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The Bible Tells Me So

by Jonathan Wilson

When asked what she thinks of homosexuality, the 85-year-old Carol Channing was recently quoted in the Cleveland publication, *Gay People's Chronicle*, "You know what the Bible says about that." I think I do know. I think Channing doesn't. She's not alone. If you can stomach hearing it, you can tune in to Sunday evening televangelists and her misperception is repeated there regularly.

In fact, **the Bible says nothing whatsoever about homosexuality.** Now hear me out. The Bible, in several places, does condemn homosexual behavior. There is a difference. Only those who don't know there's a difference continue to think the Bible condemns "homosexuality."

First Century thinkers, and those today who haven't progressed in enlightenment beyond them, believed that all God's children are straight. If that were factually true, the Biblical admonition against same gender intimacy would be right on the mark. If all God's children were straight, same gender intimacy would be just another example of straight people acting out. One of many examples, I might add. It would certainly be unnatural and, I suppose, even an abomination (to use the Biblical hyperbole). It would legitimately be in the category of a wide range of behaviors typically, and for the most part legitimately, condemned in civilized society. Bestiality. Pedophilia. Rape. Sodomasochism. You name it. Some, gay and straight, engage in one or more of these behaviors. When they do, gay or straight, they are behaving badly, and usually committing a crime to boot.

That some of God's children are homosexual, that is, same-gender oriented, was not recognized until at least 1935, basically a couple of thousand years after the Bible was written (the Old Testament at least, where the most oft quoted supposed condemnation appears). I have a copy of an unabridged Webster's dictionary copyright 1935, and the term "homosexual" does not appear.

The Biblical writer, divinely guided or not, believed that the earth is flat, with heaven above, hell below, and an inevitable fall off the edge if someone like Columbus sailed too far

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, February 2 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our guest speaker will be Craig Smith, Aviation Director of the Des Moines International Airport.

- ▼ R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, January 30 to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or 288-2500 by phone.

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west. The Biblical writers are regularly forgiven this obvious mistake in order to find the capital “T” Truth in the Scriptures. The Biblical writer, divinely guided or not, believed that the earth is the center of the created universe with the sun, moon, and stars revolving around it. They were wrong. Read up on Copernicus and the fate of Galileo if you don’t believe me. Today the Biblical writers are readily forgiven their obvious misunderstanding of basic astronomy in order to still find the capital “T” Truth in the Scriptures.

The Biblical writer, despite divine inspiration, believed that all God’s children are straight. They wrote to that supposed audience. A contrary reality didn’t occur to them. And they were wrong. We need to be willing to forgive the Biblical writers this further mistaken understanding of fact, or we are destined to misunderstand the capital “T” Truth embraced by the Bible.

Christians need to be reminded that Jesus, at least as quoted in the Bible, never said one word about homosexuality, or homosexual behavior for that matter. You’d think that if it were as morally important as gay detractors today would have people believe, their Christ would have made at least a passing reference. Something like, “Oh, by the way, you adults of the same gender shouldn’t be doing intimate stuff with each other.” They could also be well-reminded of the many things Christ did have to say about married straight people acting out in ways that Christians are wont to do with utter abandon, and in reliance upon a forgiving God.

Know this my gay brothers and sisters. Any time you hear someone with a First Century mindset assert that the Bible condemns homosexuality, know that they are saying you don’t exist. Know they’re claiming that you are merely a misguided straight person acting out. Know that they are wrong. You are a whole person, a child of a creator, a creative God that works in mysterious ways. You owe no apology for who you are, and the Bible can be your friend. You could ask them if they also think, as the Biblical writer did, that the earth is flat or the center of all creation. Or ask them if they think you exist.

—Jonathan Wilson

From the Top of the World to Hoyt Sherman Place

by Bruce Carr

Our premiere guest speaker of 2007 was the first Iowan ever to climb to the summit of Mt. Everest. Charlie Wittmack, scion of two prominent political and industrial Iowa families, reached the “top of the world” in May of 2003 after years of dreaming, climbing planning, networking, and persevering. And on January 5 he brought us the inspiring story and some brilliant slides of his adventure, and used them to teach lessons for achieving anyone’s dream.

