

commentary

from other pens...

George Catlin paints America's Indians

In 1832, artist George Catlin made the hard journey west along the trail opened by Lewis and Clark, and with brush and paint recorded the arresting face of America's Indian nations.

Catlin intended nothing less than the creation of a national treasure. It would be a visual record of a people he believed would vanish from the Great Plains along with the buffalo that sustained their lives. Catlin envisioned his paintings as a monument, one the U.S. government would purchase and the American people would honor.

Frustrated during his lifetime, Catlin's success is now indelibly clear. The proof is on view at the Renwick Gallery a block from the White House, where some 400 Catlin paintings and artifacts from the collection of the Smithsonian Institution's American Art Museum are on view.

In them, a giant grizzly bear contemplates the tiny mouse standing just beyond his nose. In a painting titled "River Bluffs, 1,320 miles above St. Louis," an Indian in feathered headdress is dwarfed by an immensity of green knobs and stretching river. In other paintings, mounted Indians pursue running buffalo and wildfires course through the prairie grass.

But the stars of the exhibit are the hundreds of portraits Catlin made of warriors and chiefs, including leaders famous far beyond their own tribes, including the Sac chief Black Hawk and the Seminoles' Osceola.

The assembly includes White Cloud, head chief of the Iowas, in bear claw necklace and a dark handprint across his face; and No Fool, a Kansas/Kaw, in layered necklaces, earrings, face paint and feathers. Catlin described him as "a great fop" who "used half the day in painting his face, preparing to sit for his picture."

One pair of portraits shows Pigeon's Egg Head, a young Assiniboine warrior, before and after he traveled to Washington to meet President Andrew Jackson. The latter painting shows him wearing a general's uniform, chomping on a cigar, clutching an umbrella in one hand and a lady's fan in the other. Two whiskey bottles are seen between his coat tails.

"Catlin's message — civilization destroys Indian culture — doesn't get much clearer than this," the exhibit's catalog says.

For Catlin, the grip of Indian country was strong and enduring. "If my life is spared, nothing shall stop me short of visiting every nation of Indians on the continent of North America," he wrote early in his quest.

"Man feels here the thrilling sensation, the force of illimitable freedom" he wrote after one of his last journeys. "The Indian muse dwell here and I have learned there is poetry in the very air of this place."

Born in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., on July 26, 1796, Catlin might have been a lawyer had he not discovered an artist's ability to penetrate below the skin to the character of the person before his easel. He saw his mission as one of "snatching from a hasty oblivion what could be saved for the benefit of posterity, and perpetuating it as a fair and just monument, to the memory of a truly lofty and noble race."

Catlin's government gave him reason to hurry. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 was forcing Indians from their land and threatening a way of life.

On March 26, 1832, Catlin stepped aboard the steamer Yellowstone and began an 1,800-mile voyage up the Missouri River to Fort Union.

Working rapidly over the next three months he painted all the river tribes: the Mandan, Teton Sioux, Assiniboine, Blackfeet and Crow, returning with more than 135 portraits, landscapes, hunting scenes and scenes of Indian life. Over the next four years he visited 50 tribes living west of the Mississippi. He called his subjects "the finest models in all Nature."

The show tells all of Catlin's story: his attempts to profit from his efforts; his financial struggles; his decision to move the Catlin Indian Gallery to Europe, where audiences might be more receptive; and his efforts to persuade Congress the collection needed to remain in American hands.

Although Congress never agreed to purchase them, Catlin's paintings came to the Smithsonian in 1879, seven years after the artist's death.

They were the gift of the widow of a Philadelphia industrialist. He had acquired them after agreeing to pay Catlin's debts.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 35 years.



Bible's prophecies deserve everyone's attention

My past eight columns have been devoted to counting down the top 10 reasons everyone should read the Bible. The no. 10 reason is the Bible's account of creation; no. 9 is the Bible moves hearts; no. 8 is the Bible is the only guide to religious truth; no. 7 is it is a guidebook for living and teaches lessons about life; no. 6 is it chronicles the formation of the Christian congregation; no. 5 is its stories of imperfect men and women provide examples for us; no. 4 is Jesus' death in behalf of mankind; and no. 3 is the Bible's theme of God's kingdom.

This week's column will cover the no. 2 reason: the Bible's prophecies have meaning for us today.

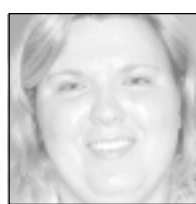
Many details related to Jesus' birth and death, the timing of his appearance as the Messiah and his ministry on earth were foretold accurately in the Bible hundreds of years before he was born.

Psalm 69:9 contains a prophecy about Jesus which says, "For sheer zeal for your house has eaten me up, and the very reproaches of those reproaching you have fallen upon me."

John 2:13-17 tells us of an occasion on which Jesus' disciples recognized that this prophecy had been fulfilled. John wrote, "Now the passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those selling cattle and sheep and doves and the money brokers in their seats. So, after making a whip of ropes, he drove all those with the sheep and cattle out of the temple, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he said to those selling the doves: 'Take these things away from here! Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise!' His disciples called to mind that it is written: 'The zeal for your house will eat me up.'"

Psalm 41:9 foretold, "Also the man at peace with me, in whom I trusted, who was eating my bread, has magnified his heel against me."

Peter talked about the fulfillment of that prophecy in a talk recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 1:15-17 says, "Now during these days Peter



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

rose up in the midst of the brothers and said, "Men, brothers, it was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled, which the holy spirit spoke beforehand by David's mouth about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus, because he had been numbered among us and he obtained a share in this ministry."

These and many other examples show that the Bible's prophecies have been and will be fulfilled accurately. What does this mean for us today?

