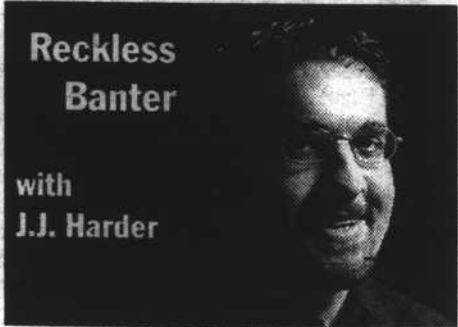


Misguided souls

Detractors of Christianity may be wrong



Reckless Banter

with **J.J. Harder**

You might think Andy is a fool. You see his hurting eyes underneath that oversized ball cap and can't help but feel sorry for him. He's just a poor little sixth-grader; he doesn't understand that he has been conned. He sits with his elbows on his knees, head hanging as thoughts tumble through his mind. You can't even see why he came here — to supposedly learn about right from wrong.

You look around Pershing Auditorium and see 6,800 other kids like Andy and a few parents, too; all of them here to find out about what the Bible has to say about morality. An event called "Counter the Culture" is terrible, you say. We should embrace our culture and its "diversity." You want to run up on stage and scream in the microphone, "Get out of here. Christianity is nothing but a big scam!"

But you know that even if you did, the thousands of people would simply ignore you. They're in a trance or something. Christianity has this effect on people that pulls the wool over their eyes, so they can't even understand what's happening to them.

You are an intellectual, and intellectuals place their faith in knowledge. Not some wacked-out, unfounded belief in some deity that is so out of touch with the world he might as well appear on "Star Wars."

I guess on the surface it all seems pretty harmless. First on stage is a cookie-cutter rock band. The band members have Brad Pitt haircuts, are wearing all black and are singing songs about worship and God. Then comes an over-the-top comic/rapper who tries to make morality down-to-earth.

But then there's Josh McDowell, this Christian author/speaker who kind of reminds you of Chris Farley on Saturday Night Live. He's not breaking coffee tables, but he's going on and on about family and God and a real right and wrong.

He's just corrupting these young minds with this garbage. He doesn't understand that today's society doesn't need God, the church and especially doesn't need the Bible.

He says that moral relativism is a load of crap — that God has given us absolute truths written in the Bible. That means that there is a real right and real wrong that don't change from person to person or culture to culture. How absurd can a philosophy be? This McDowell guy is trying to say that God created each of us, loves each of us and wants us to know him. And on top of that, he wants us to live our lives according to his word.

Good thing this is the 1990s. There is no room for God here. This society is about tolerance and personal beliefs. There is no way that there can be an all-encompassing truth for everyone.

But Andy doesn't know that. McDowell is on stage giving his testimony, and Andy falls right into the trap. The speaker says that in college he set out to disprove Christianity. McDowell traveled all over the world talking with academics and historians, all to show the world what a crock this "religion" is. But he couldn't disprove Christianity; instead he accepted Christ as his savior. Then his friends became saved. And his alcoholic father.

By this time Andy is really getting swindled. He hears McDowell's story of life change and buys it hook, line and sinker. He thinks he has seen what God can do. McDowell reminds him not to make a decision based on simple emotion, but to make a serious, conscious choice to accept Christ. Andy feels God tugging on his heart to make the right choice, and he does.

McDowell asks everyone who made a decision to stand up and go to another room to talk about what it means. So Andy gathers up the courage and leaves the room with his dad. He sits down with a volunteer to talk about

Christianity and the Bible. Andy's eyes show his fear. Fear of what his friends would say. But more importantly, fear of what this decision still means for his life.

And you might hang your head in disgust. Just another life wasted on a system of beliefs thousands of years old and billions of years obsolete. Andy is wrong. So are the 6,800 other people that think Jesus may make sense in their lives. So are the millions of other Christians in the world.

