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My Opinion

Alcohol slogan not appropriate for Christian organization

Ben Franklin was staring at me.

There he was, on the postcard lying on the sidewalk, gazing at me happily. In the space next to him, one of his eternal quotes was printed: "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy."

I picked up the postcard and read what was written on the other side: "To Ben the issue was simple. Simple enough that a cold beer from the local pub was proof that God loved him."

Then came the conclusion, one that revealed that this card was not a beer-marketing campaign, but a Christian message: "Jesus said the ultimate proof that someone loves you is that they would give up their life for you. And then He did just that." A visit to the Web site listed on the card, www.beerisproof.org, indicates that this campaign is sponsored by "Cru," the cool way of saying Campus Crusade for Christ.

I can understand why Cru would try to use beer to reach out to the college student demographic, but I think using alcohol as proof of divine existence may be pushing the issue a little too far.

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To begin with, Franklin was a deist. He believed in a god who created the universe, but he did not believe in Christianity specifically. He even expressed doubts in Jesus' divinity. Go read his autobiography if you don't believe me.

So the idea of using a quote from a person who didn't believe in Jesus' divinity as proof that the beliefs of Christianity are true is misleading at best.

Second, and more broadly, do Christians really want people treating alcohol as some sort of gift from the heavens above?

The postcard lists other examples of evidence of the divine -- "laughter, music, sunsets at the beach and the miraculous combination of chocolate and peanut butter." Reese's Peanut Butter Cups probably do have a spiritual original.

But beer?

Penn State students go to the hospital every weekend because of alcohol poisoning. In fact, according to **www.live.psu.edu**, the number of alcohol-related emergency room visits by students increased dramatically last year, and Centre County set an all-time record for DUI arrests.

I'll give Cru the benefit of the doubt and not blame the increases on their campaign, and I'd bet that most Christians are less likely to abuse alcohol than the average college student.

But telling students beer is a gift from God isn't exactly going to encourage temperance.

Maybe establishing a beer-God connection is more effective at getting college students' attention than the Willard Preacher's more blunt style.

But no one walks away from his lecture on how beer is the "tenderizer" of girls for the fraternity "meat-market" thinking that getting drunk is anything but a sin.

Christianity has plenty of marketing material already:

eternal salvation, life purpose, brothers and sisters in Christ, etc. If Christians really are reduced to turning to alcohol to get their message out, they may need to check on their core beliefs first.

Few people deny that State College and Penn State have an alcohol problem.

Instead of trying to extort it as a marketing opportunity, Cru -- and all faith organizations -- should help work toward finding a solution.



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