“What is a dream?” Charlie began—as he has begun with countless classrooms of Iowa schoolchildren whom he enlisted as members of his “climbing team.” It’s not just a goal, although achieving it will require breaking the objective down into a series of subsidiary long- and short-term goals. But “no

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BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the February 2 meeting by Tuesday, January 30 to Jonathan.Wilson@lawiowa.com or by phone at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Craig Smith of the Des Moines International Airport.

Thanks to David Twombly for introducing our January speaker, Charlie Wittmack.

The Second Annual Governor’s Conference on LGBT Youth is February 22 at Drake University. To register, go to www.iowasafeschools.org. Register early. Last year’s conference sold out.

StageWest presents “Broadway Friday Night” on February 9 at the Stoner Studio Theatre in the Civic Center. You may purchase tickets at the Civic Center box office, through Ticketmaster at 243-1888, or on line at www.civiccenter.org.

Starring
Rudy Youngblood,
Dalia Hernandez,
Mayra Serbulo,
Gerardo Taracena,
Raoul Trujillo, and
Mauricio Amuy
Tenorio

Directed by Mel
Gibson
2Hr 18 Min



Apocalypto is a journey back in time to an ancient America and a civilization rarely, if ever, portrayed by Hollywood—the land of the Maya. However, the time period that director Mel Gibson chose to portray is one that is long after the Mayan civilization peaked. The Toltecs, the ruling society at that time, had conquered the Mayans and twisted their religion into its ultimate darkness—with its worship of Kukulcan, a snake god. Ritual animal sacrifice and perhaps voluntary human sacrifice were replaced with massive blood sacrifices of captured victims.

Even though we know that will be the ultimate destination of our journey, it begins with a boar hunt by a small tribe of forest people who are oblivious to the Toltecs' existence in the Yucatan jungle. The tribe members live pretty much as most native forest inhabitants have lived throughout the world until recently. It is portrayed as an almost idyllic existence of hunting, fishing, and living off the forest with storytelling by elders at the campfire at night. Families were close. Tribal members were close. One of the boar hunters was subject to ridicule for not being able to have a child. This was done through more or less good-humored pranks. After all, the continued existence of the tribe depended upon procreation.

A warning comes to the hunters when they are visited by the remains of a tribe who merely wish to pass through that portion of the forest. "Our tribe was ravaged. We seek a new

beginning," they said while passing. The only members remaining in that tribe were the elderly and children with almost no one of adult age. After that tribe has gone, one of the boar hunters has a shamanic dream that tells him to "Run!" But it is too late, and their tribe is ravaged by a band of Toltec warriors who are hunting for sacrificial victims and slaves. **Apocalypto** began with a quote from historian William Durant, "A great civilization is not destroyed from without until it has been destroyed from within." This is the point of the film. The captured tribe members are forced into a death march to the Toltec city, and as they march deeper into the city, the civilization becomes darker and darker until they reach the apex of the darkness, a massive human sacrifice to the cheers of a mob.

Gibson has done a masterful job of developing a story to portray this mixture of ancient American societies. The actors all speak Mayan. There are English subtitles, similar to his film, **The Passion of the Christ**. It does add to the feeling of authenticity and the subtitles are easy to follow; it does not cut into the effectiveness of the movie at all. Although the human sacrifices and battle scenes are very bloody and graphic, the film is not nearly as difficult and painful to sit through as **The Passion of the Christ** where I found myself wanting Christ to die already to end the suffering of both the character and myself as a member the audience. If you are willing to make **Apocalypto**'s dark journey, you will be glad you went.

One last item worth mentioning is that Gibson's film, unlike most Hollywood depictions of ancient civilizations, shows the characters dressed as they would have actually appeared. For those of us who might appreciate the appearance of naked, athletic male posteriors, the entire movie has the men in loin cloths. Although it is hard to appreciate all the backsides amid all the gore, I would definitely have to give this aspect of the movie a "Two Buns Up!"

