



Writer's Block

How To Get To Heaven

BY WILLIAM KERR
For the Press & Dakotan

An open letter to our Congress:
There is a passage in the Christian New Testament that to me seems most important both to the Christian Church and to the individual Christian for lifetime guidance. I bring this up because I don't remember ever hearing a sermon on this passage, nor have I met another person who remembers hearing one. I see this as one of the major failings of the Christian Church, and don't know why it hasn't been emphasized by the Church. It is the one place in the New Testament where Jesus clearly tells us not only who is going to Heaven but also who is not!

The passage is in Matthew 25, verses 31-46: "When the son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, (The sheep of Palestine were usually white and the goats black.) and he will place the sheep at his right hand but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'"

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those at his left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Then he will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."



William KERR

Does Jesus say anything clearer anywhere else in the New Testament about who is going to Heaven and who is not?

The Interpreters Bible Commentary has this comment: "This love is the end product or fruit of genuine religion; and by this fruit one's true relation to God is known. (7:20-21) 'Thus you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven.'"

How you can even talk about reducing programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid that help many, who would otherwise be in distress, and think of yourselves as Christians? You who have yet to pay back any of the \$2.6 trillion you have "borrowed" from the Social Security Trust Fund to balance the budget every time you reduced taxes for the rich. That's like taking from the poor to give to the rich! And, both Social Security and Medicare are still paying their own way and causing no deficit.

You, who reduced the wages of all other federal employees while taking raises the first three years of the recession and continuing your private fleet of jet aircraft instead of flying commercial air lines.

You, who have not eliminated subsidies for oil and gas corporations who are earning the highest incomes ever, and leave the income taxes on the rich at ridiculously low levels (the rest of the rich countries, who are also in financial trouble have rates 15 percent to 35 percent higher) and some of our politicians even talk about cutting them further yet.

You call yourselves Christians?
How about showing all of us — including the poor, the aged, the disabled and our children — that you do care about us, as well as the rich by not reducing further any helping programs for us before you remove the tax breaks that you have been giving the rich, over the years since Ronald Reagan was president, By doing so, you will really be helping them.

How? Remember this passage; "And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" (Matthew 9:23)

After World War II when our peacetime economy began burgeoning, many actors and sports figures began earning really big bucks, They also began complaining about the high income taxes. What happened when there was no immediate change was they began giving a lot more to charities, which help people in distress, instead of giving it to the government. They might have a shot at heaven that way.

That's how!

Scouts, Be Prepared For The Future

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

Hold your applause. As milestones go, this one is disappointing.

It is, at best, half a milestone. Or a down payment on a milestone. If you are of a more cynical bent, you might even call it an effort to forestall a milestone.

Whatever you call it, last week's decision by the Boy Scouts of America to allow openly gay Scouts, but not openly gay Scout leaders, to join, is unlikely to please or appease either side of the gay rights struggle. Predictably, that shrinking coterie of individuals for whom homosexuality and Satanism are synonymous greeted the decision with howls of anger and pain. Matt Barber, an attorney and blogger, accused the Scouts of having "betrayed its own constituency, mission, oath and law." John Stemberger, an Eagle Scout and anti-gay activist, predicted the Scouts will "probably be destroyed" by this decision.

For the record, the Girl Scouts have no policy limiting lesbian involvement. Indeed, according to its website, Girl Scouts of the USA has embraced diversity and inclusion from the beginning, and it doesn't seem to have hurt that group any: It has 3.2 million members and recently celebrated its 101st anniversary. So Stemberger's prediction that the boys are doomed for doing what the girls have done for years seems nonsensical at best.

But again, there is little reason this should be celebrated by the rest of us, either. The Boy Scouts' decision to split the difference — allow gay boys, ban gay men — does not exactly smell of Solomonian wisdom. Rather, it is marked by reasoning that is cockamamie even if taken on its own terms.

