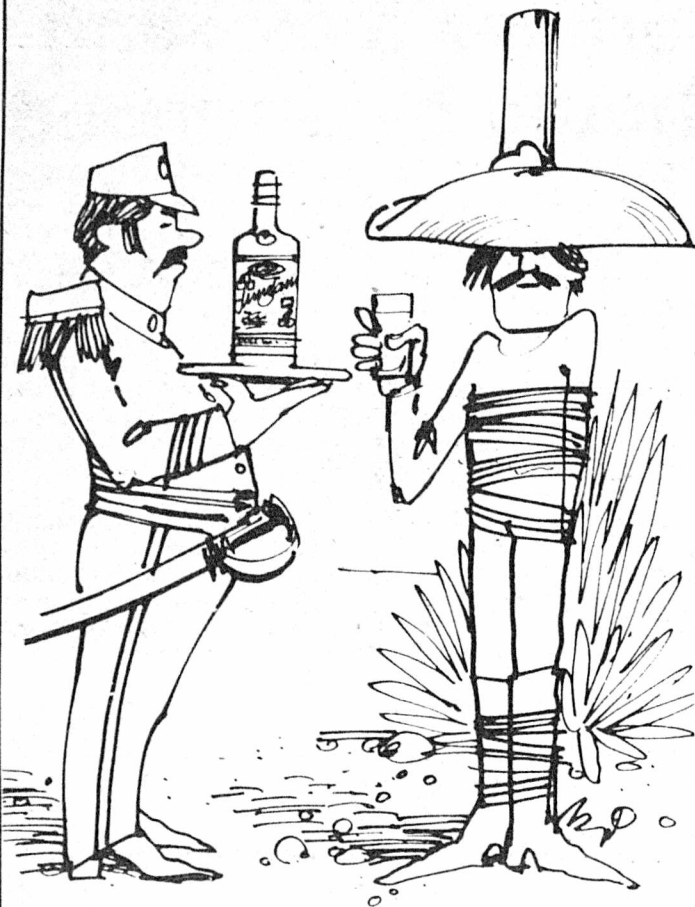


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CON

by Ambrose Fierce

I seem to have offended at least eight people - nine, counting Mrs. Torrance - with that recent little evangelical article. While giving offense is always gratifying to me ("Spread a little hate wherever you go"), I confess, however, that my purpose in writing the article was partly altruistic, educational: trash is demonstrably trash.

Since St. Jerome, a fire-breathing satirist if there ever was one, the standard Christian line is that one hates the offense but loves the offender. That is the theory, anyway. Mr. Blacklock, *et. al.*, should, by the way, look up the word "slander" (in a good dictionary); it is difficult to see how a man's own words may constitute this offense.

One might point out the raw fact that there are no "issues propounded" that might be "positively criticized." One might contend that some negligible person, having decided that he is allied with God, is not thereby necessarily entitled to greatly increased respect. We are obliged neither to regard his person as sacrosanct nor his ravings as worthy of serious consideration. These ravings are, as quotations, not only "true," but exactly rendered, and in context (such context as there is). - You say "may be true"; can it be that you have not troubled to verify with utmost precision your sacred text? You shrewdly refrain from accusing Mr. - *not Mr.!* Reverend! - Reverend Cebuliak of self-slander (and thus contradict your earlier assessment of the "article"; you astutely note, however, Mr. Blacklock, that the "attitude" which I "intone" (a difficult feat, this never before executed or even attempted in our language), "is not necessarily reflective of Frank Cebuliak, nor of his message."

What is his message? What are the issues?

In my "article" I provided no fewer than seventeen instances of internal contradictions, tautologies, illiteracies, gross errors of fact reflecting near-immaculate ignorance which seems to cover the entire world like a shroud without a gap or rent anywhere, blatant absurdities, and near-pathological incoherencies. (A good dictionary will help you out with that last sentence.) By providing these instances of mild idiocy, I have of course anticipated and thus controverted charges of prejudice - charges to which, let me point out, your

own note is vulnerable, since your sole objection, boiled down, is that I disagreed, disagreeably, with this engaging little God-jobbing tatterdemalion.

What did Jesus do for Rev. Cebuliak?

Does anybody know? Anybody? How many years has this dogged and wind-burned little figure of fun stood around distributing his surrealistic little tract? How many tens of thousands have been given away? Am I the Reverend's sole reader? So it would seem. What did Jesus do for him? The inescapable conclusion is that, first and specifically, Jesus, who raised Lazarus, was unable or unwilling to raise twelve dollars on a particular occasion; and that, second and generally, He saw fit to transform his disciple's frontal lobes into some such non-cerebrating substance as rancid phlegm.

Finally, let me (and my phone number is in the Gateway offices should you wish to contact me) point out your real objection to that little evangelical "article." You do not know what your real objection is. I do. I will tell you: you objected to my having interwoven an *ad hominem* argument with an extended *reductio ad absurdum*. This technique, though valid, powerful, and popular long before Pericles was even a twinkle in his father's eye, is still, I suppose, to some a bit of an innovation. Basically, using this technique, one attempts not only refutation but ridicule. The effect is, if one is not on the receiving end of such an "article," highly enjoyable. Highly enjoyable, as well, is the sight of seedy-genteel, squat and elderly little folk (all of whom resemble Nikita Krushchev) who sell the *Watchtower*, and the sight of the Hare Krishna-ites, and the sight of the squeaky-clean-cut young missionaries of some sort whizzing along on their ten-speeds and cadging for souls - and so forth. Hilarious. But they are all, you say, entitled to their own opinions, especially Reverend Cebuliak; so, then, am I entitled to my opinion. I think they are all "idiots, or sharpers got up as idiots to win the public confidence," as Mencken put it. I think they are all frauds. And funny as hell.

For the moment, however, I need only repeat Voltaire's kindly advice to similar critics whose obtuseness approached that of my own: *Forget the wit, then, and answer the logic.*

Teaching Positions

Personnel from the *Edmonton Catholic School Board* will be interviewing teacher applicants for the 1977-78 school term on campus at the MANPOWER OFFICE (4th floor SUB) on the following dates:

Nov. 22
- Dec. 2

Interested applicants should contact **Louise Perkins** at the Manpower Office **432-4291** for an application form.