—Gary Kaufman

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pursuit is more important than the chasing of a dream,” as he’s written on his Web site www.wittmack.com. And although identifying your dream may be a solitary search, achieving it is unlikely to be a solo effort. “On Mount Everest I was challenged by some of the most difficult weather the mountain has suffered in recorded history. Had I been climbing alone I would have surely turned around when the temperatures dropped and the winds began to peak. But as I climbed over the Hillary Step and trudged slowly towards the summit, I felt the support of all of those back home. My feet became a little lighter, my breathing a bit steadier, and soon enough we reached that summit together.”

Charlie Wittmack’s intense climbing days seem to be on hold for the time being: he’s recently married (to the woman who—as he amusingly noted—told him to climb his mountain first and then come back and ask again) and has bought a house and started working as a lawyer. But, he concluded, “As we Iowans face increasingly serious economic and social challenges, let’s not forget our greatest qualities. If we can continue to dream, and continue to work together, I am certain the summit is just ahead.”

—Bruce Carr

From the Editor (Continued from page 6)

have the Varied Industries Building renovated, but I don’t care how much you try to tart that place up for a ball, it still looks like—well—the Varied Industries Building. And adding insult to injury, the so-called “Black Tie Event” featured hot dogs and funnel cakes as the bill of fare for the evening! I don’t know about you, but when I put on a tuxedo, I don’t want to eat hot dogs and funnel cakes. The entire concept just didn’t work and was more of an embarrassment than a celebration. I left early.

4. On the national level, Bush’s decision to ratchet up the war in Iraq has to be the second greatest blunder of his administration (the first being his initial decision to go to war in Iraq). The man is simply incapable of learning. He didn’t learn from his party’s losses in

the November election; he didn’t learn from the bipartisan Iraq War recommendations; and he didn’t learn that many in his own political party recognize the stupidity of his “strategy.” I am usually optimistic that the Republic will survive even the worst of Presidents, but I’m not so sure about this one. Before he goes, we will be lucky if the Bill of Rights is still a part of the Constitution.

This old world has its strange occurrences. Keeping a sense of humor helps in coping with them.

—Steve Person

Adventure and Culture in South America

or

Two Gay Men On Tour

by Michael Thompson & Allen Vander Linden



aving D.M. on November 21 eliminated our preparing of T-Day dinner and replaced two weeks of early Iowa winter with two weeks of late tropical spring.

Because English is spoken less in Latin America than many areas of the world, we decided to connect with a tour group rather than head out on our own. We decided against the luxury hotel/motor coach package and opted for the G.A.P. adventure tour. G.A.P. tours are limited to 12 people plus a bilingual guide. Group members can decide what to see and choose among many available physical activities, individually or with the group. These tours typically appeal to the single, young, international, adventure seeker. This one also attracted two gay men in their early sixties from Iowa.

Although we were the oldest of the group by several decades, and the only Americans, we fit in surprisingly well. Our vacation was only two weeks. The other 10 group members were committing 6-12 months of their lives on varying legs of this South American tour and other destinations thereafter. How many young *Americans* do you know who decide to

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leave their career and travel for a year?

The trip began with sight seeing in the big city of Buenos Aires, with its impressive European architecture, monuments, wide boulevards, and parks. We saw the Casa Rosouda from which Evita sang “Don’t Cry For Me Argentina” (well, supposedly she addressed the crowds from there). Our tour ended in Santiago, Chile, a smaller city, but we felt was more interesting with parks, plazas, markets, and a gay center.

What made this trip unusual were the choices of activities offered in the small communities and lake/mountain resort areas. They included hiking to a glacier, rafting a river swollen by snow melt on class III and IV rapids (paddling like hell, and yes, the water was coooold!), making an ascent to the 9000' summit of an active volcano in Chile, boating to an island in the Pacific to observe two kinds of penguins, horseback riding on mountain trails, and mountain biking.

