

MARGULIES
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"...and we worried about people burning the flag..."

Religious prejudice needs to be avoided

Albert Babin
Guest Columnist

Howdy Ags! I'm here with a response to the July 26 column by Mr. Matt McBurnett. He is hopelessly wrong in his statements. He mentions the myth of the population explosion as proposed by Malthus and attempts to scare us into believing that our greatest enemies are the Catholics who are going to consume our food supply and leave us starving, destitute and hungry. I stopped and laughed at this point, because the very idea is ludicrous. Let me first fix his lies, and then I have something important to say.

I refer to the population explosion as a myth because that is exactly what it is. Time and again it has been proven that the birth rate levels off as a society becomes developed and industrialized. I would also like to suggest, Mr. McBurnett, that you not limit yourself to the selective examples you used to prove your point. If you look at all the underdeveloped countries in the world, you will find the same population density but a variety of religions. Catholics have no special claims on procreation.

As for food, the capability exists to more than feed the entire world. We produce enough grain for every person on this earth to have a loaf of bread every week of every year. No, Mr. McBurnett, world hunger is not a population problem, it is a political problem.

Let me now fix your twisted view of the Catholic stance on contraception. It has been the Church's position that Catholics should avoid artificial means of contraception. You state that the rhythm method was discouraged. This is not true. For those of you unfamiliar with the rhythm method, let me explain. The Catholic Church used to teach a method of natural contraception based on the idea that a woman is fertile only once a month; thus by counting the days from the end of her period, a couple could determine when it would be possible to safely engage in intercourse. There was a problem with this: it was less than 50 percent effective, and there are many "rhythm babies" as living proof.

Today, the Catholic church advocates not this old method, but a newer one called natural family planning. It is based on biological factors such as observation of the woman's mucus flow and body temperature variations. This means there is about one week out of the whole month that is not safe because an egg is present. The United Nations did a study and found that this method is about 98 percent effective.

Of course starvation is not a Christian policy, and that is the only point where I agree with Mr. McBurnett. The Catholic Church strongly advocates family planning to provide the best environment for both the child and the couple. The suggested method is natural family planning. The final decision, though, does lie with the actual married couple. If, for example, the woman's cycle is irregular, or there are health or even fi-

nancial reasons why a woman should not become pregnant, then artificial contraception may be in order.

Methods that are abortive, such as IUDs and contraception as an excuse for casual sexual relations outside of marriage covenant, are unacceptable. However, there are mechanical means such as condoms, which the couple may choose in some circumstances. The point is that our sexuality is a gift from God, and we are responsible for making informed decisions regarding it.

Now this is fine and well, but Mr. McBurnett's column points to a problem greater than contraception: religious prejudice.

When I was a freshman here, I rudely and abruptly awakened to the fact that there is a good bit of prejudice toward Catholics. I have heard many different things concerning what we believe or don't believe, and it never ceases to amaze me how many people are in the business to publish lies about the Catholic faith. Someone once told me that because I am a Catholic, I have a hope of getting into heaven. I even saw a pamphlet where the author, a fallen television evangelist, "praised" how evil we Catholics are by proposing lies about our faith and then discussing the errors. Of course it was in error, was a lie to begin with!

"The Big Lie." Say it loud enough and long enough and people will begin to believe. Throw enough mud at a wall and some of it will stick. Hitler used to say the Jews. The Chinese are currently trying to use it. "No, there was no sacrifice." This propagation of lies about Catholics, or any religion, is the same thing.

So what does all my rambling mean anyway? Just this: please, please, please get your facts straight. Don't believe what you read or hear about us Catholics. If you want to know about our faith, just ask us! Don't depend on charlatans who introduce and perpetuate lies. Suppose you find a Catholic who doesn't know or can't give you a satisfactory answer, then find one who has had better religious schooling. The best solution is to talk to a Catholic priest.

Not everyone agrees with the Catholic viewpoint. This is just fine; you don't have to. Religion is a choice you make and no one has the right to force their beliefs on anyone. But rejecting us before you actually know what we profess and why is a condemnation of yourself by your own ignorance.

Albert Babin is a senior computer science major. As with all columns opinions expressed by Guest Columnists are not necessarily those of The Battalion. Persons interested in submitting guest columns should contact the Opinion Page Editor at 845-3314.

