The Broken Yellow Brick Road

by Richard Burton, Publisher

â€œPay no attention to the man behind the curtain!â€• A famous phrase from The Wizard of Oz echoed through the minds of Topeka residents after reading a published letter from Mark Phelps, son of Pastor Fred Phelps, who broke away from the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka thirty-two years ago. In an attempt to dispel any illusions and in an effort to educate the public on his fatherâ€™s fanatical point of view, he instructed the citizens of Topeka to recognize Pastor Phelps as â€œa small, pathetic old manâ€•, not a powerful man of God.

Despite his efforts at simply waving away the actions of a confused, old man, Pastor Phelps and his church, the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, are very difficult to ignore. The group was a no show after threatening to picket the memorial service of Bend native, Marine Lance Cpl. Randy Lee Newman last Tuesday in protest of Americaâ€™s tolerance of homosexuals. To protest gays at the memorial service of a fallen soldier is pure lunacy. How dare this group of crack-pot fruit loops trudge near the funeral or memorial service of a fallen soldier with picket signs reading â€œGod Hates Fagsâ€•, â€œThank God for Dead Soldiersâ€•, â€œThank God for IEDsâ€• and â€œYouâ€™re Going to Hellâ€• while dragging the American flag on the ground beneath their soiled feet? These families struggle with enough grief without a cult of crazies parading at the funerals of their loved ones.

Phelps and his brain washed followers believe that God had irreversibly cursed America. The group claims Washburn University students bombed the church with an IED (improvised explosive devise) and believes that God is now killing Americans in retaliation with Muslim IEDs, using Bible scripture to back up their insanity. In a recent news release by the Westboro Baptist Church the group cites, â€œTouch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.â€• 1 Chron. 16:22. â€œFor it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.â€• Rom 12:19. In protesting the funeral of Army Pvt. Joseph R. Blake, the group released in a news flier the following statement: God Almighty killed Army Pvt. Blake. He died in shame, not honor - for a fag nation cursed by God: â€œBuried with the burial of an ass.â€• Jer. 22:19, and thence into Hell with his soldier pals. A favorite slogan of the group is â€œThey turned America over to fags; theyâ€™re coming home in body bags.â€•

These quotes and statements speak for themselves. This group is loony tunes central. Just look at the names of their web sites, godhatesfags.com, godhatesamerica.com, signofthetimes.net and hatemongers.com. Besides gaining national attention by interrupting funeral services of soldiers killed in battle, Phelpsâ€™ religious sect also claims terrorist acts to be acts of God. To these fruitcakes, September 11th was to be expected. After all, we are a nation that supports gays. God was only exercising his wrath. The church has released the following statement: You bombed our church and instituted a 15-year reign of terror against us - for warning you of fag sins. America is now in Godâ€™s eternal crosshairs. They also contend that Hurricane Katrina was a result of Godâ€™s hatred toward homosexuals and Americaâ€™s tolerance of them. America is not the only country blasted by Phelpsâ€™ forked tongue. The 2004 Asian Tsunami was also a result of Godâ€™s vengeance. But Phelps does not disapprove of the Asians and neither does God. Itâ€™s the Swedes that God is angry with this time, for also supporting homosexuals. So, according to the very logical pastor, Asians were drowned because of Swedish beliefs. Makes perfect sense, right? Wrong. What makes more sense is the fact that Phelpsâ€™ son, Mark Phelps, the very son that asked The Topeka Capital Journal to publish his letter regarding his fatherâ€™s warped mind, married a Lutheran girl of Swedish origin. In Phelpsâ€™ mind, his sonâ€™s wife separated him from the family, giving him another group to hate, as noted on his other website, godhatessweden.com. Anyone that goes against Phelps thinking becomes a target. This is hardly the wrath of God. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, but laugh, laugh a lot.