But what if they're right? What if Andy didn't throw away his time and energy into a lost cause? Maybe a man who died 2,000 years ago is as real, even more real, than anyone living today.

Maybe we should try to counter the culture. Maybe right and wrong aren't blurred into a gray, amorphous mess we can't understand. Maybe truth isn't like a bubble floating away from a little child but more like a rock you can stand on.

About 3 billion people in the world believe in the Bible. A lot of them take different things from it, and many disagree on interpretations. But nevertheless, they still believe in it. Maybe it shouldn't be disregarded as a piece of religious banter with-out relevance.

Isn't Christianity just a life of rules and regulations, void of fun and enjoyment? Or is Josh McDowell right when he says, "True freedom is to have the capacity to know what we ought to do?" Maybe Christianity is a life of freedom.

So Andy probably just made the biggest decision of his life. And you might still think he made the wrong choice. A life for Christ is a life of ignorance. Or maybe it's the other way around.



SHAWN DRAPAL/DN

J.J. Harder is a senior political science and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Playing against type

Man has good time disproving stereotypical perceptions



Stereotypes are how people categorize you with what small amount of information they may have.

Maybe they don't know your name, where you grew up or how old you are, but these facts have nothing to do with it. All it takes is one look at you, and, POOF! You're labeled.

Of course, most people don't like to be stereotyped, and some spend their lives trying to get out from under a stereotype.

Personally, though, I really don't mind it at all. In fact, I kind of like being, as I call myself, a walking stereotype. How? Let me explain.

First, let's start with the most obvious aspect: I'm black. That by itself opens enough cans of worms to feed all of Hitchcock's birds!

According to all assumptions, I listen to rap music. Loud rap music. Rap music so loud the little purple monkeys on Saturn have to plug their ears.

And I have to be doing it in a low rider that's so low I don't have a floorboard.

And, of course, every time I'm not in my hip-hop-playin', concrete-scrapin' pimpwagon, I'm stalking little old ladies so I can run off with their purses or their wigs and hightail it to the next big city.

Oh yeah, I'm also strapped! (For you non-street-wise lot, that means I carry a gun.) Didn't you know that every single black person in America is strapped all the time? Yeah! I thought everyone knew that — or is that just a common

misconception?

There are other categories I fit in as well; let's explore some of them.

I can tell you I'm a theater major. What does that mean? Nothing, if I don't plan on making anything out of myself.

You see, being a theater major means that I'm paying for 4½ years of college so I can live the rest of my life with absolutely no money at all.

This also means that after I graduate with my pointless degree, I'll be living in a tiny studio apartment in New York with 12 other people, and none of us will have any money or a job because all we want to do is act.

That is, with the exception of three of us at a time who work as waiters and bartenders. They don't have any money either, though, because all of it goes toward paying our rent so we can keep our tiny studio apartment.

Of course, it's not always the same three that work. As soon as one of us gets a role (no matter how minuscule), we immediately quit our job to dedicate all of our time to the part. Of course, the next person has to find a job, but that's beside the point — we're acting!

Being a theater major also means that I walk around all year wearing a beret, dark sunglasses and black clothes smoking a cigarette. And, of course, no one can talk to me because I'm just too good for you people who don't understand what it's like to be an actor.

Of course, I could be wrong.

Am I done yet? Heck no! Being a walking stereotype obviously means there are more than two strikes against me.

Strike three? I live in Nebraska. That makes me a corn-huskin', football-watchin', cow-throwin' (or tippin') farmer.

Wait a minute! That doesn't work because I was born in and spent most of my life in Tennessee. Go ahead; take a few seconds to get all your Vols jokes out. (one one hundred, two one hundred, three one hun-)

Ready? OK, by now we've determined that I'm a Vols-watchin', sister-lovin', monster-truck-drivin' hillbilly.

Obviously, this totally goes against the whole black thing. I mean, I've never heard of a black hillbilly, have you? What does that matter, though. All stereotypes fit, right?

