

Only faith in God can help Americans

Bush was right to offer faith as a source of support for all those grieving.

The events of the tragic week of Sept. 11th sparked unique reactions from so many people. Growing up in America can create a false sense of security and an idealistic portrayal of our world; therefore, when faced with a bleak reminder of a fallen world, we as Americans have no idea

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how to act. I was completely shocked by the events of Sept. 11, and have been wandering around in a numb state ever since the attack.

More than a week after the attack, I am just beginning to regain my sense of order; however I was completely floored once again, when I read Dave Walker's column ("We need a president, not a preacher," Sept. 13).

Walker suggested, "we need a president, not a preacher." He described disappointment in viewing the president on the night of Sept. 11, who referred to Psalms 23 in his address to the nation.

Apparently Walker wanted to find more security in America the nation than in the words of the Bible. He commented on Bush's seemingly stoic manner and lack of emotion. After reading his column, I was washed by a wave of sadness, anger and complete disbelief.

Walker wrote, "I wanted to know what my government was going to do. I wanted faith in American steel, in American resolve and American strength."

Walker further said that he could not believe that Bush suggested that America should put her faith in God during this time because Christianity was not under attack, but rather our country.

I am completely astounded by these words and cannot imagine what in the world has so deluded Walker's sense of reality. He wants to put our trust in America, in American "steel."

Hasn't it been proven last week that we cannot put our faith and trust in things or ideas? What man has constructed will fall. The Twin Towers were not indestructible, and neither are the other creations of man. Men themselves will continually fail us, just as the terrorists did on Sept. 11 when they killed our people. We cannot place our trust in something that will fail and something that can never prove complete security. That is why President Bush pointed us to God, and rightly so. Only God does not change.

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Only God does not fail. Only God is completely trustworthy. Only God has the power to withstand any other force. I thought perhaps it was the most important thing that Bush said that night, that we should put our faith in God.

Secondly, Walker criticized Bush for his emotionless speech. I hate to be the one to point out this to you Mr. Walker, but that particular day was enormously shocking, especially for the Commander in Chief of our nation. The entire world watched as our false sense of self and security crumbled before our eyes.

How could anyone be prepared for such an event? I walked around for days like a zombie, unable to comprehend what was happening to my beloved country. President Bush too is a normal human. He was shocked, just like the rest of the whole world. And not only that, but he probably felt an intense sense of responsibility for the nation. So much pressure on one man and on such a tragic day is astronomical, and he is undeserving of your insensitive comments.

I wonder how you would have acted as president on the night of such a tragic day. I recall a speech made late on Sept. 13 in which President Bush's eyes welled up with tears and he became extremely choked up as he proclaimed his sorrow for the families who have experience a death in their family due to the attack. I call that emotion.

In contrast to Walker's desires, I believe that this country should put full confidence and trust in God during this time, and not in our weapons, foreign policy or American economy. God alone determines our futures, and he will bring us through this dark time. We only have to humble ourselves and pray to him and trust in him.

Second Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Only God can put us back together again. Only God can heal our land.

Thank you President Bush, for pointing us to such a powerful and loving God.

Rain represents our emotions

Weather can be symbolic of the tumultuous nature of all our lives.

I wish it was raining. The nice thing about being from Oklahoma is that sooner or later, when you're sitting in your life lost in thought, a thunderstorm will come along and for a moment you'll get that feeling of being small enough that the stuff you consider the axis of

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life, the very rising and setting of the sun by which you measure your own personal development, is very small compared to what rages just above you. You stare up into the lightning and the rain, and it may reflect your anger or help you put things into cosmic perspective.

What I like best is when rain is soft and warm, and even if you have a long way to walk in it you don't mind as much because it feels kind of nice and even cathartic, like today when a radio ad made me roll on the floor of the Deacon Shop for 10 minutes in uncontrolled laughter. Rain that makes you feel like that makes the whole world feel kind of new and unused - it renews the air and makes breathing less of a chore and more of a joy.

But most of the time, rain is not like

Rainy days are usually marked by cold and wind, discomfort and discontent. On those days, the rain is the rhythm of the blues. I think maybe we hate days like that because somewhere inside us it's already that way. Uncomfortable. Dissatisfied. Unfulfilled.

that. That's why those kinds of days are so special, because you can probably count on two hands the number of days it's been a sweet, rhythmic rain that you just wanted to run and play in.

Rainy days are usually marked by cold and wind, discomfort and discontent. On those days, the rain is the rhythm of the blues. I think maybe we hate days like that because somewhere inside us it's already that way. Uncomfortable. Dissatisfied. Unfulfilled. Plans and dreams thwarted and somehow ultimately unattainable.

It's like nighttime. No matter how much of a night owl, no matter how much of a homework hound, no matter how much of a party animal you may be, there comes a time in the night when you'd just as soon be in bed. Because when you're alone in the middle of darkness, it seems to close in around you, and to sleep is to rush the morning, when light will open up the whole world for the curiosity and eagerness of your vision and your exploration.

