Religion fills spiritual and social needs in B-CS

two percent of American world is their temple." s went to church in a typical during the bicentennial in '76, ng to the latest obtainable poll of church attendance. nally in 1972 more than 62 t were church members but about 36 percent of the College Station population urch members.

-eight of the 94 Bryan-Station churches and reliroups were contacted in a reurvey of church membership. her with an estimated 100mber average for each small rch that could not be contacted, how a combined membership out 36,000 for the 100,000 a-College Station population ding Texas A&M University).

membership can be higher regular attendance the differetween local and national avweekly attendance may be than the 14 percent between ove figures.

he other pew is the possibility ed by the Rev. Bob E. Waters of A&M United Methodist h. He suggests that because of a's transient population many hurchgoers may not be mem-

also, out taking their sabmay be the local "un-

nanist Edward L. Ericson, in Rosten's "Religious America," es "The 'unchurched' are those s of Americans ... who dejoin a church out of convicnot those who are "merely innt or inactive.

the unchurched," Ericson nues, "religion is a personal onsectarian matter rather than estion of church affiliation or

However, no local organization or spokesman for the unchurched could be found.

For local churchgoers there are more than 25 denominations to choose from among the 94 religious groups. Most of them represent some form of mainstream Christianity, such as Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist faiths.

Other denominations include the Baha'i Faith, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehova's Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons).

Thirty to 40 clergymen meet once a month as the Bryan-College Station Pastor's Association. The association represents about a dozen mainstream denominations, and is open to any local qualified cleric.

"The association is dominantly Christian," says Waters, president of the association, "but we would not be unhappy with the presence of

But the local denominations are only parts of the whole that is religion. Religion can be broader in its

Be he member, attendant, unchurched or indifferent, religion in American society affects almost everyone at some time in his life, besides fulfilling certain social and psychological needs.

Religion, says Dr. Jon Alston, a Texas A&M sociology professor who has specialized in religion, offers a sense of community and answers the ultimate questions — questions in-cluding those about the meaning of life, evil and unfairness, immortality and "why I am here."

life," he says.

As society progresses and becomes more complicated, Alston

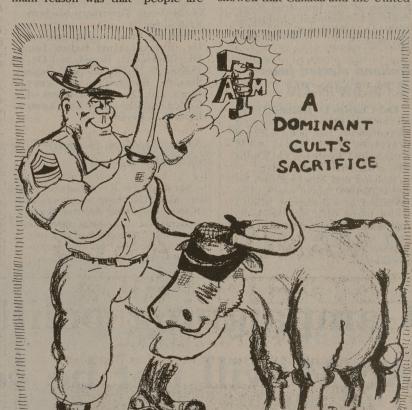
pantheism to the concept of a su-preme being. Eventually, the idea is that modern societies would not need religion.

In 1970, a Gallup poll showed 75 percent of American adults to think religion as a whole was losing its influence on American life. Their main reason was that "people are

was losing its influence whereas 69 percent said its influence was in-

However, by 1975 the censer appeared to be swinging back, as 31 percent said religion was increasing its influence.

Also, a Gallup poll in 1971 showed that Canada and the United



"It gives a general purpose in changing — religion isn't important

Fourteen percent said religion was increasing its influence.

Thirteen years before, in 1957, The might say that humanity is explains, an evolutionary process of the figures were almost opposite. religion and the great, wide religion brings a change from Fourteen percent then said religion

States topped a list comparing churchgoing in seven countries. The closest was Holland and Greece, Australia, England and Uruguay trailed the leaders.

Waters takes a more theological view of religion, stressing that his is

THE BATT

says, "Is to tell man of his insepara-ble, inalienable relationship to whatever name you call God. It is not merely to save the self, but to save the community.

"one man's perspective," and not

representative of his Methodist de-

'The function of religion," he

More specifically, Waters says "the church is a symbol of the commonalities we all have. It tells us that the final form of humanity is in

"We go there for nurture, for es-

And for Waters, religion does more than fulfill man's needs — it is a basic human need

"All humanity is in one room, in essence, and religion is the founda-tion on which it all stands."

Pastor Hugh Beck of the Ulutheran Chapel says religion is a way to perceive the whole of reality and how everything interweaves to

He also takes a theological stand when religion is specified as Chris-

"The interweaving," Beck says, Finds its center in Christ. A person in knowing Christ can understand it

"The mystery of Christ is God's way of allowing man to focus, to center on the whole of reality."

The whole of religion, however, goes beyond Christianity and all of its denominations and sects. Nor does the remainder just comprise the other world religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and

There are also the cults. But what is a cult?

A cult is a group of people with a strong, charismatic and authorita-rian leader. The leader is necessary for a cult to arise. His followers may be lonely or depressed when persuaded to join.

We should not let the Jonestown, Guyana massacre make us think all are "of borderline intelligence, misfits, castoffs or problem-stricken minorities," points out David Lee of the Houston Chronicle

And, according to Time, only one third are "psychologically distressays Alston. sed" when they join.

The cult does not need to live with the leader, but often it is isolated from regular society, thus religious cults. causing the members to be out of touch with reality and have a narrow

The cult offers a sense of fellowship and community. But it requires total commitment to a very strict discipline, although it provides psychological and intellectual secu"You are given all the answers,"

In America, Newsweek estimates that 3 million "espouse the teachings of 3,000 religious and non-

And furthermore, the theological definition of a cult varies: whether it is outside of mainstream Christianity or outside of the major world

And by either definition there could be some cults in Bryan-College Station.

ALTERATIONS

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LEVI'S BASIC **DENIMS &** CORDUROYS

Health center fee increase be considered by senate

By DILLARD STONE

eral bills are expected to be on at tonight's meeting of the d or tabled in committee.

addition to the regular reports officers, senators will also hear port by Jeb Hensarling, presiof the American Student Fedion, on that organization's

e bill to be considered calls for lementation of a compulsory implementation of a complement lical service fee to supplement surrent \$15 compulsory group ital fee used to finance the Be-Health Center that all students

ne Morrison, vice president ce, said the bill was to be dered in that form because center fees must be raised to ain the level of health services. A&M currently charges the mum \$15 for group health ince, but state law allows inions to charge additional med-

medical service fee, charged students, would be the most ble way of generating onal funds for the health cenorrison said.

other bill recommends that the rsity not increase the penalty campus parking tickets. In-the bill recommends a uated penalty, with the first two ets costing \$5, and third and sive violations costing \$10. ne senate will also consider bills make recommendations to the

Eddie Dominguez '66 Joe Arciniega '74

DENTS

state Legislature for the inclusion of graduate students in the teacher retirement system, for the establishment of a Texas Guaranteed Student A&M University student se-while several others have been of the Permanent University Fund. Loan Program, and against abolition

change the honors system to a percentage of each class in each college, and one that would have made programming fees in programmed dormitories optional.

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BOOKSTORE PROFITS WORKSHOP

Wednesday, March 21, 1979 3:30 & 5:15 p.m. **Room 212 Memorial Student Center**

All student organizations planning to request funding from Bookstore Profits for the 1979-80 academic year must plan to send a representative to one of these workshops. This representative should be the individual who will make the actual request. Please plan to attend this important workshop; several new procedures for this year's requests will be explained. The deadline for all requests is 4 p.m. March 30, 1979. No request will be accepted after this date.



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