

The Daily Tar Heel

93rd year of editorial freedom

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In defense of indefensibility

Last week, the U.S. assistant secretary for inter-American affairs, Elliott Abrams, issued a reinvigorated hard-line policy on Central America, referring to Nicaragua's Sandinista leaders as "really reprehensible people." Unfortunately, the assistant secretary's rhetoric on the Nicaraguan issue is based upon a belief in absolute solutions to indefinite needs — disregarding economic realities in favor of uncompromisable political values.

As defense number one, Abrams maintains that Sandinista censorship of the "opposition" newspaper *La Prensa* is indicative of the Sandinista's "communist" bent. He fails, on the other hand, to mention the fact that nearly all states under siege reserve the right to censor the press — certainly the U.S. reserves the same right. Nicaragua's former fascist leader Anastasio Somoza engaged in brutal censorship techniques — and the National Guardsmen who were once Somoza's censorship bloodhounds are now Reagan's "freedom fighters."

Intercepting Egypt

Holding a gun to an airline stewardess' head and ordering the pilot to change course is a crude way to hijack a plane. The United States does it much better.

Thursday night, President Reagan scrambled F-14s from the USS Saratoga to intercept and divert to an airbase in Sicily a EgyptAir jet carrying four Palestinian hijackers. Unlike the terrorist's action, the U.S. move was justifiable by all but the loftiest legal standards. The Egyptian denunciation of the interception as piracy should be taken for what it is — pique and domestic politics, aimed at Egyptian radicals, other Arab nations and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, rather than at the United States.

Two considerations put the interception in a wholly different category from, for example, this summer's hijacking leading to Beirut, Lebanon. First, the purpose of the show of force was not to coerce a government to take some prescribed action but rather, in effect, to serve a warrant for four internationally wanted murderers.

Second, the F-14 pilots who persuaded the Egyptian pilot to change course did not threaten the lives of innocent civilians. The only passengers aboard the chartered flight were Egyptian officials and six Palestinians, four of whom had spent the preceding two days holding 400 tourists hostage aboard a cruise liner and allegedly killing a 69-year-old, wheelchair-bound Jewish American. The success in forcing down the plane in Sicily without loss of life also is a credit to the Navy fliers and a fortunate contrast to the Soviet handling of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 two years ago.

Nobody was hurt, the alleged murderers are in jail (the other two Palestinians have slipped out of Italy to Yugoslavia), and the Palestinian Liberation Organization has suffered another black eye. Why then is Egyptian President Hosni Mubarek warning of "coolness and strain" in his country's relations with the United States?

Mubarek has two understandable grievances and two worrisome fears. He

These are the very Sandinistas who in 1978 and 1979 repeatedly requested U.S. recognition and aid in reforming a nation long tortured by the Somoza regime. U.S. ties to the elite landed class of Nicaragua prevented two presidential administrations from engaging in reasonable, constructive talks with the Sandinistas. Today, after having abruptly isolated the reform-minded Sandinistas, the U.S. maintains that state censorship is the "norm" in Nicaragua — as though the current U.S. effort to violently overthrow the Sandinista government represented a "normal" situation. When Somoza's censorship suited the interests of U.S. investors, no condemnation or action needed to be taken; yet when the Sandinistas react to U.S.-backed military assaults with censorship, it is condemned as the hallmark of a "communist" regime. It's nice to know that the U.S. has one set of values for every foreseeable situation. We wouldn't want to be caught applying one set of values to all actions — that would be dreadfully consistent.

is dismayed that Egypt has yet to receive international acclaim for swiftly securing the release of the cruise liner hostages in the first place. He also is embarrassed that the terrorists should end up in Italian hands after he had promised to deliver them to the PLO in Tunis, even incorrectly claiming Thursday that they were already there.

More important, the American action has left the PLO and other Arab nations irritated with Egypt, which denies widespread accusations that it provided the United States with intelligence, and has provoked riots in Cairo. Like most countries, Egypt does not want to be the object of the PLO's attention. And sensibly peaceful relations with its powerful and aggressive Israeli neighbors notwithstanding, Egypt also needs to stay on the good side of Arab nations with oil wealth and jobs for Egyptian emigrant workers.

Most troublesome of all for Mubarek are the public disturbances that have greeted news of the U.S. action. Already the Egyptian government pursues a more moderate, pro-Western foreign policy than most Egyptians probably would prefer. The rising influence among students of Islamic fundamentalism, spearheaded by the Moslem Brotherhood and gruesomely highlighted by the assassination of Anwar Sadat, is undermining political stability. Following the Iranian (as opposed to the Afghan) example, this fundamentalism is also anti-American. To the degree that the U.S. interception identifies the Mubarek regime with the United States, the regime may be threatened.