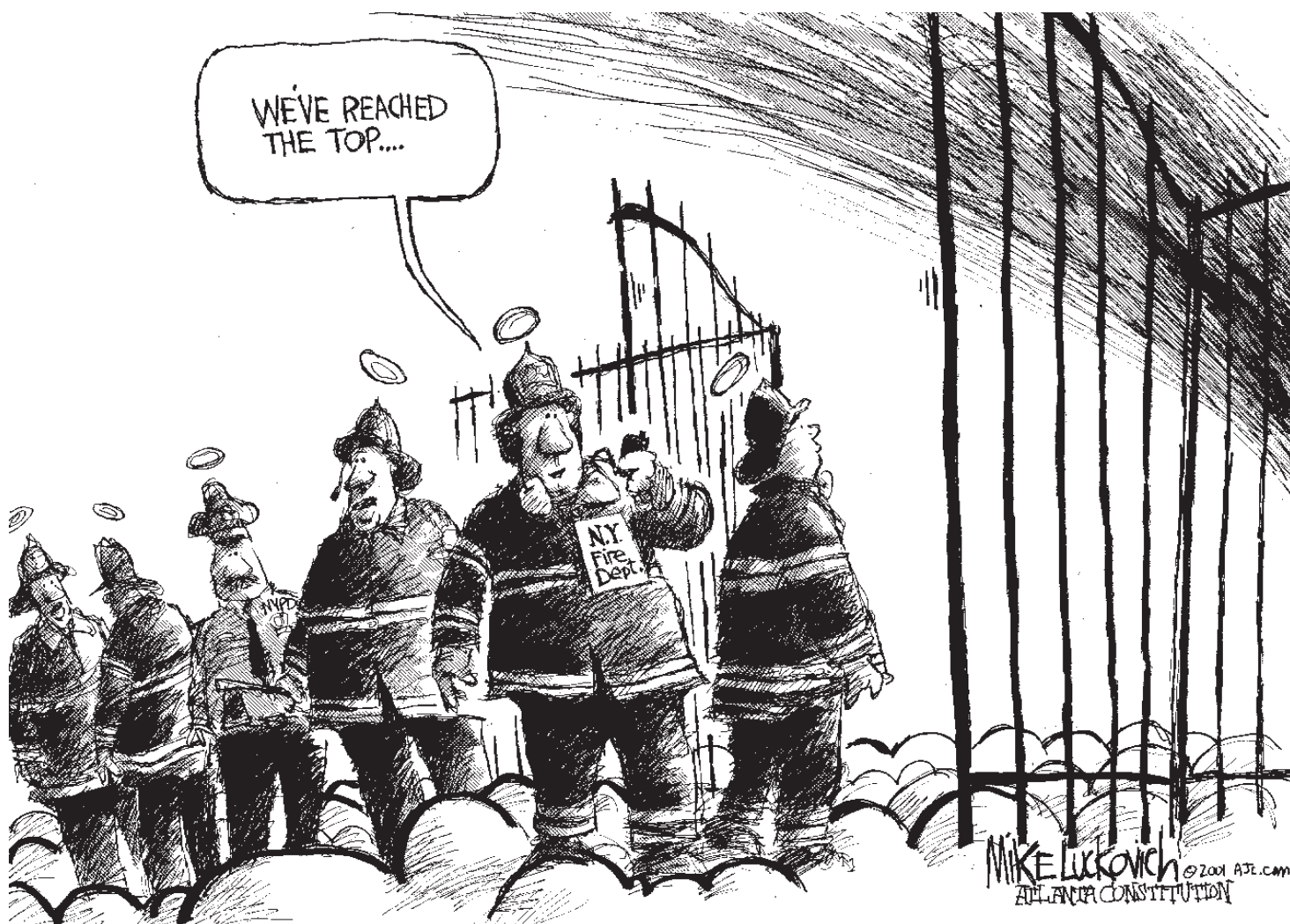
The night reminds us of the places within ourselves that we'd rather not

go, the places within us that are messy and uncontrollable and at some level unknown.

So right now I'd like to stare into the lightning. I'd like to feel small, because when the cold wind and sleet slash up against you, you tend to feel like you're the only one it's lashing out against. My pride wants me to believe that I'm the only one who hurts. I'd like to see a sunrise, because the horizon at morning is far bigger, far more significant than the darkness which closes around me to create a world just a little bigger than me and anything or anyone else I choose to let in.

For one damn minute, I'd like it to not be about me. I'd love to let the ways that I hurt and the ways that I've been hurting people get lost in something bigger and sail off into the blue, or tremble in fear at something so powerful it could rock them to their foundations with a single bolt of lightning, a single blast of wind, a single clap of thunder.

The bad thing is, I can't push the darkness away. No matter how many lights I light, the darkness will be always just past them. No matter how I bundle up, the wind and the rain will keep driving, and I will get soaked and dirty. All I can do is watch the clouds and let myself feel small and insignificant. All I can do is wait through the night, rest and find joy in the anticipation of the coming dawn. I can find comfort in the fact that with or without me, the world keeps turning, the sun keeps coming up. And maybe in the driving storm, tears will turn to rain, and in the dark, light will break and show me peace.