Here are some observations from our North American cultural perspective:

We found very little English spoken locally so we did need Jose, our guide (also amicable, fun, and easy on the eyes). The food included fresh seafood; great local beer; cheap, good wine; bottled water; and instant Nescafé coffee (what happened to mountain grown Folgers?). There was very little good native merchandise for sale in Argentina but a somewhat better selection in Chile (like nice fusion glass items for Christmas pre-

sents). The scenery was spectacular—wide beaches, mountain lakes, and volcanoes (200 in Chile alone). Gay life existed in an area of Santiago near our hotel. However, bars become active after midnight, which was a bit late for us. We did patronize a fine gay-owned restaurant and took part of our tour group there another night. If you like your men with that dark, brown-eyed, slim, Latin look, you are in luck. The perception of the USA shared by other tour group members was not positive. If the USA was mentioned on an international broadcast of CNN at all, it was usually not favorable. In one broadcast, discussing an important event that happened years ago, a Scottish lass began with, “When the US was a great nation...”

The more adventurous approach rather than the four star hotel/motor coach type of tour isn’t for everyone, but it sure worked for us.

—Michael Thompson & Allen Vander Linden



FFBC Scholarship Awards

Award Year	Number of Scholars	Award Amount
1997	1	\$ 3,000.00
1998	2	3,000.00
1999	3	3,000.00
2000	4	8,000.00
2001	4	3,000.00
2002	3	2,500.00
2003	5	7,500.00
2004	4	6,000.00
2005	11	13,000.00
2006	11	8,000.00
Totals	48	\$ 57,000.00

Tax-deductible scholarship contributions are always welcome!

**FIRST FRIDAY BREAKFAST CLUB
DUES SCHEDULE**

First Time Guest.....\$12 Per Meeting
 Full-Time Student.....\$7 Per Meeting
 Non-Member.....\$18 Per Meeting
 Member (includes Newsletter Subscription):
 ◆ \$36 Per Calendar Quarter or
 ◆ \$125* Per Year (save \$19)

Newsletter Subscription:
 Non-Member.....\$15 Per Year
 Full-Time Student\$10 Per Year

* Payment must be received before the end of February



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*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

FEBRUARY 2007

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From the Editor

Looking at the world around me sometimes reveals strange and difficult-to-explain circumstances. The following are just a few of the absurd observations I witnessed recently.

1. While on my daily two-mile constitutional on the skywalk, I came across a piece of graffiti. On one of the advertisements near the Liberty Building, a Bible thumper had scrawled across it, "Jesus loves you." I have nothing against the idea of Jesus loving me, but what I found really disconcerting was that whoever this anonymous scribbler was, he found it necessary to make his proclamation by defacing public property. It just didn't seem appropriate to have a religious zealot scribbling on the walls of the skywalk. The following day, as I walked by, I noticed that someone had crossed out the word "Jesus" and substituted it with the word "Satin." Like Alice in Wonderland, I found this curiouiser than the original greeting. I like satin as well as the next guy, but when a person looks upon himself as a proponent of the Devil, I would have thought he would at least know how to spell "Satan." The dumbing down of graffiti sank to a new level.
2. Speaking of sinking to new levels, the Republican minority leaders in the Eighty-second Iowa General Assembly could take a lesson in learning to turn the other cheek. Neither Senate Minority Leader Mary Lundby of Linn County nor House Minority Leader Christopher Rants of Woodbury County could see fit to attend the special session of the Legislature for the inauguration of Iowa's new Governor, Chet Culver, at the Wells Fargo Arena on January 12. So much for the spirit of bipartisanship that both of them so vocally espoused after their party's spectacular losses in the November general election. Hypocrisy continues to be alive and well in the Republican Party. The ceremony, however, had its high spots, the most obvious being the performance of the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus. They did a spectacular job.
3. And that brings me to the Inaugural Ball the evening of January 12. It was held at the Varied Industries Building at the Iowa State Fair Grounds. That has to be the dumbest place ever to have an inaugural ball. I realize that Bill and Susan Knapp were co-chairs of the inaugural committee and that Bill Knapp spent all kinds of money to

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