

The Battalion Editorial Board

JULI PHILLIPS, Editor in chief

MICHAEL PLUMER, Managing editor
BELINDA BLANCARTE, Night news editor
HEATHER WINCH, Night News editor
TONI GARRARD CLAY, Opinion editor

KYLE BURNETT, Aggiefife editor
DENA DIZDAR, Aggiefife editor
SEAN FRERKING, Sports editor
WILLIAM HARRISON, Photo editor
JENNIFER SMITH, City editor

Religion born to soothe stargazers Belief systems all similar, relative to cultural surroundings

FRANK STANFORD

Columnist



Since before recorded history, humans have gazed at the stars wondering what was out there and why. Because there was no way of knowing what the stars were or the sun was, or why the rain fell — or even a host of other natural phenomena — early man invented answers. Through the transference of information from generation to generation, societies came to fully believe these explanations. Religion was born.

Every culture of humans in the world, from primitive island societies to present continent-wide civilizations, have had gods to explain the unexplained and provide direction in human life. This god or gods was not only responsible for the safety of their followers, but expected strict homage as well (or else).

Because we all live in something of a religious subculture, it is important to be familiar with some of the reasons behind a "deviant," non-religious perception of religion. Hopefully we might better be able to understand why someone may choose an unpopular religion or none at all. I realize that as with most religions, there are as many subtle and not-so-subtle differences in particular beliefs as there are believers, but I am reluctantly forced to be grossly general in my descriptions.

Religions are all similar in that they contain moral codes, provide emotional fulfillment and are socially cohesive, not to mention explaining stuff like why we're here on Earth and where the sun came from. But a person doesn't need a particular faith to have these things.

Contrary to popular thought, religious morality is unnecessary for a society to function. Although such morality can have effective results, societies antedating or ignorant of Jesus, Mohammed, or Buddha had — and still have — moral codes of behavior that work also. It stands

to reason that if a particular religious morality was the only true morality, other cultures would be non-functioning from a moral and legal standpoint. This is simply not the case. These codes are basic and fundamental for all social functioning and are called "The Social Contract."

Believers have told me they can feel their god with them and that he provides much comfort. But those of other religions will say the same thing of their gods, which are clearly different. How can this be? It appears the human psyche yearns for the feeling of being protected and loved, and this is quite understandable.

Especially in times of great emotional pain, but even during stability, a belief in a loving protector is very soothing and fulfilling and therefore makes religion quite helpful and powerful. But any religious belief will do, not just a particular one. It is important to realize that the power of a belief lies in the believing and has nothing to do with whether or not truth is involved or even if there is a choice.

Religion is culturally relative. This statement is ridiculously obvious. If you are born in a predominantly Christian (or whatever) nation, in a Christian society to Christian parents, and are surrounded by Christian peers, you are highly likely to become Christian and therefore perpetuate

the religion. Everyone truly thinks they have their own reasons, but this formula still works quite well in other states or countries and religions around the globe. There are more Protestants in Alabama than there are in Nicaragua or Turkey, and this overwhelmingly seems due to social influence. Few believers will admit to this influence however, insisting on objective personal decision as the primary motivator.

Finally, explaining the creation of the universe is a really tough one. Even the Big Bang Theory had to start somewhere with something (I guess). Because we just can't really know the origin of the universe or its purpose (if there is one), religions help us out with some of the most ridiculous answers I could ever imagine.

Just think, making a woman out of a bone and a man out of dirt (the Mayan Indians thought of this also) and damning the entire future human race because someone ate evil fruit seems mythological to say the least. Not to mention showing millions of animals and a billion or so insects on a boat during a major rainstorm and starting anew (Mayans again). A virgin giving birth and someone walking on water seem equally "fairy-tailish." All of this would sound preposterous if you didn't already believe such occurrences and ideas, wouldn't it?

The above concept of religion has a scientific, psychological, sociological and philosophical basis. I, and many others here at A&M, have a problem chucking all of that thought right out the window.

But although religious belief is usually easy to explain, it's still impossible to prove — or disprove.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student



I'M SORRY, MS. FENWICK. IF THERE WERE MORE PROFIT IN TREATING YOUR HUSBAND'S RARE DISEASE, BELIEVE ME, WE'D DO IT.