That would be bad for the United States. Egypt is crucial to U.S. attempts to foster peace in the Middle East and has too large a population too near the Gulf for the West to be comfortable about any instability, particularly if it stems from religious radicalism. The United States should ignore even the most extreme statements that may come from the Egyptian government in the coming weeks and maintain or increase its \$2 billion a year aid to the country.

To the dth degree

A space for reflection

Maybe this isn't appropriate for the column, but it's something I feel a need to say. Nothing else I could write now would say as much.

In Friday's editorial column, I took a chance and tried to memorialize John Lennon in the way I thought best — using his own words, brief yet meaningful. To me, at least. To others? I only hoped.

It was late, though; his birthday was Wednesday. I had forgotten a detail, and I'm sorry. Thank you, Louis, for reminding me. But I had not forgotten John Lennon and still wanted to express both sadness for his death and joy for his memory.

I decided on the tribute Thursday morning. As the day progressed, his words grew in impact as news came of two more who had died: Yul Brynner and Orson Welles. A deep respect for Orson Welles, especially, shines on in me, and my tribute to John Lennon became a sort

of memorial to all three — and everyone special we have known who has died.

A few editors and many readers, I'm told, didn't like it. They called it bush, inappropriate for an editorial. Some even believed it had been mere filler or indicated a lack of ideas.

Oh. Maybe I should have filled up the space like the pieces about Yul Brynner and Orson Welles. I would have, if I could have said more than "We all shine on." I couldn't, and didn't want to.

Maybe it wasn't "appropriate" for an edit, but it was something I felt a need to say. Nothing I could've written then — no matter what the idea — would've meant so much.

I could go on about the way it looked, and the way I feel, but won't. Once again, more words aren't going to help.

— DAVE SCHMIDT

To the editors:

It is difficult to imagine a more philosophically inept or terminally stupid defense of charity than your editorial ("The demands of fortune," Oct. 9), nor a more feeble attack on individualism and selfishness. There are more distortions and deceptions in this editorial than in any given week's issue of *National Enquirer*. In spite of your understandable reluctance or inability to explain fully what you mean, we will endeavor to analyze your premises objectively and clearly.

Your argument that there is a trend towards individualism is just false (unfortunately). Americans today seem more prone than ever to emerge themselves in groups — a fact easily seen in the resurgence of fraternities and sororities on this campus, as well as the growth of professional organizations, and everybody's favorite punching bag, fundamentalist religion.

Specifically, you offer two casualties for this "trend." Initially, you cite the growing diversity of religion and the decline of piety. Is there a connection? It seems likely that religious diversity would increase rather than decrease piety because persons practicing alternative religions would identify more closely with specialized value systems than with more general principles. But more importantly, if religious diversity is a problem, then is establishing a dominant religion a solution? Or what solution would you offer?

Even worse than this, though, to invoke the now infamous Nietzsche

quote concerning the health of God to support this argument is blatant misrepresentation of Nietzsche's meaning. Nietzsche was expressing, not with any concern about the status of religious conformity, his antipathy for any Christian base of morals, and certainly would never lament its demise.

The second casualty cited for the phenomenon of individualism is libertarian "social dogma" being extracted from economic theory. Are you claiming that libertarian philosophy is something new? It dates back to John Locke and Thomas Jefferson at least, and has existed in its present form since Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* in 1943. More importantly, libertarian ethics has a sound philosophical base independent of economic considerations, as well as support from sociology and psychology.

But the real crux of your argument is the notion that wealth is arbitrary, or that success and failure are socially determined. To claim that the "world's goods and services" are distributed disproportionately assumes that 1) goods and services are a part of nature (like apples on a tree) and 2) that there is an objective proportion that determines how many apples each citizen of the world should receive. This ignores the origin of those goods and services — someone has to dig the ditch or weld the car door or start the company that is assumed to simply exist. This is analogous to divvying up a pizza among your suitmates regardless of the fact that

it was bought by the suite next door.

To make the claim that what we produce as Americans is somehow in reality an "unintentional gift" (if such a phenomenon exists lexiconically) from the rest of the world is basically unintelligible, to put it generously. Is Ethiopia, or any other poverty-stricken nation, the source of our industrial might? If we flip hamburgers eight hours a day, is it Burger King or Bangladesh that shells out the paycheck? Are we to assume that the countries of the Third World are accidentally suspending their ownership rights over American wealth to their own detriment?

