insecurity about his sexuality led to the cult's main philosophy: The human body contains an asexual soul that can only find salvation in outer space. Applewhite's followers renounced their sexuality as well. If he hadn't been taught that his natural sexual desires were wrong, possibly none of this would have happened.

The entire situation of cults in general is depressing and absurd. I don't think there is a cause that's worth surrendering your right to think for yourself, speak to your families and engage in sexual activity. The Heaven's Gate situation could have evolved because Applewhite was in denial of his homosexuality. Thus, he founded a new religion in order to provide a means to ignore his sexuality completely. Unfortunately, the spirituality he added to this denial resulted in the deaths of 38 other people.

However, what we can learn from this event is that after people sacrifice their right to think for themselves, tragedies often occur. The magnitude of the tragedy depends on which religion or belief system is involved.

Karl Marx once said that religion was the opiate of the masses. And for masses of Americans, religion is their drug of choice. Christianity is one of the largest cults of them all, sedating people with the Bible. Why think for yourself if you can lazily pick up a black book that will tell you how to lead your life?

A black book that will teach you

how to deprive yourself of natural sexual desires and to dwell in unnecessary shame and guilt. Christianity justifies irresponsibility, creating a situation in which a person can wrong another person and turn to a god (one that has "punished" millions of other people) to effortlessly gain immediate forgiveness.

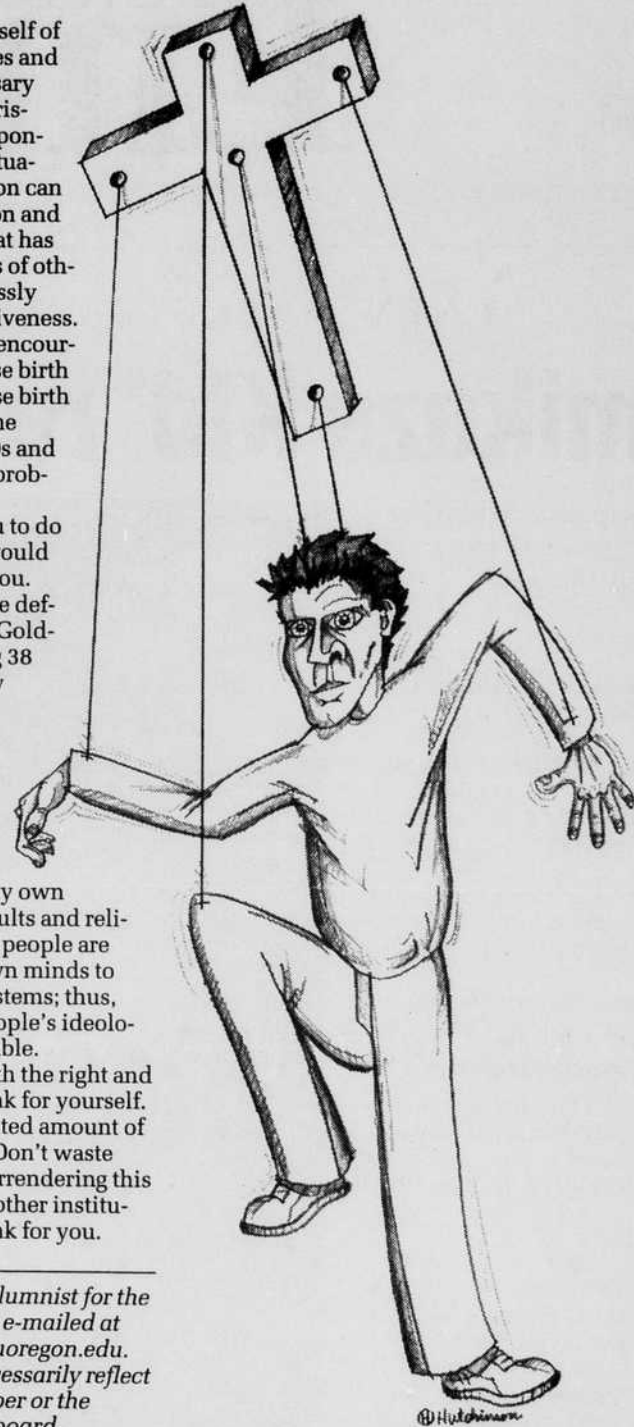
The Catholic cult encourages people not to use birth control. Failure to use birth control can lead to the spread of AIDS, STDs and the overpopulation problem.

The Bible tells you to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Marshall Applewhite definitely followed the Golden Rule — providing 38 people with a deadly mixture of barbiturates and vodka that he himself ingested.