EDITORIAL

Corps under fire Violations mar elections

As elections for student government and yell leader positions began Wednesday, the University saw what is fast becoming an annual Aggie tradition — campaign violations by members of the Corps of Cadets. Certain cadets' use of ballot-tampering and blatant lies to promote their political agenda not only breaks the rules but also subverts honor, fairness and democracy itself.

The Corps must learn that it cannot operate outside the constraints placed on every other student organization. To mandate that lesson, the University administration should create a method to hold the Corps accountable for its actions. At present the election commission cannot do anything to punish non-candidate perpetrators of any violations.

The attempt to rig the election by fraudulently removing the name of a non-reg candidate from ballots points out some cadets' refusal to respect the non-reg members of the student body. This sort of behavior is not a fact of political competition — it's an act of prejudice and discrimination.

Corps Commander Will Haraway circulated to all Corps members a list of candidates' names with instructions that it be taken to

the polling places. This led to election commission fines against all the listed candidates because the names of two cadets who openly support non-reg candidates were omitted. The name of another cadet candidate — who also supports candidates from outside the Corps — was placed in a list of non-regs just above the name "Benedict Arnold."

Through a breakthrough in creative logic, Haraway claims that the Corps' actions were designed to promote civic interest. When questioned about the candidate list, the former public relations sergeant said, "I can say whatever the hell I want because I know I'm within the bounds of the law."

The Corps suffers terrible publicity every time abuses are exposed, and often reacts by accusing the media of sensationalism. But the facts in this case need no exaggeration. If the Corps wants to stop receiving bad press, then it needs to stop ignoring its own ideals.

Undoubtedly, the great majority of the cadets in the Corps had nothing to do with the attempt to rig Wednesday's vote. But the cadets, particularly the leaders, who continue to corrupt student elections will continue to sully the entire organization.



Yes, Virginia, there is a medical school at Texas A&M

As a public service to my fellow Aggies, let me clarify some things. I am not a vet student. I am not a pre-med student. And by no means am I a nursing student. I am a medical student. Here, at Texas A&M.

And for the 37,872 of you who are about to ask: Yes, there is a medical school here at A&M. We're not big. We're not all A&M grads. (I am, but some of my 47 classmates weren't that lucky.) But we definitely exist. It's the big black building next to the Medical Sciences Library on West Campus. As a matter of fact, the medical school has existed since 1976. Almost 20 years later, it continues its near anonymity among the majority of people here.

Actually, we're a well-kept secret only here. As an undergrad, I didn't know anything about the A&M medical school. When I applied and got an interview, I thought it would be just practice for my "real" interviews at other schools. However, I was pleasantly surprised.

It seems that word about A&M had gotten out elsewhere. Between

PAM OVERMYER
Guest columnist

1,200 and 1,400 applicants vie for about 350 interviews. Of these, only 48 become members of the incoming class. (For the math-impaired, that's less than 4 percent of those who apply.) The t.u. system usually has 2,500 applicants for the 800 spots at their four schools. (I'll let the math wizards figure that one.)

Part of the interest in the A&M medical school is that it consistently ranks in the top few schools in Texas on licensing exams. Most years, it has been at the top. The small class sizes allow extensive personal attention from professors. Not only do we really know our classmates, but our profs know us as well — our

names as well as the days we skip class. It's also very easy to ask questions and snag profs in lab to clarify stuff.

We also do not have the cut-throat atmosphere that affects other places. Grades and rank are not publicized. (I'm in the top 50.) We take out our competitiveness on the intramural fields. If you've ever played a team called "Encephalitis" or "The Amygdalas," it was us.

But med school is not all fun and games. We really do cut up dead bodies. And school really is hard. And stressful. And time-consuming. We also study a lot — even on the weekends, which is something partying neighbors don't seem to understand. I never studied this much as an undergrad. We can't get by with cramming the night before a test because there's just too much material. And some of it is actually important.

But even in our relative obscurity to the general population of A&M, there are two groups that are quite familiar with the medical school. One group is the delivery people of every restaurant in this town. We eat many meals up at

the Learning Resource Unit in the same building as the Med Library. The LRU is our own personal library, computer center and nap area. Just ask any Burger Boy deliveryman about the LRU, and he could get there blindfolded.