Most amusing is that this group is hung up on the â€œfagâ€• word. On godhatesfags.com, the group explains the origin of the word, referring to it as a bundle of sticks. Any logical thinking person already understands where this thinking is headed. Thatâ€™s right, a bundle of sticks is to be burned or tossed into the fire. Thinking themselves very clever and witty, the Westboro Loonieâ€™s have latched onto this word with every last breath. It seems to be their only calling, the one word that blankets nearly every single picket sign. â€œFags burn in Hell!â€• Certainly, intelligent beings everywhere will recognize the irony and nod their heads in agreement. Fags are sticks of wood. Wood burns. Fags must burn in hell. Surely anyone with even the tiniest measure of intelligence can recognize the code word that God has created, after all, His chosen people are carrying the signs! Wake up, Fred Phelps, even a halfwit would never buy your load of sticks. Theyâ€™re merely hollowed out logs of hate and bigotry.

Most of this mindset stems from the play The Laramie Project, which was later made into an HBO movie, depicting reactions of the people of Laramie, Wyoming to the hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepard. Phelps is portrayed in a negative light after the church picketed the funeral. The pastor blasted a profanity laced sermon to the mourners, condemning Shepard to Hell while informing all in attendance of the assurance that they would one day join the dead young man in the fire pit, to burn for eternity. The church continues to picket any performances of the play to this day. How dare this pastor of good will be defamed?

The Westboro Baptist Church has slightly fewer than 100 members, 90% of whom are related to the eccentric zealot, either by blood or marriage, though there are claims within the group that only 80% are related. With only a possible 20% membership outside of this family of nuts, they can easily be likened to a wacko traveling circus-cult. Phelps has 13 children, 54 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Over the past 12 years, the church has protested over 22,000 times, picketing in 22 states and in foreign countries. In 2003, before the fall of Sadaam Hussein, Phelps wrote Hussein, asking the dictator for permission to visit Iraq in order to condemn America as well as homosexuality. Misery loves company. Hussein granted the crazies permission to visit. Members were soon seen parading the streets of Baghdad. Ironically, the group carried signs condemning Bill and Hillary Clinton, though George Bush was president by then. Apparently, the group hates the Clintons more for their work towards legislation for gay rights. On the brink of war, this hate group carries anti-American signage after asking for permission from a vile dictator. Clearly, they are all insane.

On May 29, 2006, Congress enacted the Respect for Americaâ€™s Fallen Heroes Acts, prohibiting protests within 300 feet of the entrance of a cemetery from 60 minutes before to 60 minutes after a funeral. Penalties for violating the act are up to $100,000 in fines and up to one year imprisonment. This was passed in an effort to stop the disrespectful display of our nationâ€™s most mentally ill. Many states have also began enacting similar legislation. Counter protesters like the Patriot Guard Riders, a group of motorcycle riders have formed barriers to prevent the freakish cult from picketing funerals and memorial services. Phelps and his church were

sued in June of this year by Albert Snyder whose son Lance Cpl.. Matthew A. Snyder was killed in the line of duty. Snyder sued the hate mongers for defamation, invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Also included in the lawsuit is the statement made on one of the websites that Mr. and Mrs. Snyder â€œraised (Matthew) for the devilâ€• and taught him â€œto defy his Creator, to divorce, and to commit adultery.â€• The church also picketed the funeral of Al Goreâ€™s father in 1998 since Gore is a staunch supporter of gay rights.

A former lawyer, Phelps was disbarred in 1979 by the Kansas Supreme Court for unethical business practices and was kicked out of a co-pastoring position in 1954 for publicly condemning a woman for adultery. For years he earned his income through what he referred to as â€œThe Childrenâ€™s Crusadeâ€• by forcing his own children to sell candy door to door. Phelpsâ€™ bigotry does not end at gays. Though he has fought for blacksâ€™ rights, he has referred to the black race as â€œthe servant of the servantâ€• or of the white race. One of the founding members of Westboro Baptist Church, Charles Williams, was allegedly a member of the Christian Identity Sect of the Ku Klux Klan. Phelps has been arrested for battery, threats, assaults, trespassing, disorderly conduct and contempt of court. This is clearly a bunch of lunatic, bigoted thugs, intent on harassing and defaming hard working Americans as well as fallen soldiers all in the name of Godâ€™s wrath. One need only look at Phelpsâ€™ tainted past, full of dark manipulation. The coward surrounds himself with brainwashed family members, flipping the switches and pulling cords while hiding behind the curtain. Fred Phelps is no man of God, but crazy enough to think heâ€™s stuck in Oz. Perhaps a hefty dose of thorazine is needed at the next protest.