The only logical statement in the editorial was sarcastic and derisive: "My time and property are mine and only mine and nobody else's needs give them any claim whatever on them." Exactly! Creation of wealth is inherently a volitional exercise of an individual mind, whether that mind receives data from parents, peers or society. Charity, therefore, can never be an obligation, but only a function of that same individual mind, free to choose its values and

how to protect and foster them. In other words, we have the right to help or not to help the starving Third World, and we may choose to do either because our wealth is ours — it was produced by our efforts. Basically, real charity cannot be coerced, either by gun or by guilt.

The editorial ended by calling America the "world's greatest economic and technological power." How did this happen? By a malnourished witch doctor's magic? Simply put, our nation was the only one founded on the underlying principles of the Enlightenment, and specifically, the Rights of Man. To submerge these founding principles in a sobbing, hand-wringing, apologetic orgy of sacrifice and self-flagellation is worse than unfortunate; it bespeaks a criminal ignorance of the basis of human freedom, and portends the ultimate collapse of the last semi-free country on Earth.

John Hood
Jeff Taylor
Chapel Hill

He-Man? Ha! He-Wimp!

To the editors:

I totally disagree with "He-Man's no sissy, 'DTH'" (Oct. 11). He-Man is a wimp, I must say, and I'll say it again if I must. Let's take a look at the real facts:

Sure, He-Man's got his hefty super-duper magic sword, and all the power of Castle Greyskull at his disposal, but he's still a wimp. Every day he gets banged around by a skeleton in tights for 20 minutes (minus commercial breaks) until he finally licks out and his friend Orko tells him to clobber the bad guy. I mean, anybody else who had this magic sword could do better than He-Man. Elmer Fudd could polish off Skeletor in about six minutes, and he wouldn't be such a loud-mouth about it. He would be vewwy, vewwy quiet. Then he could spend the rest of the show chasing wabbits. The way I see it, *Elmer Fudd and the Masters of the Universe* would be a much better show.

Even He-Man's sidekicks are wimps. Everybody waits around for He-Man to start swinging his sword.

Teela and Orko maybe throw a punch or toss a spell, but nothing ever gets done until that sword starts swinging. Even He-Man's Battle-Cat is nothing but an overgrown pussy that cringes every time he tries to give it the power of Greyskull.

Finally, compare He-Man to a real hero, namely Batman. The writers of Friday's letter mistakenly claim that the power of Greyskull makes He-Man far better than Batman, but they don't say how this is possible. Batman has beaten literally hundreds more villains in a career that has spanned over four decades, without any fancy swords or supernatural powers. He-Man wouldn't last four days without his magic sword. Batman's record speaks for itself, while He-Man's ad agency has spawned an obscene media blitz designed only to sell cheap toys at inflated prices. It's so funny that the writers of "He-Man's no sissy..." should think that, because everyone knows that he is.

Bryan Fenton
Ehringhaus

Whip me no more

To the editors:

After reading J. Thomas Jackson's well-informed column ("Moral decree good for state," Oct. 10), I feel compelled to come out of the closet and support him. You see, I was a secret porn flick addict. My lust, an inherent human condition, was so great that the words "whip me baby" sent me into multiple orgasms, and I kept my larder full of whipped cream. I would frequently dress in leather and spikes and molest old ladies.

I was in a deplorable state, headed straight for hell and eternal damnation. I can admit this now, after

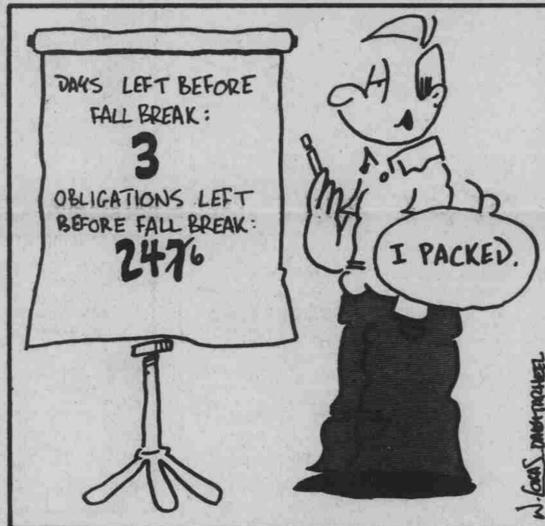
years of therapy and psychological help.

But, the important thing is that I got help. I went to church, voted for Reagan and am thinking of joining Students For America. I am cured, praise the Lord, but just thinking of all those poor demented people out there like me, urges you, Jackson, to support this new law. Please do. It will bring this country back into the arms of the right, where it belongs.