At Matthew 24:3, Jesus' disciples asked him about a future time. Jesus' answer in verses 7 and 8 describe conditions like we see today. Those verses say, "'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and the conclusion of the system of things?' For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress."

Revelation 12:7-9 and 12 tell us of events in heaven leading up to these times of distress: "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original Serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."

Notice that Satan and his angels, or demons, were cast out of heaven, and the time following that event would bring woe for the earth. Few people would argue that we are not seeing woe on earth today.

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, widespread economic problems, starvation in many countries and natural disasters leave many wondering why the world is this way. The Bible answers that question: Satan has a short period of time.

A short period of time for what? Revelation 16:14 says, "They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and perform signs, and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty."

Satan has a short period of time to gather as many people to his side as possible before the war of the great day of God, also known as Armageddon.

By causing anguish on earth, he is leading many to believe that God does not care about us or will not intervene in our suffering. But that is not the case.

Many people fear Armageddon and think that as the end of the world, it literally means a complete destruction of the earth. Is that the case?

2 Peter 3:13 says, "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."

What will be destroyed at Armageddon is the world as we know it, with crime, violence, sickness, suffering and death being commonplace. But something better awaits. Revelation 21:4 says that death will be no more.

Psalm 37:11 says, "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."

Since right now is the time of distress and woe, and Satan has a short period of time, this happy future is not far off. Reading and understanding Bible prophecies will help us to understand why the world is experiencing such problems today and what is to come in the near future.

Voters' concerns about schools prompt statements

Tim Shallenburger decided last week that as the Republican nominee for governor, he needed to clarify his position on education spending.

He said he doesn't want to cut aid to public schools if he is elected, despite the state's financial problems and his promise not to increase taxes.

Shallenburger even said Friday that he believes the state could cut as much as \$200 million from other programs and agencies in the state's \$4.4 billion budget to avoid making cuts in public schools.

There's little mystery as to what prompted Shallenburger to make his remarks. Democratic candidate Kathleen Sebelius attacked Shallenburger, portraying him as an advocate of cuts in spending on public schools.

Shallenburger doesn't want such an image planted in voters' minds before the Nov. 5 general election. His success could depend upon preventing Sebelius from winning support from moderate Republicans, many of whom see education as an important issue.

"Every poll that is taken asking Kansans what their priorities are comes back with the same answer, that what the overwhelming majority views as the No. 1 priority is education," said state GOP Chairman Mark Parkinson. "An overwhelming majority of Kansans do not want education cut. They want other things cut."

Shallenburger's predicament seemed a natural outgrowth of his conservative politics, and a spirited Republican primary race against Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson, and Wichita Mayor Bob Knight.

Kerr and Knight said they didn't want to raise taxes but would do so to prevent cuts in aid to public schools.

Shallenburger said he wouldn't increase taxes. He said Kansans think their taxes are too high, and that government is inefficient. He argued that enough people are suffering the effects of the national economic slump that it would seem cruel to them to take more money out of their pockets for government.

Initially, Sebelius, the insurance commissioner, seemed to be in the trickier position because she



john hanna

• ap news analysis

ducked the issue of higher taxes.

When asked whether she would be willing to increase taxes, she said the debate should begin with a top-to-bottom review of state government to find efficiencies, which she would initiate. She hasn't been more specific.

But on the morning after the Aug. 6 primary, Shallenburger told reporters: "I think schools could make it with 1 percent or 2 percent or 3 percent less if the alternative is raising taxes."

Less than two weeks later, Gov. Bill Graves, a Republican, cut \$41 million in spending from the \$4.4 billion budget because of the state's financial problems. The state's 303 school districts lost \$17.4 million, dropping their per-pupil spending figure \$27, to \$3,863.

Then, last week, Shallenburger said he had not said he wanted to cut education, adding, "We have said we want to hold education harmless, that we think it's a top priority."

The Sebelius campaign jumped, issuing a memo to reporters that described that statement as "Tim's tale," contrasting with the post-primary statement.

For good measure, Sebelius aides cited two votes in 1995 and 1996 in which Shallenburger was against increases in per-pupil spending for education.

"We hope these kinds of contradictions from Tim Shallenburger will not continue," the memo said, promising Sebelius would "correct the record and answer falsehoods and distortions whenever they arise."

Shallenburger noted that Sebelius was citing votes against increases, not votes for cuts in school spending. He also said that over the years, minority Democrats have routinely offered expensive budget amendments, so that they could use Republicans' 'no' votes against them.

"It's the oldest trick in the book," he said. "They'd chuckle and write a post card for their campaigns."

Shallenburger then said the state can avoid both a cut in aid to public schools and a tax increase at the same time, by cutting up to \$200 million in spending elsewhere, if necessary.

However, that \$200 million would represent 9.5 percent of the \$2.1 billion in general tax dollars spent outside of public schools, the bulk of it on state universities and social services.

To be fair, Sebelius' rhetoric has sometimes led her to the same place.

When she's asked how the state could increase aid to public schools without a tax increase, she sometimes points to Missouri as an example of how it can be done. There, she noted, the General Assembly managed to increase state aid by about 6.5 percent, or \$135 million, without raising any taxes.

"It does get difficult, but what you do is make that the No. 1 priority," she said during an interview.

Sebelius isn't acknowledging that Missouri lawmakers cut higher education and social services. In fact, that state has been sued over reductions in dental services for the needy and nursing home reimbursements.

Given that aid to public schools consumes about half of the state's general fund revenues, the state will have a difficult — and possibly next-to-impossible — time avoiding a cut there if a governor and legislators are determined not to increase taxes.

But that's probably not what many voters want to hear.

"Education is an important issue in this state," said State Democratic Chairman Tom Sawyer. "People are very concerned about their schools taking another cut."

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