

CONTACTING US

NEWSROOM: (541) 346-5511
 ADDRESS: Oregon Daily Emerald
 P.O. BOX 3159
 Eugene, Oregon 97403
 E-MAIL: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
 ONLINE EDITION: www.uoregon.edu/~ode

PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Sarah Kickler
 EDITORIAL EDITOR Mike Schmierbach
 NIGHT EDITOR Sarah Kickler

Confrontation is not conversion

Religious demonstrations on campus only heighten anti-Christian sentiment among students

Let me begin with a clarification: This column is not a treatise on religion or a meditation on Christianity. Those topics are best debated by scholars and theologians. Besides, there's nothing I could add to the discussion that the likes of Marx, Nietzsche or Marilyn Manson haven't already said with more pomp, pretense or pure entertainment value than I could manage.

Those of us who have been here for awhile are familiar with the annual visit of "Bible Jim."

OPINION



Kameron Cole

Every year during fall term he stops by and declares us all damned, people yell and throw things, and we all go on with life.

Bible Jim has become something of a campus legend. Well, actually, more of a joke than a legend.

Most students get a good laugh at him and his entourage, which comes complete with bullhorn and sandwich board. Unfortunately, his tactics seem to have caught on, and the joke isn't funny anymore.

Last week was a particularly active one for local evangelists. For the better part of five days, students were assailed by guerrilla street preachers out to save our souls — whether we liked it or not.

Some of us had no choice but to listen. Last Monday, as I sat in my two o'clock class taking notes on optical weight, I found my attention drifting toward the religious group that had set up camp on the corner of 13th Avenue and University Street — not because of what they were saying but because of how loud they were saying it.

Wednesday afternoon presented a similar scenario. For an hour I watched my Spanish professor trying to project her voice over the ranting of the freelance evangelist who was railing away outside of the building. It was like a warped version of dueling banjos; an irregular verb conjugation here, a snip-

pet of the Old Testament there.

Both incidents left me more annoyed than enlightened.

I was further vexed by the fact that every time I walked down 13th Avenue, I had people screaming at me to repent or find Jesus.

I spent a lot of time last week trying to figure out what these people were trying to accomplish. More important, did they think they actually accomplished it by shouting condemnations at passersby?

Given that incidents like this occur on campus every year, it's not hard to see why religion is so unpopular with so many students. Generally, religious viewpoints on this campus range from benign secularity to all-out hostility toward organized religion, in particular Christianity. When organizations set up shop on campus and start handing out judgment and pointing fingers at those they deem unrighteous, it only justifies that hostility.

In the interest of discourse and free speech, I would hesitate to suggest that evangelists be banned from campus or even significantly restricted in their activities. Instead, I'd like to offer them this piece of free advice: People don't like being told that they're going to hell, even if it's true. Furthermore, you do the biggest disservice to your cause by alienating those you seek to enlighten.

If they really want to reach students, or anyone for that matter, street preachers should spend less time on confrontation and cheesy theatrics and more time studying the nature of their cause. Consider this: Jesus drew people to him with his gentle grace and quiet dignity. And there's nothing graceful or dignified about parading down 13th Avenue wearing a sandwich board.

Kameron Cole is a columnist for the Emerald. Her columns appear on alternate Wednesdays. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Quoted

"But the fact is nothing can halt the ever-increasing recurrence of those moments when your total isolation, the sensation of an all-consuming emptiness, the foreboding that your existence is nearing a painful and disastrous end, all combine to plunge you into a state of real suffering."

Michel Houellebecq, as translated by Paul Hammond and printed in the autumn issue of Granta titled "France." The French really have perfected self-loathing, haven't they?

"When the speaker calls names I don't pay too much attention. What I try to do is listen to people who have constructive ideas and keep an open mind."

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, quoted in Monday's Register-Guard. If you're looking for constructive ideas, what are you doing in Washington, Janet?

"Let me tell you about our profession. We are the meanest, nastiest bunch of jealous, petty people who ever lived. You think I wouldn't sell my mother for My Lai?"

Investigative journalist Sy Hersh, quoted in the November Vanity Fair and reprinted in the Oct. 13 Newsweek. Hell, there have been days when I'd sell my mother for a good sandwich.

"Never mind chafed thighs and calloused hands; students who peddle [sic] through campus are facing another problem: theft."

From the October U. Magazine. I don't know where the chafed thighs come from, but if you're selling goods on campus, you're going to have to expect to be ripped off now and then.

DRAWING BOARD

