

Opinion

Monday's Salute



Thumbs to...

- ✓ **Pat Erickson** — on being honored as the 2004 "Friend of 4-H."
- ✓ **Social Problems Class** — at Colby Community College, on your 37th annual Thanksgiving dinner today for all seniors 55 years of age and older. Nice!
- ✓ **Matt Murray** — the talk of the Nebraska Cornhuskers' "Big Red" wrestling machine.
- ✓ **Community Awareness Team** — on your efforts to keep the dangers associated with smoking before the public.
- ✓ **Terrilyn Fleming** — for sharing your expertise of the arts with our readers.
- ✓ **The City Gang** — good job with the Christmas decorations.
- ✓ **Lyman Bear Family** — on being named "4-H Family of the Year."
- ✓ **Kathi Wright** — on your very first ambulance purchase as director of Thomas County Emergency Medical Services.
- ✓ **Michael Schwanke** — on being voted Wichita's sexiest television newsman.

✓ **All Substitute Teachers** — for keeping the educational machine running smoothly in the absence of the regulars.
(This column is prepared each Monday morning by the newspaper's publisher. If you would like to submit a name, names, or group for consideration, simply e-mail td@nwkansas.com, fax (785) 462-7749, call 462-3963 or mail to the office at 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701. Thanks...in advance.)

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansas.com.

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Ruth Clark**, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: rclark@ink.org

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Difference between Religion, Christianity

This space is usually occupied on Mondays by Free Press reporter/photographer Tisha Cox. Tisha, however, is on vacation this week. So the space today is being filled by Ken Poland. - td

Ken Poland

• Ken's World

"Religion" is a commodity that is bought and sold. Religion has been the motivating factor and justification for more conflict and wars than any other single thing. Religion is measured by outward signs of production and success. Religion is supported by a set of rules, laws and proper ritual. Religion is dependent upon immediate gratification of self proclaimed piety that must be evident to man. Religion can be worn on your sleeve and doesn't even require soiling of your cuffs or calluses on your hands. Religion can inspire self mutilation and denial of personal pleasure. One of the dictionary definitions of religion is: A cause, a principle, or an activity pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion. Using that definition, pornography can be a religion. Religion can be a religion within itself. Partisan politics can be and is a religion for many folks on both sides of the aisle.

There is a vast difference between "Religion" and "Christianity."

Christianity is a relationship that permeates our very essence or spiritual inner being. Christianity is dependent upon the Grace of God to allow man the freedom to minister to the needs of his fellowman, without fear of eternal judgment for shortcomings and failures. Christianity is not validated by statistical measurement or superior power over the rest of creation. Salvation through Christ (a prerequisite to Christianity) produces, for all eternity, a living personal relationship between God and man, with intangible earthly rewards. Christianity is the evidence of man's effort to share God's love as expressed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not defined exclusively by any political affiliation, club, denomination or individual.

The following story is an example of religion verses Christianity in a real life example that begins about 35 or 40 years ago. A group of local

women sold her on salvation as the answer to all her problems. She came home from the evangelistic meeting on such a high she could hardly wait to tell the world about her salvation. However, it was a short lived high. The next morning the sink was still full of dirty dishes, the diaper pail was full and stank (disposables weren't affordable yet) and her husband had to go to work! She still had 4 kids under the age of 4 years. She still lacked the skills and emotional maturity to function under stress. Her every day problems and responsibilities hadn't disappeared, as promised. She has spent years going from highs to lows. Her religious highs are like drugs and she needs bigger doses each time. She can testify to many miracles in her life, but she is still hoping for the permanent "fix" through another miracle. Needless to say all her miracles to date have not produced the promised end to all her problems. She may have received eternal salvation, but the bill of goods promising earthly comfort has deprived her of many years of serenity that rests in the promise of eternity with God.

Those super salesmen, the ladies who sold her on salvation, have abandoned her. The "salvation" they sold her was only a panacea (snake oil or miracle salve) without a money back guarantee.

God doesn't promise us a rose garden! He promises grace sufficient to cover our sins and He will walk beside us as we struggle with today's realities. Jesus Christ did not produce miracles on demand and there certainly is no evidence that God is beholden to any one

person's expectation of miracles that absolve them from personal responsibilities and accountability to their fellowman. Not even Presidents, regardless of political affiliation.

The Old Testament system of laws, sacrifices and ritual failed to produce, for most of mankind, a lasting personal relationship between man and God. Nor did it produce peaceful coexistence of man with man. That does not invalidate the Old Testament account of man's relationship with God and how it affected his daily living. We must study and understand the culture, religious environment and covenants of the Old Testament to understand the New Testament and the covenant we have with God through Christ. Jesus, by verbal communication and physical example, met the needs, both spiritual and physical, of society. He commanded us to do the same. But, with that command, he did not lay out any absolute set of rules or ritual. He stressed the inability of law and Old Testament ritual to secure our permanent and lasting relationship with God.

All too often, today's regular church experiences, evangelistic campaigns and personal witness are merely examples of ritual mandated by law and void of any personal commitment or sacrifice. The political hype over morals and ethics are a panacea (snake oil or miracle salve) that cannot produce righteousness in our materialistic world. If your organized religion, whether it be Christian or otherwise, cannot or does not instill Godly morals and ethics in the hearts of those to whom they witness, then government will continue to be devoid of true morals and ethics that protect all of mankind from selfish tyrants and servants of Satan, himself. You cannot produce through law a change in the heart. You cannot protect the freedom of man with your exercise of political power or wealth.

Christianity is not a product of Government mandate. Nor is it a product of democracy.

Ken Poland is a Gem farmer and a member of the Free Press Writer's Club. His e-mail is rcwinc@cheerful.com.

About those letters . . .

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Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

