

A universal faith

It is hardly secret that this column is foremost a platform for the defense of the Christian faith. I often feel, though, that my arguments are viewed as merely

This may have little impact on our 20th-century minds, but for a Jew, a "Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" to equate a Gentile



Joel P. Shempert
Staff Writer

Altar of an Unknown God

a soapbox in the corner of a quite crowded intellectual marketplace—one view among many which could surely never be meant to meet the needs of so diverse a mass of humanity.

This view I take to be fatally mistaken.

The very title of this column is a tribute to my belief in the universality of Christian faith. I believe Christianity is more than a religious peculiarity derived from the platitudes of a vagabond Jew. It is the core of reality itself. It is culturally, personally, and spiritually relevant and fulfilling to all humanity.

The most shining example of cross-cultural relevance in early Christian history occurs when the Apostle Paul sets foot in Athens—the epitome of Christian zeal meeting the pinnacle of Pagan wisdom in a clash of eternal proportions.

Athens by this time was glutted with gods and their requisite shrines and idols, much to the consternation of Jewish-minded Paul. He could have responded quite simply to this polytheistic milieu: "My God is right. Yours aren't. Abandon your culture and be like me." But Paul did not respond simply.

Paul responded with an eloquence and broad-minded enlightenment far surpassing his Rabbinical background. He reached out with a truth that resonated with a Greek mind, not merely a Jewish one. "Men of Athens," he declared, "I perceive that you are very religious, for I even found an altar with this description: 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you."

Paul was a man with a foot in both worlds. In his Pagan education he was likely aware that around 600 B.C. the Cretan Epimenides had come to Athens and banished a plague by sacrificing to a nameless god. Paul even quoted Epimenides in his Letter to Titus, saying, "One of their own prophets has said. . ."

poet and seer with a prophet—he who speaks for God Himself—is audacious indeed.

Which, speaking of audacity, brings us back to Mars Hill, Athens, where Paul played the same game the other way by equating the nameless *Theos* whom the Greeks had revered in ignorance, with *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who through an executed Jewish Peasant had redeemed mankind!

Paul reached Athenians through the culture of Athens. He declared that it is God's will that all nations "should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are His offspring.'"

This was far more than an obscure bit of Semetic philosophy trickling into Athens. This was the fundamental principle of human existence, of the very universe, being preached to all nations. Nor was it a mere switch from one thought system to another—from "the Greek way" to "Paul's way." It was the One Way woven into the fabric of the Greek way. Athenians had men like Epimenides, and even Socrates and Plato (which I shall explore in a future column) to prepare their hearts for total communion with the God of Creation.

The transition was by no means smooth. At the mention of bodily resurrection (a concept repulsive to Greek thought), many hearers scoffed and dismissed the message. But some heard. And the kernel of God's truth was scattered on the four winds, spreading throughout the world. Today it still offers its wonderful, terrible choice: Accept or reject? Believe or deny? Light or darkness?

The purpose and namesake of this column is the presentation of this choice. *I show you a more excellent way.*

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Speak up if you're offended by instructors or material at school

If an instructor says something offensive in class, is it administrative freedom or lack of re-

Now, I know I am not the only student who believes this, but what I am asking is: do we draw a line in

to take into consideration that there are some students who have a low tolerance level for bias. It takes a lot to offend me, but not everyone is like that. We need to decide whether there should be positive decorum for offense.

Make a statement, be heard...



Salena De La Cruz
Opinion Editor

sponsibility to student success?

I believe we all have an interest in an instructor's agenda and attitude. I myself am guilty of taking classes from instructors who are known for their offensiveness or shock effect. Sometimes that is the best way for them to get their point across. If I'm bored with the instructor and/or the lessons, I find myself less apt to pay attention.

offensive subject matter and or comments in class?

If so, where? I think there are some subjects, races, sexual preferences and ideas that touch on sensitive subject matter. There are some instructors who feel they are politically incorrect. Now, I would be the last person to question an individual's opinions and freedoms because I value my own.

I am not suggesting we go back to the boring, monotone, already verified by the school board subjects. I do think that instructors need

It is just a question of tact. I am asking students to look out for material or subject matter that offends you personally or you find to be less than appropriate. Don't just shrug your shoulders and say, "Oh, that's just the way they are." If the instructor doesn't take your feelings into consideration, go higher, or write a letter to *The Clackamas Print* addressing the matter. You don't under any circumstances have to just take it.

Remember, we are paying to go to school, so we have the right to feel comfortable in our road to success.



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