

commentary

from other pens...

Somehow all of this is part of God's plan

In the history of man, more blood has been shed in the name of God than for any other reason, save maybe simple greed and the lust for power.

Is that part of God's plan, or are we humans just a little dense? You have to believe that it is us men who are faulty, not the Creator. If you choose to believe, then you must believe that God knows what he is doing, that God is capable of creating a perfect plan for the world. It's us. We're the ones who can't understand.

In this time of trouble, it might be easy to believe that God has lost sight of us.

How could he abandon the world to terror and death? He has not. Men still do not understand his message. But if you believe in God — call him Yahweh, Jehovah, Allah, Jesus, whatever you like — it's hard to believe that he intends for us to kill one another. We just don't get it.

But while things may seem dark today, the light of history shows us that they are not.

The history of man is a steady progression from cave to temple, from flame to computer, from hoe to airplane, from disease to cure, from monarchy to democracy, and yes, from war to peace.

It has always been that way. A steady improvement in the human condition, interrupted, to be sure, by backsliding, defeat and destruction, on occasion, but always upward and onward.

Humans have built on the body of knowledge since prerecorded times. Discoveries, hopes and traditions have been passed down from generation to generation, from father to son, mother to daughter, over the eons.

And despite the setbacks — the wars, disease, pestilence, the Dark Ages, the occasional triumphs of evil — civilization has improved with each century. We know more, live longer, think better than any past generation.

And, if you believe, you have to believe we will continue to do so.

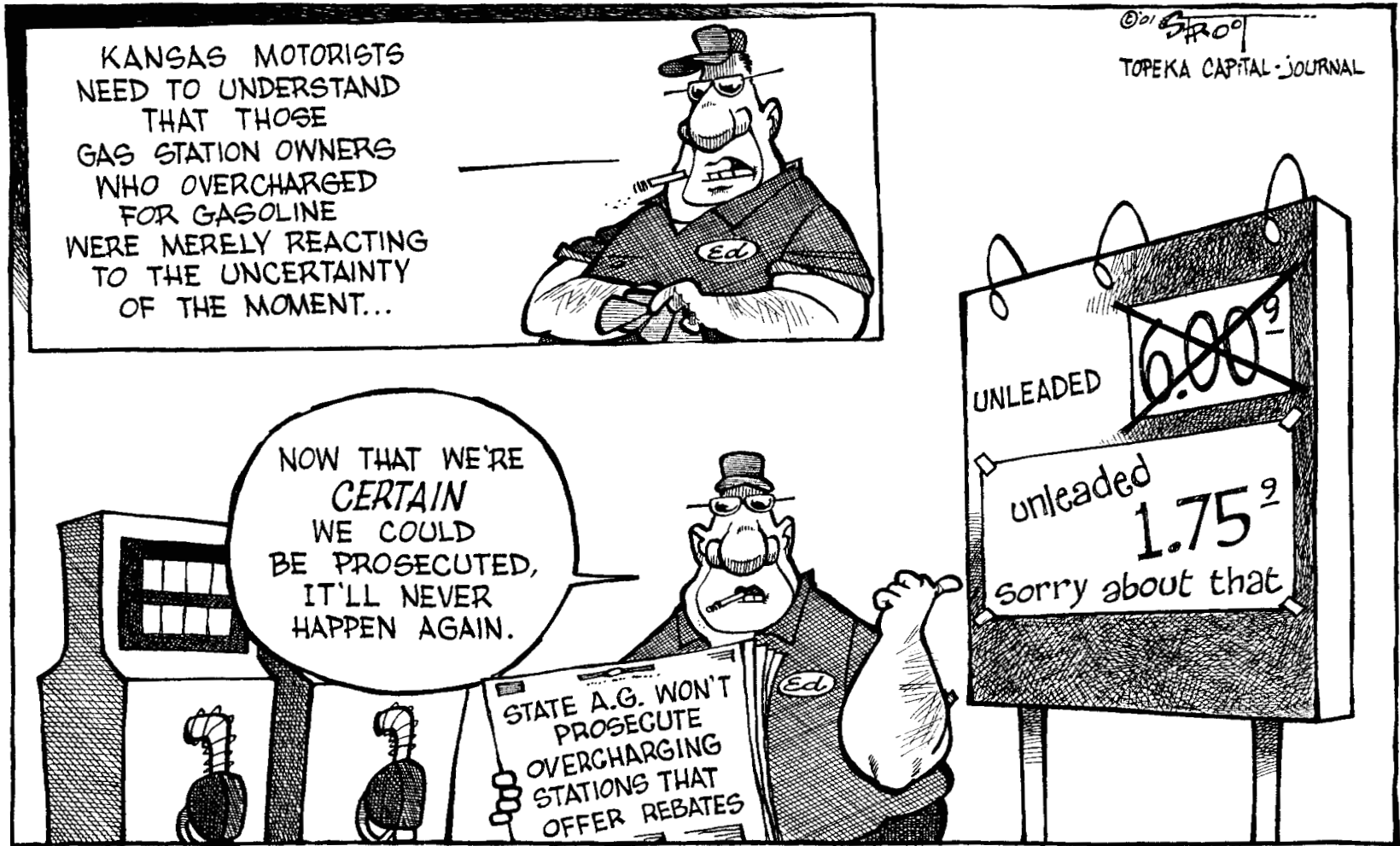
Three great religions sprang from the Mideast, all tied to versions of one Book, all believing in their versions of one God. Instead of growing together, the children of the Book often as not have fought one another. Crusaders attempted to drive the Moslems from the Holy Land, and later, the Zionists attempted to drive the Arabs from Israel. None of that has exactly fostered understanding.