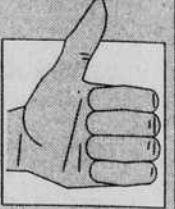
One of the violations of the Heaven's Gate code was "trusting my own judgment or using my own mind." The reason cults and religion exist is because people are afraid to use their own minds to create their belief systems; thus, they follow other people's ideologies and get into trouble.

You were born with the right and responsibility to think for yourself. You only have a limited amount of time on this planet. Don't waste your time here by surrendering this right by allowing another institution or person to think for you.

Nicole Kristal is a columnist for the Emerald. She can be e-mailed at [nkristal@gladstone.uoregon.edu](mailto:nkristal@gladstone.uoregon.edu). Her views do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper or the Emerald's editorial board.



### All thumbs



#### SIGMA PHI EPSILON

Making their fraternity house accessible for disabled brother Jess Markt may seem like common sense, but the actions of these Greeks are still commendable.

#### ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Believe it or not, we stand by the decision to hire Ernie Kent as the new men's basketball coach. This leaves assistant Mark Turgeon in a lurch, but new blood for a program the University hopes to rebuild can only help things.



#### FOOTNOTES SITUATION

The battle continues. The EMU Board voted again on Wednesday to keep the group on campus, but things are far from over. Exactly where Footnotes will be is still up in the air, and an upcoming ballot measure is still under debate. Just end it!

#### TACO BELL

Taco connoisseurs should be the first to know that the once-cheap fast food has gotten more expensive lately. While the stated reason for the price increase is the raise of the minimum wage, other fast food restaurants like Burger King have kept prices low. So, enough excuses, bring back the 59 cent taco.

### Letters policy

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be typed, double spaced and include the author's name, signature, and phone number. The identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar or style.

### LETTERS

#### Vote Miner/Unger

The election is far from a joke and deserves the respect of all the candidates and the entire voting student body. Sarcastic, casual voter's guide statements denigrate the serious responsibilities of the ASUO office, and single platform campaigns will not cut it.

I am voting for a team that is serious about action, that has real experience in student government and that is making real campaign promises. I urge the students of this University not to fall for hopes or sound bites, but to empower concrete action and specific quantifiable goals.

Bill Miner and Ben Unger are pledging solid goals with the means to accomplish them. How will Miner and Unger encourage awareness and tolerance on campus? By creating a fund to bring in guest educational speakers. How are Miner and Unger going to promote program growth? They will limit the ASUO budget.

How will Miner and Unger promote life on campus? They

will bring the concerts here and not let them defer to the Hult Center where students pay more. They will bring back the beer gardens that once thrived in the EMU.

I urge you to consider your vote as a message. We demand to be represented strongly by a team that has answers. Vote Miner/Unger.

Emily Robertson  
Political Science

#### All about inaction

You may have noticed Bill Miner and Ben Unger are running for ASUO Executive. They have bright yellow posters everywhere boldly proclaiming this fact. In fact, they got so overzealous with the poster and they so desperately want to get their name out there, they think nothing of violating election rules.

Before everyone got back from spring break, the Miner/Unger campaign put up posters in every place conceivable on campus and they continue to poster on a regular basis. Yet, they did-

n't stop there. They postered up and down the streets surrounding campus, on telephone poles and on the back of street signs. Poster in Eugene is illegal and putting posters on the back of stop signs should seem like an obvious no-no.

These posters have been up for almost two weeks now. True, some of them have been removed, but many still remain. For two weeks the Miner/Unger campaign has unfairly been getting some valuable exposure in many high traffic areas that other ASUO candidates have not been getting because they know that it is against local laws to poster in these areas and that this is a clear violation of elections rules.

Bill Miner and Ben Unger have known about their wrongdoing since last week. On Monday, the ASUO Election Board told them they had 24 hours to remove the illegal posters. Forty-eight hours later on Wednesday, they were still to be found on every telephone pole on Hilyard and Patterson, so I filed a formal

complaint with the board. Bill Miner himself told me that the posters would be removed.

The next morning, walking to school, I spotted Miner/Unger posters on a telephone pole at 15th and Hilyard and on the back of a street sign on Kincaid across from the library. I did not go out of my way to find these posters.

Four days after they were told to rectify the situation, Miner and Unger have yet to solve the problem. But what do they care about it at this point? The election cycle is almost over and even if they take the posters down now they will still have illegally obtained more exposure than the other candidates.

Their names should be taken off the ballot since they are unable to comply with the rules. At the very least I would hope that no one would vote for them. If Bill Miner and Ben Unger are unable to keep track of a few hundred posters, how can we trust them with 6 million dollars of student money?

Mark Hemingway  
Journalism