Marguerite Arnold
Alexander

Letters

are always welcome, provided they're typed and triple-spaced. Deadline is 2 p.m. daily.



U.S. has collective responsibility to God

By STEVE MATHENY

In Rick Robinson's column "Anger and fear — this is the New Right?" (Sept. 26), he seems annoyed that some "have found 'the truth' in a book." Perhaps this evokes the danger that another like Martin Luther King Jr. might come along, claim the Bible to be "the sole rule of authority and practice over all life," and, by doing so, transform the total character of the age in which he lives. President John Adams called it "the best book in the world." President Jackson called it "the rock on which our Republic rests." President Lincoln said, "But for it we could not know right from wrong." Likewise, when the British Empire encircled the globe, Queen Victoria called the Bible "the secret of England's greatness." Considering what these and others have said, does it seem alien or irrational to find someone relying on the Bible as the source of truth? Furthermore, the Bible independently makes the claim that it is "inspired by God... profitable for instruction in righteousness," and a book of indestructible and eternal "truth" (*Matthew 24:35, Psalm 119:89*).

Numerous references to God and Scripture are inscribed on government buildings and monuments in our nation's capital. State charters and constitutions refer to God as well. While one can't maintain that our nation was a Christian theocracy in the past, or that all the founders were Christian men, it nonetheless seems clear that our forefathers had great respect for both God and the Bible. When Ben Franklin arose to address the Constitutional Convention of 1787 his words were these: "The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of his truth; that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?" In his 1789 inaugural address, Washington warned: "We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smile of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

Robinson disparages those who in efforts to prick the social consciousness of our nation are drawing attention to crucial moral issues. Among the issues being addressed by groups such as the Moral Majority are abortion, child pornography and drug abuse. Considering there are 1.6 million legal abortions annually and the problems of pornography and drug abuse are heightened by

'Being a Christian is the only thing that can bring lasting joy, hope and peace into an individual's life.'

links with organized crime, is it so rash to suggest something should be done? The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (*Isaiah 5:20*).

Does anyone suppose our nation has not been forced to reckon with moral shortcomings and crises before? What about slavery, was that not also an egregious, indefensible practice that brought our nation under horrible judgment? In 1863, Lincoln said this: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved... in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God... it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

Lincoln's prescription is timely today as well. The crises we face must be confronted with the same moral resolution that brought an end to slavery. You might ask, what will be the cost if we don't succeed in averting this decline? You may decide for yourself; I only know that our society will not be able to claim immunity from God's judgment merely because we happen to be too egalitarian, pluralistic and sophisticated to come under his jurisdiction.

For those not willing to concede defeat and who wish to see our nation prosper, keep fighting for that which is true, honest and right. Be courageous like Nobel Prize winner Mother Theresa, who was bold enough to chide the committee and demand that they do something to stop the horrendous practice of abortion. Or Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who, rather than giving a flattering sermonette at Harvard University's 1978 commencement, emphatically stated that the West was now characterized by "a decline in courage... an atmosphere of moral mediocrity... (and) a state of spiritual exhaustion." "America is great because America is good."

If she ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great." So said a visitor to our country during the 19th Century. Conservative-minded students, you too have a voice and a vote. Don't be intimidated and don't give up. Let's strive to make America great and to preserve its future.

While the foregoing comments relate to our collective responsibility to God as a nation, there is yet another level wherein each individual can relate to God personally. Christianity is not confined to or derived from Western culture. The nation today with the highest percentage of Christians is probably South Korea and the greatest growth is on the continent of Africa. Even if America does not overcome its problems or even survive as a nation, God will still be evermore God, and the Bible will still be evermore that "eternal" and infallible word of God which "For ever is settled in Heaven."

Being a Christian is the only thing that can bring lasting joy, hope and peace into an individual's life. Christianity gives the assurance of knowing that regardless of how you came to God — whether a homosexual, murderer, thief or whatever — God loves you unconditionally because his son died on the cross and shed his blood for those sins. Someone has aptly said, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross because we stand equally in need of God's grace and forgiveness."

Jesus Christ is the son of God who became incarnate in human flesh. The Bible says "he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin." And "He (God) made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The heart of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again, and that anyone, regardless of the state they're in, can have "peace through the blood of His cross." A student at Yale University several years ago expressed it like this: "The big line I remember from our school days was: 'There's no one right answer. What's your opinion?' After so many unproven facts and so much loosely undisciplined freedom, it's comforting to have a creed to follow and a cross to bear."

Steve Matheny is a second-year law student from Raleigh.