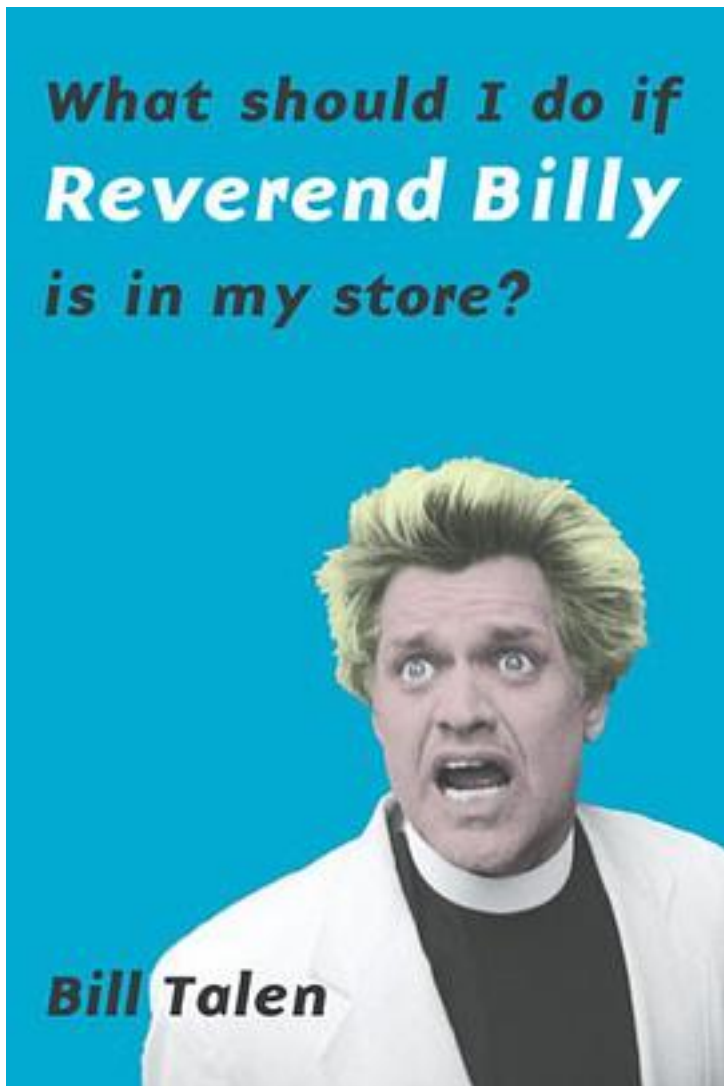


What Should I Do if Reverend Billy Is in My Store?



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The spiritual leader of the renowned Church of Stop Shopping takes his anticonsumerist sermon from the stage to the page.

The Reverend Billy is a revivalist preacher who leads the Church of Stop Shopping, an anticonsumerist communion devoted to putting the odd into God. Created by the actor Bill Talen, the Reverend first appeared alongside the sidewalk preachers in New York's Times Square during the Giuliani years, bringing his new post-religious theology to eager crowds. Now Reverend Billy has a cult following across the country and was recently featured in a profile in the New York Times Magazine. In these pages we go inside the Disney Store on 42nd Street ("the high church of retail") to witness staged dramas against consumerism that employ eight hundred Disney characters with their "reeling eyeballs and sky-cracking grins" as the mise-en-scène. We encounter the icon-twisting logic of credit card exorcism performed in front of astonished tourists and listen to a gospel choir made up of "recovered preachers' kids" singing anti-Starbucks anthems at the cash register of the \$5 latte. We watch as the defense of a community garden is turned into an Off-Broadway hit and join with the Reverend as he preaches love and peace to the crowds that gathered spontaneously in Union Square after the attacks of September 11.

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目录:

[What Should I Do if Reverend Billy Is in My Store? 下载链接1](#)

标签

评论

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