The other group is the gaggle of service and social organization members who have mandatory "study" hours at the Med Library. We get free entertainment watching the matching T-shirts and bowheads as they engage in studying (each other). It's more interesting than happy hour at the Dixie Chicken. And now that mating season is here, "last call" at the Med Library should

Yes, there is a medical school here at A&M. It consistently ranks in the top few schools in Texas on licensing exams. Most years, it has been at the top.

look like a feeding frenzy. All in the name of education.

But besides the obvious social benefits of having a medical school next to the main campus, this is an excellent academic opportunity for students. The Med Library is a valuable source of journals and on-line searching. There are also many positions for undergrads to do research at the medical school. Some pay money and some simply pad your resume.

The school also offers summer programs in the medical sciences. For those who wish to apply here for medical or graduate school, stop by. You can visit, tour and get lots of fascinating information about the school. We'll even sell you a T-shirt. Get the word out. We really are here.

The more people that know, the less I'll be asked: "Large animal or small?" Until then, I'll just keep answering: "Two-legged."

Pam Overmyer is a second year medical student

COLLEGE STATION, TX
March 31
1994
MAIL CALL

Hooray for PTTs

In my four years and three parking tickets at A&M, I have never heard, read or said anything positive about the PTTs. That changed recently after A&M hosted the tenth annual Texas Triathlon. In order to secure permits for the event, I had to wade through red tape and bureaucracy of numerous state, local and campus agencies. One agency went above and beyond their duties to help us. Believe it or not, it was the PTTs.

They helped close off Olsen Road, as well as supplied us with barricades and officers to monitor them. All of this was done to add to the safety of the 225 triathletes who participated in the event. If your organiza-

tion is holding an event on campus, don't be afraid to contact Sherry Wine and her staff at the PTTs. They'll be happy to help, more so if you give them plenty of notice.

Matt Raines
Class of '94

Accompanied by 7 signatures

Best man for Council

I couldn't be happier to hear that Mr. Jimmy Stathatos is running for College Station City Council. I find it hard to believe that with students making up almost one

half of the population of College Station, we do not have a voting seat on the council. We are an important part of this city, and we should have some real representation in the city government.

Almost everyone is dismissing Mr. Stathatos as a serious candidate. This just makes more evident the attitude of "real" residents in this town toward us. We all should take Mr. Stathatos seriously. Who better to represent us than one of our own?

Karen Seman
Graduate student

Driving the drunk

When you encounter a fellow student who is drunk, you would think taking them home is the best answer, but as I learned this weekend, this is not means for removal from the University. Excuse me? you may ask. I believe the exact words from the campus police officer were, "Would you like to remain a student at this university, Andrea?"

The reason for this: my boyfriend and I had given a friend a ride to his dorm because he had obviously had a rough night out on the town. I am a reasonable person and in no way object to correctional action when a situation gets out of hand, but my only crime was seeing that a friend made it home safely. If the campus police made improved relations with students, then the officers with attitudes like I encountered should learn that their badge is just a badge. We are all adults here, and unless the situation warrants this type of harassment, the students would appreciate being treated as such.

Andrea Bingham
Class of '94

Corps members need to get off power trip

It is not an unknown fact that the Corps will typically encourage its members to vote strictly for Corps members; however, they

have now gone to lengths that cross any lines of ethical standards.

The motto, "Aggies don't lie, cheat or steal" is supposedly the ideal of all students, yet by illegally campaigning as an organization they are proving that this university has not even been able to instill that truth within the longest standing student group.

Why must the Corps of Cadets feel they need to scratch the names of non-regs off the election ballots? It is the fear that they are not the most influential group at Texas A&M. Why must they pass out a flyer in the Quad that has a list of what names to vote for (Corps members) and names not to vote for (non-regs)? It is the realization that maybe the whole student body here at Texas A&M does not think of them with some great reverence.

I feel it's time for the members of the Corps to get off their ego trips and come to grips with the fact that they are just another part of this university that can be outnumbered in any fair and clean election!

Todd Rice
Class of '96 President