If, for example, you buy the notion there is something about male homosexuality that renders men unfit to be leaders, why doesn't that same flaw render boys unfit to be followers? And if you buy the idiotic canard that every gay male is a pedophile in waiting, then how do you countenance allowing gay teenagers as old as 17 access to boys as young as 10?

Worse, what kind of message does all of this send



Leonard PITTS

gay boys? You're acceptable until you aren't?

It is, of course, a mistake to seek logic here. This isn't about logic, but about a conservative group doing what conservative groups always do when social change comes. Meaning, they bring up the rear, the caboose on the freedom train lurching belatedly to where the rest of us have already been.

It happened with racism, happened with sexism, happened with anti-Semitism, all of which conservatism loudly and proudly embraced long after the rest of us came to see them as evil and wrong. It is happening now with homophobia.

The problem for the Scouts and other conservative groups (paging the GOP!) is not simply that this change has been definitive (a record 59 percent of all Americans now find gay and lesbian relationships morally acceptable, according to a Gallup poll). It is not simply that this change has been swift (12 years ago, only 40 percent of us approved). No, it is also, maybe even primarily, that this change has been driven by young people, a whopping 70 percent of whom, ages 18 to 29, now believe same-sex marriage should be legal — up an also whopping 18 percentage points just since 2010.

Hello?

The momentum and trajectory are unmistakable: Gay rights are the future. The organization that fails to understand this sabotages its own future credibility. So there is little reason to celebrate the Scouts' half-hearted attempt to compromise with change. Might as well attempt to compromise with a locomotive.

Last week's decision is a mere way station en route to a destination that seems increasingly inevitable. One day, and it probably won't be all that long, the Scouts will concede this. On that day, this absurd decision will fall and scouting will be open to all boys and men regardless of sexual orientation.

That will be a milestone worth clapping for.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Redefining The War On Terror

DETROIT FREE PRESS (May 24): In an address remarkable for both its candor and its humility, President Barack Obama sought Thursday to limit the scope of his predecessor's global war on terror, pivoting from a full-court campaign of military pre-emption to a new era of proportionality and political engagement.

Squarely confronting critics who have decried his administration's unprecedented use of unmanned drone strikes and its continuing detention of suspected terrorists at Guantanamo, the president pledged to curtail both practices and called on federal lawmakers to facilitate the transition to a containment effort that relies less heavily on military force.

He said Gitmo has become "the symbol around the world for an America that flouts the rule of law" and warned that "history will cast a harsh judgment" if the U.S. continues to imprison suspects indefinitely without prosecuting them before criminal juries or military tribunals on American soil. ...

For Obama, Thursday's address to the National Defense University was an effort to distance both his presidency and the United States from the open-ended war on terror then-President George W. Bush declared in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. ...

He noted that five years have passed since "the premise for opening Gitmo — that detainees would not be able to challenge their detention — was found unconstitutional." And he acknowledged that casualties inflicted on innocent civilians have damaged U.S. credibility with both the people and governments of strategically important allies.

Among the most refreshing themes in Thursday's address was Obama's call for the expanded use of diplomacy and foreign aid, both of whose effectiveness has been grossly underestimated. As the president noted, current expenditures on foreign assistance constitute "only a tiny fraction of what we spend fighting wars that our assistance might ultimately prevent."

A single speech will scarcely bring about the sea change Obama seeks. But the shift in focus and tactics that he outlined Thursday is both worthwhile and long overdue, and America's long-term efforts to contain terrorism can only be enhanced by its swift implementation.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, May 30, the 150th day of 2013. There are 215 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On May 30, 1943, during World War II, American troops secured the Aleutian island of Attu from Japanese forces.

On this date: In 1431, Joan of Arc, condemned as a heretic, was burned at the stake in Rouen, France.

In 1883, 12 people were trampled to death in a stampede sparked by a rumor that the recently opened Brooklyn Bridge was in danger of collapsing.

In 1911, the first Indy 500 took place at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway; the winner was Ray Harroun, who drove a Marmon Wasp for more than 6-1/2 hours at an average speed of 74.6 mph and collected a prize of \$10,000.

