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Idiot cartoonist botches the Bible?

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It's usually against personal policy to play the explain game with editorial cartoons. By nature, they are symbolic and interpretive. Sometimes, rationalizing an image would ruin it. Sometimes they're rooted more in emotion and intuition than literal-minded analysis. And sometimes a cartoon just isn't very good. These scribbles ain't exactly Claude Monet, after all.

In some ways, political cartooning is more of a sport than an art. You step up to the plate, the three-point arc or the line of scrimmage, and you swing, shoot or sling away. Sometimes you score. Sometimes you don't.

And sometimes, reactions to an image are more interesting and symbolic than the drawing itself.

In the week before Christmas, I published a cartoon showing two exhausted-looking figures being turned away by an innkeeper exclaiming, "You people are why we need to build the wall."

As the image made the rounds on social media, and soon after in the pages of the News Journal, criticism and letters to the editor rolled in. Here are a few of the highlights from Facebook (punctuation and spelling errors quoted as written).

"Joseph and Mary were not immoral, grating, legal or illegal!"

"You really should have read the story before putting off of that work in a piece of art that doesn't make any sense."

"Mary and Joseph weren't immoral, grating, they were required to be there!"

"Pieces of crap cartoon by an idiot non-Christian who doesn't even understand why Joseph & Mary went to Bethlehem. Worst poor taste ever."

"Try reading the bible before you draw ignorant cartoons."

"NOT AT ALL! They were going to PAY TAXES! get your facts straight, your post stinks me out!"

Apparently, I had failed to accurately depict a scene from that well-known source of interminably-understood source of eternally-understood source of the Holy Bible, King James Version, of course.

But, forget the admittedly lapsed idea expressed by the caption for a moment. What was interesting was the

common thread in the criticism — a literal-mindedness tinged by finger-wagging anger that demanded some sort of presumed degree of historical accuracy and scholarly citations... from a cartoon.

"Thou shalt not... what? Mix metaphors? Must have missed that commandment."

In defense of my little image, it's simply an imagined scenario that poses a pretty simple question: What if the mood of modern America collided with the mood of the Bible?

With the Bible lacking a comprehensive Freudian analysis of the innkeeper, scholars, believers and, yes, even cartoonists, are forced to speculate on the actual intentions of the man who turned away the mother of Christ.

In Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church in Sanford, Fla. where I

was raised, the story was used to teach the basic importance of being kind to strangers and those in need. It also warned that you never know whom you might be refusing help to when the world presents you with someone in need — a child-including notion with the power to alter our encounters with every living thing from folk with flat tires to lost dogs.

It is symbolic core — its burning visceral modern — the image of a poor young man and his young pregnant bride being turned away from an inn.

Perhaps there was truly no room at the inn. Perhaps every square foot was filled. Perhaps the innkeeper felt deep for the young mother and turned the strangers away only after doing every-

thing he possibly could to help.

Or maybe he did not.

And if the mother of Jesus showed up today, at our door, our inn or even our border — poor, weary, dark-eyed and long-travelled — how would we measure up?

No, the cartoon is not a literal translation of biblical detail. No, it doesn't analyze or articulate dense historical context or ancient immigration and taxation policies. But in modern America, is the cartoon's caption really so inaccurate?

Not only is it appropriate to creatively use biblical symbols to frame and challenge the morality of our contemporary world, it is crucial to do so.

But hey, that's just some idiot cartoonist's opinion. The more important question is what would Jesus do?



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dealing with Hurricane Michael in Tallahassee. He is a beacon of goodwill. We are so lucky to have him."

Another said, "Andrew Gillum delighted my husband and me. We were so pleased that he ran for governor. His demeanor, good nature, and intelligence uplifted us. So sad that he lost the race, but he will be back. Let us applaud him for his hard work in very difficult circumstances."

Cheryl Williams

Andrew Gillum's effect on Tallahassee grew from his grand deeds of making Florida a better place.

Cheryl Williams had a much smaller wish. She just wanted to know what happened to her son, Mike Williams, who disappeared while duck hunting in 2000 and was presumed dead.

She may not have had a palpable effect on the business of the community, but she touched our hearts.

She persevered, day after day, year after year. She was convinced her son did not die in the lake, and after three years finally persuaded law enforcement to investigate. She wrote hundreds of letters to Gov. Rick Scott, put ads in the Tallahassee Democrat, posted billboards and picketed with signs for hours at a time.

Without her tenacity, it's doubtful we ever would have known what really happened to Mike Williams. Cheryl Williams gave us all a lesson in loving, fighting, persisting.

A jury validated her years of staunch belief when it found Denise Williams guilty of first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit murder and accessory after the fact on Dec. 11, two days before the 18th anniversary of Mike Williams' disappearance.

Jennifer Norman, who covered the case for more than a decade, wrote:

"For Mike Williams' family and friends, however, the real and the ideal came together in that courtroom, enveloping Cheryl Ann Williams, her son's crusader, in its bright light."

A crusader indeed.

Jeff Binkley

Jeff Binkley, an Atlanta tax consultant, received the worst news a parent can get. His 25-year-old daughter Maurya, a Florida State University senior, had been killed by a gunman who invaded a yoga studio in Tallahassee.

Binkley came to Tallahassee immediately,



Cheryl Williams, ALCA DEVIN/DEMOCRAT



Jeff Binkley, ALCA DEVIN/DEMOCRAT



Joshua Quick, BILL LAY/FSU PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES

him, but Gillum wasn't having any of that. He presented Quick with a key to the City, the city's highest honor.

A nominator said: "This story speaks for itself. I doubt I'm the only one who will nominate Mr. Quick."

More "Person of the Year" honorable mentions:

Here are the other nominees who rose to the top of the list, in alphabetical order — as described by the people who nominated them.

Christi Colfield: "Christi created a Facebook page for the support of Mexico Beach homeowners — to share pictures of their homes and work through their grief. We are currently 285 strong, and new members are still being added. Christi saw a need for a devastated community to have a safe place to grieve, away from realtors, contractors and curious onlookers. She was also instrumental in setting up a 'lost and found' page where neighbors are reunited with valuable treasures — whether a car key or a damaged family picture. She is already planning a party for the survivors next October so we can meet each other in person."

Father J. Thomas Wilson: A dedicated Catholic priest, Father Wilson is full of energy and kindness; he always seeks to share the God's truth. All generations adore him, as he serves as a priest at Good Shepherd Catholic Church and directs the youth of St. John Paul II High School. His talents and holiness make him a leader here; he

wants to bring peace and love to all Tallahassee.

Rebecca Kelly-Manders: Rebecca is non-stop. She is kind and unendingly giving. In 2018 she continues to grow the

Before culinary program she founded, which provides basic skills training, job experience and job placement support for people with felony convictions. The success of the program, including the new "Yes, Chef Cafe" (managed and staffed by graduates of the program) is a true testament to her hard work, "make it happen, never give up" spirit. Tallahassee is so lucky to have her.

Rabbi Jack Romberg: Rabbi Romberg has been the spiritual leader of Temple Israel for almost 38 years. Ever since his arrival, he has made outreach to the community a core value. He has involved community and faith leaders of all denominations to share ideas and

to foster dialogue and in-depth understanding. After 10 years of loyal and faith-driven leadership, Rabbi Romberg is set to retire effective June 30, 2019.

Joy Watkins: As CEO of the Community Foundation, Watkins' successful determination and professional management skills for Leon and surrounding counties has meaningfully touched many lives of people needing help and assistance.

Colfield:

Binkley:

Williams:

Dillon:

John Paul II High School. His talents and holiness make him a leader here; he