America's legacy of terrorism continues to this day

In a war against Afghanistan, the United States would be fighting against freedom, not for it.

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center last week was an event of historic proportions. The staggering loss of human life combined with the economic ramifications of the attack has caused an outpouring of generosity and support. The American people should be praised for that much. Unfortunately, our nation has not yet learned from the sins of its past - as

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I write this, the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier battle group is sailing from Norfolk, Va. to coastal waters near the Persian Gulf to position itself for war.

A Newsweek poll published Saturday indicated that 71 percent of Americans want the U.S. military to strike against terrorist bases and the countries that support them even if there is a high likelihood that civilians would be killed. It seems likely that in the coming weeks that many will die at the hand of American "wrath," as our esteemed president put it.

One of the effects of the attack has been an outpouring of patriotism in this country. I've seen more waving flags on TV and on bridges in the past week than I've seen in a year. People have called on America to declare a war on terrorists and countries that harbor them. If that is the case, we're going to have to start in our own backyard. The United States Army runs the School of the

Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia. It is there that some of the most ruthless and lamented human rights violators of the Western hemisphere were trained in counter-insurgency, torture and assassination.

Among the more famous of its 57,000 graduates are long-time CIA operative General Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Reodriguez of Ecuador and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia. Lower-level graduates participated in human rights abuses that include the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador and the massacre of over 900 civilians at El Mozote. The list of victims includes Jesuit priests, nuns and children.

It's probably a surprise to most that our country sponsors terrorists, but the ones that come out of Fort Benning aren't alone. The name Osama bin Laden has been circulating in the press for some time now. Bin Laden was once a militant who fought against the Soviets when they tried to invade Afghanistan.

The conflict soon turned into a proxy war between the United States and the USSR, so it was no great surprise when the U.S. government armed bin Laden with weapons and sent CIA consultants to Afghanistan to teach him the fine art of guerilla warfare. Bin Laden held a grudge after the Gulf War, however, and the rest, as they say, is history. I could go on - the United States has also bankrolled the Hamas organization in the past - but the facts speak for themselves.

None of these things are secret, yet America's indiscretions have been easily forgotten by the Nintendo generation. Soon we will be running the country, and we will have to look at the world with better eyes and clearer memory than CNN. The United States fought an entire ground war in Russia for two years between 1918 and 1920,

More often than not patriotism has been the precursor to suffering; it is without doubt the worst reason humans have ever conceived of to justify war. Making matters worse is our alleged president, who lately has filled his time by making ridiculous statements like, "This attack is an attack on freedom," and "All of those who love freedom will join us."

yet most college history textbooks fail to even mention it. Woodrow Wilson started sending secret monetary aide to the "white" side of the Russian Revolution in 1917, and by 1918 had authorized a naval blockade of the Soviet Union. Expeditionary forces were sent to Murmansk, Archangel and Vladivostok; with the blessing of Britain and France, and in joint command with Japanese forces, the American soldiers penetrated westward to Lake Baikal and maintained lines as far west as Volga before pulling out on April 1, 1920.

My intention is not to lecture my readers on history, but merely to demonstrate how time and an uncritical view of international affairs has led to the erasure of an entire war from our history books. I fear the same process is at hand now. Americans forget just how dirty they really are.

A favorite writer of mine wrote, "Patriotism is a virtue of the wicked." To be sure, patriotism is a pernicious virtue. More often than not patriotism has been the precursor to suffering; it is without doubt the worst reason humans have ever conceived of to justify war. Making matters worse is our alleged president, who lately has filled his time by making ridiculous statements like, "This attack is an attack on freedom," and "All of those who love freedom will join us." America

no longer has the luxury of such self-indulgent rhetoric.

I doubt anyone truly believes we are going to war to preserve freedom; those that do are only fooling themselves. The terrorists who committed last week's attacks did so to accomplish a political purpose, a purpose that lies in the heart of our nation's foreign policy. Characterizing our attackers as simple-minded zealots bent on destroying human free will or democracy is contrived and self-defeating.

Military retaliation will further polarize the conflict; the sustained campaign that members of the Bush administration have been talking about will only widen the divide between Islam and the West.

Pakistan has a strong Muslim majority that will not support a war against Afghanistan - our retaliation could destabilize an important nuclear power, and for what? To even the scoreboard? The cost of winning "America's New War" will be more than we can bear; there will be no winners. I think in the final analysis that American soldiers in Kabul will share the same fate as their counterparts in Vladivostok 80 years ago by becoming faceless casualties of an intentionally forgotten war.

I remain optimistic that perhaps after enough people have died that the United States will learn the lesson it taught the British Empire over 200 years ago: guns cannot kill ideology, and a free man fighting for his home can only be killed, never defeated. It remains to us to decide what we will teach the innumerable generations that will succeed us. We should swallow our patriotism and critically think about how the United States has created the situation in which it now stands. We should learn from the past and temper our wrath with perspective. Only then will we find justice for the deaths of almost 6,000 of our friends and family.