

Charlie The Unicorn - And Other Thought Manipulations



“Charlie the Unicorn” is the title of a brief animated video on YouTube that has had over 46 million views. It was produced by a video animator who operates out of the filmcow.com website. There are several sequels to this video and a few comedic parodies featuring live actors. When you watch the video you may just think the characters are a bit goofy like in many cartoons. But they are goofy in a way that relates to the roles that they play in the video. There are two very excited unicorns that try to persuade (actually nagging and hounding) a third unicorn who just wants to rest and be left alone. This third unicorn (Charlie) is depicted as the “normal”, rational, reasonable one of the three. He is the skeptic, the “unbeliever”, who thinks that the ideas of the two zealous unicorns are foolish or untrue. But eventually he goes with them off to find their paradise (which they call “Candy Mountain”) just because they wore him down with all their nagging. When Charlie says to the other two unicorns “You do know there’s no actual Candy Mountain, right?”, they both repeat in harmony “Shun the unbeliever”. When they get to Candy Mountain, the two “believers” trick him into entering the mountain (which looks more like a Native American teepee), where the door locks behind Charlie and the lights go out followed by the sounds of a brief scuffle. The next scene shows Charlie back in the original location: lying down in the field where he first was approached by the two other unicorns, only this time he has a surgical wound on his side and declares that his kidney was stolen.

So can we say there are any religious undertones in the Charlie the Unicorn video? From a Christian perspective the animation appears to be making fun of two believers, who believe in a place called Candy Mountain and who repeat the one liner “shun the non believer” when others say something they don’t agree with. The believers (the two goofy nagging unicorns) represent Christians (or perhaps other religious persons who take their religious beliefs seriously) and Candy Mountain represents heaven, while Charlie the Unicorn is clearly the “free-thinking” atheist, the reasonable one of the three unicorns. The animation is most likely a social satire on Christianity. The storyline which shows Charlie being nagged, deceived and then victimized, could only mean that Christianity’s promise of heaven at the end of life’s road is a lie, and that Christians are intentionally deceitful and wish to lead you to something that will be very harmful to you.

Another aspect of the film that should concern Christians is its use of words and expressions that many in our society – including Christians – have become desensitized to already. The term “frickin” is used repeatedly, which is just a more “acceptable” version of the F word. And the expression “Oh my G-d” is used several times, which is just a more “acceptable” way of taking the Lord’s name in vain. The fact that the cartoon causes us to laugh at things that a holy

God considers sin, is proof of the fact that we are being desensitized and confirmation of God's word which says: "Fools make a mock at sin" [Proverbs 14:9].

Do most viewers of this film see the symbolism or even care about it? Probably not. To them, its just goofy and funny because they don't bother to analyze how their thoughts are being manipulated by others. The techniques used by the "Charlie The Unicorn" filmmaker represent how the mass media operates also. They present messages about social issues in a way that makes them appear funny or strange or ridiculous, when what they are actually doing is mocking and defaming people (or people groups) they don't like and making opposing views seem radical, unjust, foolish or evil.