It's fun being a walking stereotype.

It's fun because there are occasions when I get to make people look like total and complete idiots. Think about it. If someone believes a stereotype placed on a particular group, he or she tends to see that and only that.

Unless you get to disprove it. You can either embarrass them, make them realize that what they're thinking is wrong (at least when it comes to you) or befriend them.

The latter is probably the most rewarding in the long run, but the first one can be pretty damn fun!

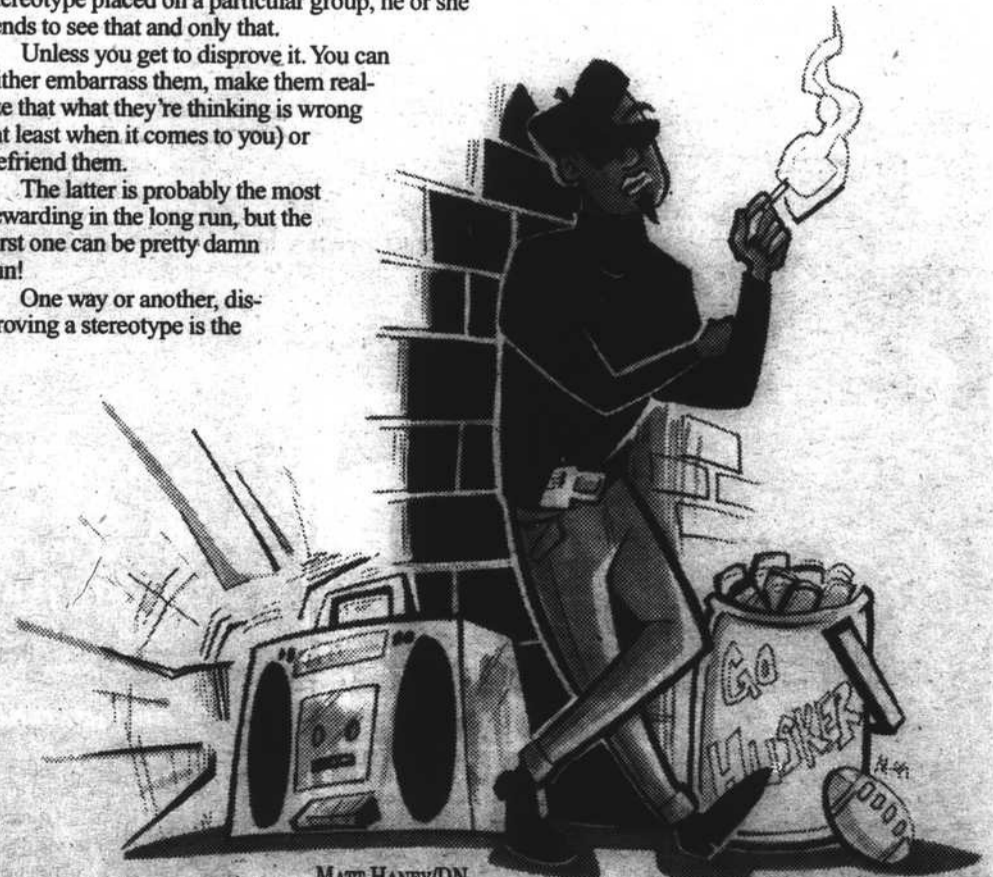
One way or another, disproving a stereotype is the

easiest way to spread the word on how wrong it is to have them. You can think of it as being your own personal social equalizer. And, as I said before, it's a great way to make friends.

By the way, I don't have a sister, and if I did, our relationship would not be like that! I've never been a Vols fan; I've always been a Husker fan.

Oh, and I won't be living in a studio in New York — it'll be in Atlanta.

See, social equalization — ain't it great?



MATT HANEY/DN

Andrew D. Wicks is a freshman theater major and a Daily Nebraskan guest columnist.