Mail Call

Catholics deserve more respect

EDITOR:

Wow! Columnist Matt McBurnett has finally done it, for I can no longer contain my opinions regarding his article titled "Catholic stance on birth control needs reversing."

I am not Catholic myself, but I think that the Church and its followers deserve more respect than Matt gave them in his ethnocentric blabber.

First, Catholics behave nobly when they choose not to use birth control out of their belief in the sacredness of life. Second, the majority of the blame for starvation in third-world countries lies with regimes that would rather wallow in their own corruption and use hunger as a means of power than feed the people. You know as well as I that the earth is capable of producing more than enough food for everyone, if only governments would distribute the food properly. The stories of stockpiles of waiting food in warehouses in third-world countries are true, so why do you point the finger at

Catholicism, Matt? Has Catholicism ruined the standards of living in Spain, Italy and France, countries with predominantly Catholic populations, as you say it inevitably must?

I propose that we act together as fellow human beings, (stop calling the beliefs of others "mistakes" and "screw-ups," Matt) and try to work on feasible solutions to make governments more responsible, while letting everyone believe in his own ideals. After everyone gets his chance to survive, then let's just all be friends, and "do lunch" as often as we can.

Also, Matt, although I am an electrical engineering major myself, I do not enjoy acting like a know-it-all. Well, then again

Steve Lau '91

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

Society is changing for the better

Twenty-five years ago a movement of people attracted the attention of the world. The Civil Rights movement birthed a new nation of people, a new culture that we know as the Afro-American race.

Many changes have come about for the good of all in these times of racial harmony. During the 80s, many still say, "We as a people still aren't free from racial injustice and economic poverty." Discussing some of the problems will bring about an awareness, but it definitely will not solve them now or in the future.

In a nation of many ethnic backgrounds, have we truly achieved the status that we deserve, or are we stereotyped as a people of corruption and ignorance in the eyes of others?

Today many opportunities have given us all chances to strive in a competitive world that has no bounds against people of a different color or religion. The progress of minorities in the business world has been overwhelming in the past decade as Blacks and Hispanics have achieved high-ranking political status.

"Things have changed a lot since the 60s, because society is more open to new views and ideas," said Rodney Moseley, a black freshman business major from Austin.

Racial discrimination has become an underlying problem in America. Instead of being openly protested it is masked from public view. This could have an effect on people who are socially dependent on those who are prejudiced.

The problem of stereotyping people of different backgrounds has played a part in some of the troubles that plague

Curtis Franks
Clerk

our society at large. We all, in some way or another, deal with stereotyping of some sort in our daily lives.

"When people find out that I'm attending Texas A&M, they're surprised as if it's not possible," said Gerald Bailey Jr., a black junior chemistry major.

Achieving goals in America today has a new definition that does not put a stipulation who can or will succeed in life. These changes have come on gradually, but they have arrived almost unnoticed. New heights have been reached by women as well, to indicate the changing roles of women as a productive and important part in our society that is continuously changing.

"Women as a group have come a long way from not being considered a part of the working community," Tina Robison, a sophomore accounting major, said.

Women are subjected to many obstacles while trying to gain a positive status in the business world, problems such as being a single parent or even trying to cope with the roles women are perceived to play. These distractions cause some to be discouraged from the true goals they have set for themselves.

Reverting back to the past and some of its instances, I can see the changes that have taken place. Positive changes that enable all races and religions to attain those inspirations that were only dreamed of two decades ago. Discrimination of sex, color or religion during these times could serve as a purpose to achieve our goals in a more assertive

way. The prejudice we experience today can hinder us in some ways, but it also can help us better ourselves. We as a nation have become less vulnerable to prejudices that cause the country to go into a tailspin of turmoil.

"It's great to see that everyone has the chance to succeed, because it produces competition which is a solid foundation for productivity in America," sophomore John Beck said.

The growth of America in its mental aspects has been overwhelming in the 80s. Some racial conflicts have come and gone, but as a whole society, Black Americans and other minorities have taken a giant leap towards a better America, which will effect all of us in a powerful way. Even though the gains have been small, we look to the future for more positive advances to occur in a society that is changing for the better.

Twenty-five years ago began an era of unity, a unity that gives new meaning to Americans, not as separate cultures, but as an undivided nation.

Curtis Franks is a freshman general studies major and a clerk for The Battalion.



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"You can apply if you like... but I doubt you'll be placed on the Endangered Species List."

The Battalion

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