We have more in common, in heritage, in belief, than what sets us apart. Still, we fight.

Some day, perhaps, we will come to understand just what it is that God wants us to do. Or at least we will get closer to understanding, for as imperfect beings, it's not likely we will perfectly understand anything, especially God. We can only try our best.

But for now, it should be enough to know that, as it has throughout time, mankind will continue to grow and prosper, learn and know. As they always have, things will get better. That has to be God's plan.

Have faith. — *Steve Haynes*



Women, children are victims no matter where

The American people are incredibly tender-hearted and generous.

The outpouring of sympathy, love and cash for the victims of the Sept. 11 tragedies in New York and Washington has been overwhelming.

Here at the newspaper, we have gathered donations ranging from dimes from children to checks for hundreds of dollars from those who could afford it.

Across the country, people are reaching out to those in need.

I have neither been surprised nor marveled at this outpouring.

It is normal. It is what people do. The same thing would have happened if the tragedies had been caused by accident or an act of nature. The only real difference this time is the upswing of patriotism.

America has always had a great deal and has always given a great deal. Ever since the Indians helped the early colonists make it through a tough winter, Americans have been extending their resources and knowledge to both their brothers and



cynthia haynes

• open season

to strangers.

But through all of this, I keep thinking there was something we were forgetting. Someone who needed our help even more than the victims in New York and Washington. Victims just as innocent, just as blameless, just as threatened.

These victims are the Afghan people, especially the women and children.

While here in the U.S., women can stand on their own feet, earn their own living and support their children, that is not true in Afghanistan.

These are people who have lived through war for all or most of their lives. Their country, always poor, had been reduced to a heap of rubble before the terrorist ever struck the U.S.

Our president, in his address on Thursday night,

gave me the answer to my question.

He asked the nation's children to send money to a special fund, set up through the Red Cross, for the children of Afghanistan.

This was it. This was the greater need.

A people without adequate food, shelter or clothing, are about to enter a winter as hard as any seen in Siberia. During these next few months, international humanitarian groups say, hundreds of thousands of Afghans will die of hunger and exposure because their government just doesn't care.

Our president has asked our children to help their children.

Let's show the world that we are as sympathetic to strangers as we are to our own. Let's do all we can to save those children.

The president asks that each child put \$1, or whatever they can, in an envelope and send it to the America's Fund for Afghan Children at the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20509-1600.

Remember: Display your flag, give blood and save the children.

I'm pleased with the area water special section

To the Editor:

I wanted to write and let you know how pleased I was with the water publication that was compiled by the seven western Kansas newspapers!

Your group did an excellent job and gathering a series of interesting and well written articles. My mother, who is a resident of Oberlin, sent me a copy of the publication.

It was very timely, as I am in the process of running for an elected position on the board of directors for the Coastal Plains Groundwater Conservation District. The election will determine whether or not the county forms a groundwater district, and how it is financed, along with a board of seven directors.

Our situation is different from yours, but as water issues are foremost in my mind right now, it was very interesting to learn more about the problems you are experiencing on the Ogallala Aquifer. When I was a child in Kansas, my father raised anything that didn't have to be irrigated, mainly wheat and milo, the typical dryland farming crops of western Kansas.