In 1913, the Treaty of London was signed, formally ending the First Balkan War. (The Second Balkan War broke out the following month.)

In 1922, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in a ceremony attended by President Warren G. Harding, Chief Justice William Howard Taft and Robert Todd Lincoln.

In 1937, ten people were killed when police fired on steelworkers demonstrating near the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago.

In 1958, unidentified American service members killed in World War II and the Korean War were interred in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1962, Benjamin Britten's War Requiem had its world premiere at the new Coventry Cathedral in England.

In 1971, the American space probe Mariner 9 blasted off from Cape Kennedy, Fla. on a journey to Mars.

In 1972, three members of the Japanese Red Army opened fire at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel, killing 26 people. Two attackers died; the third was captured.

In 1981, the president of Bangladesh, Ziaur Rahman, was assassinated in a failed military coup.

In 1996, Britain's Prince Andrew and the former Sarah Ferguson were granted an uncontested decree ending their 10-year marriage.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, arrived in Poland, the first stop of a weeklong tour of Europe

and the Middle East. The U.N. Security Council unanimously authorized the deployment of a French-led international force in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the scene of ethnic fighting.

Five years ago: A construction crane snapped and smashed into an apartment building on Manhattan's Upper West Side, killing two workers in the city's second such tragedy in 2-1/2 months. Diplomats from 111 nations meeting in Dublin, Ireland, formally adopted a landmark treaty banning cluster bombs. (The United States and other leading cluster bomb makers — Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan — boycotted the talks.) Lorenzo Odone, whose parents' battle to save him from the rare nerve disease ALD inspired "Lorenzo's Oil," died in Fairfax, Va., a day after his 30th birthday.

One year ago: A gunman in Seattle fatally shot four people inside a cafe and a fifth victim in a carjacking before killing himself. The National September 11 Memorial and Museum marked the 10th anniversary of the end of cleanup operations at the site with a tribute to recovery workers and first responders. Kicking off her first trip abroad in nearly a quarter-century, Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi offered encouragement to impoverished migrants in neighboring Thailand.

Today's Birthdays: Country musician Johnny Gimble is 87. Actor Clint Walker is 86. Actor Keir Dullea is 77. Actress Ruta Lee is 77. Actor Michael J. Pollard is 74. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Gale Sayers is 70. Rock musician Lenny Davidson (The Dave Clark Five) is 69. Actor Stephen Tobolowsky is 62. Actor Colm Meaney is 60. Actor Ted McGinley is 55. Actor Ralph Carter is 52. Actress Tonya Pinkins is 51. Country singer Wynonna Judd is 49. Rock musician Tom Morello (Audioslave; Rage Against The Machine) is 49. Movie director Antoine Fuqua is 48. Rock musician Patrick Dahlheimer (Live) is 42. Actress Idina Menzel is 42. Actor Trey Parker is 41. Rapper Cee Lo Green is 39. Rapper Remy Ma is 33. Actor Blake Bashoff is 32. Christian rock musician James Smith (Underoath) is 31. Actor Jake Short is 16. Actor Jared Gilmore is 13.

Thought for Today: "It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do." — Jerome K. Jerome, English author and humorist (1859-1927).

FROM THE BIBLE

The last Adam [Jesus] was made a quickening spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45 (KJV). Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

The Postal Food Drive

Jennifer Adamson, Kelli Stanage, Liz Hentch, Donna Madson and Dionne Lento

Contact Center Staff & Board,

The Contact Center would like to thank each and everyone of you who helped with this year's annual postal food drive. We would like to thank the Postal employees and their volunteers who picked up and delivered all the food to our loca-

tion. We also want to thank the volunteer's who helped us go through each and every bag, checking dates, sorting through and putting away all of the items. To Yankton and surrounding areas, we want to thank you for your donations. Without each of you, it would not have been such a great success and a much needed one to fill our shelves.

Thank you!

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