In the past few years, when I have come home in



from our readers

• to the editor

the summer, it is still surprising to see the green fields of corn where usually there would have been wheat stubble. It was interesting to learn that economics may play as much part in conservation of this resource as any type of regulation.

I now live on a coastal county in south Texas. We are still mainly a rural area, with farming as the largest industry. We are more diversified than Decatur County, in that we have three large industrial complexes that employ over 3,000 people.

Our main reason for wanting to form a groundwater district is the fear of larger communities like Houston and Corpus Christi that are looking for new sources of water for their growing populations. Landowners have been made offers to "mine" their water for a signing bonus of \$30,000 plus \$200 for each acre foot of water.

Pentagon may be best agency for bioterror war

Whether or not Al Qaeda terrorists planted anthrax in Florida, the incident ensures, Congress will fund a major upgrade in the nation's defenses against biochemical attack.

The White House budget office had been quibbling over Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson's request for \$800 million. Now that Florida is home to anthrax cases, it seems almost certain more funding will be approved.

Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., told me in an interview he's confident the administration will support the \$1.4 billion he and Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., have proposed primarily to build up state and local health and emergency agencies.

With the addition of overdue improvements to food-safety inspections, the total is likely to come to \$2 billion, according to aides to Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that oversees HHS.

The money is likely to be approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee and be attached to the Defense Department's appropriation.

However, it does not contain what one outside expert considers a vital bureaucratic change: making the Defense Department the lead agency responsible for combating bioterrorism.

Sue Bailey, assistant secretary of defense for health in the Clinton administration, told me the lead agencies now are the FBI and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but she explained neither has the assets needed to respond to a serious attack.

"The military has the transport capacity and the communications," she said. "It has the hospitals and it has control of the vaccines we'd need. It also has the troops, if it comes to that, for quarantines and crowd control."



morton kondracke

• commentary

The military is prohibited by law from performing civilian police functions, but Bailey's idea deserves attention. After all, the attacks of Sept. 11 were acts of war on American soil, and they undoubtedly won't be the last.

An anthrax or nerve-gas attack could kill tens or hundreds of thousands of people — millions, in the case of highly contagious smallpox and plague.

Bailey, who oversaw anthrax vaccination of all U.S. military personnel in the 1990s and took the shots herself, said the recent mini-outbreak of inhalation anthrax in South Florida was "an apparent deliberate release — an act of terrorism."

"Unless a herd of sheep came trotting down the hallway of that office building (the headquarters of American Media Inc. in Boca Raton), there's no way this could have been a natural release," she said.

Bailey did not blame the Al Qaeda terrorist network of Osama bin Laden, but it's a fact one of the perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attacks, Mohammed Atta, attended flight school in nearby Delray Beach and inquired about crop-duster aircraft.

"Even if it turns out not to have been done by the Islamic terrorists," she said about the Florida cases, "it's a harbinger that ought to spur us to action."

Besides making the Pentagon the lead agency to combat bioterrorism, Bailey ticked off a list of other things that need to be done.

"Every hospital in Israel has a decontamination room to protect the rest of the hospital from chemi-

cals and biological agents," she noted. "Hardly any of our hospitals do."

Subways, stadiums and public buildings, Bailey said, should be equipped with detectors that will signal the presence of biological and chemical agents, and set off alarms for local and federal authorities.

"People have to know who's in charge ahead of time. And the first responders ought to be vaccinated in order to take care of other people," she said.

Bailey suggested subways and major buildings, including the Capitol, have filters installed in their air conditioning systems to remove biological agents.

She was not alone in her criticism of Thompson for saying on television and before Congress that the U.S. government "could respond to any (bioterrorism) contingency and control it."

"Unfortunately, that's simply not the case," Bailey said. "Our public health system has no anthrax vaccine inventory and would be overwhelmed by a large-scale biochemical attack if it happened today."

Although a biochemical attack might be the deadliest, Frist said poisoning the nation's food supply with bacteria might be the easiest evil act for terrorists to pull off. American agents currently inspect only 1 percent of imported food, he explained.

Thanks to Frist and Kennedy, who helped pass a bioterrorism-response bill last year, the nation isn't starting from scratch. And Thompson, to his credit, has been working on federal responses since January.

A reminder of how unprepared local areas are was furnished last week at a hearing by Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., who said his wife recently had to wait all day to be seen at Fairfax Hospital's emergency room for pneumonia. Imagine the situation if the Washington area had been hit with anthrax.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

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