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A DIVINE DILEMMA

by Jonathan Wilson

If you're reading this, it may be fairly bad news. You see, publication is scheduled for after May 21, 2011, the forecast date that Jesus is to return and take up with him the few "true believers" and commence ending the world. Not just the world as we know it, but the utter end of the world itself and the end of time to boot. The actual completion of that world-ending, time-ending exercise is supposedly going to take several months to accomplish after the true believers are taken up. No explanation has been offered for why it is that what it took God seven days to create He can't manage to destroy in that same timeframe or less. Admittedly, the forecast is for considerable tribulation and some pretty unpleasant experiences for those left behind, but if that's to be followed by eternal hell, as the "true believers" claim, what could be the point of waiting? Since eternity is such a long time and hell will presumably be worse, logic would question why God would grant a brief, albeit unpleasant, postponement of hell-fire.

According to those who claim "true believer" status, they will be taken up on May 21, 2011, to spend eternity together in the bosom of the Lord. Good riddance. Therein lies the dilemma for the Divine. Given those "true believers" that I know, my remaining life here on earth will be measurably more pleasant without having them around. And, frankly, I don't relish spending eternity with those folks in the bosom of God or elsewhere. That would be at least a touch of hell for me. And it couldn't be completely heaven for them either, having me and others like me there in heaven with them forever.

The story is told of a gay married couple who went to heaven. Saint Peter is showing them around and, as they walk along, he points out a series of rooms, saying, "That's where we keep the Muslims; that's where we keep the Hindus; that's where we keep the Mormons; and that's where we keep the Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and so forth. They then come to another, more remote room and Saint Peter admonishes the couple to keep their voices down as they walk by. In response to the obvious question, Saint Peter whispers, "That's where we keep the Evangelical Christians; they think they're the only ones up here."

Someone is lying and we who aren't shouldn't stand for it any longer. They're lying about the end of the world and the end of time. They're lying about being "true believers" and about being "chosen." And they're lying when they suggest that all of God's children are straight -- the supposedly gay ones being merely errant straight people. They're lying, therefore, when they implicitly say that gay children of God don't exist. We who are gay *know* from first-hand knowledge and beyond a shadow of a doubt that we do exist. We're alive, we're well, we're getting even better, and we are of infinite worth. We're sinners alright, but not because we're gay.

We who are gay need to stop buying into the lies. We need to come out. We need to claim our birth right. We need be less silent and more unapologetically outspoken. We need to be seen *and* heard. For those of us raised in the Christian tradition, we need to reclaim the Gospel that is good news -- and only good news -- for *all* of God's children. We need to stop marrying unsuspecting straight people. It will be, as the Bible suggests, unnatural, not to mention unkind and a flirtation with domestic disaster.

The Bible warns that there will be false prophets. It's got that right. Confidently, we can expect that false prophets won't readily admit it. Heck, they may not even know they are

(Continued on page 2)

INSIDE

- May Speaker Review by Bruce Carr 2
- Thor Movie Review by Gary Kaufman 3
- Briefs & Shorts 3
- My M.O. by Steve Person 4

CALENDAR

▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, June 3, 2011 at Hoyt Sherman Place.

Our speaker will be Dr. Raynard Kington.

▼ R.S.V.P. by Wednesday June 1 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

circulating untruths. Unfortunately, the Bible offers precious little to help us figure out who is and isn't a false prophet. We are left to do that based on whatever we know to be true from our personal. Anyone caught lying about a known truth is a prime candidate for false prophet status. I know, for example, that gay children of God exist because I am one. There's no speculation or anything theoretical about it. Knowing that fixed reality, I can confidently test for false prophets.

May 22, 2011, offers us another opportunity for getting in touch with a fixed, known reality. On that day, a bunch of purported "true believers" will be mysteriously absent from the face of the earth, or they won't. If they're still around, we'll know they were lying. And if they were lying about the end of the world and the end of time, they can't be believed on just about anything else.

In actuality, the dilemma that logic would suggest is the thing that doesn't exist. Logic, of course, has little to do with any of this. It would appear that, for the "true believers," God gave us minds with the intention that we wouldn't use them. If that's the case, the "true believers" are certainly fulfilling God's intention.

Willits: A Visionary and an Institution

by Bruce Carr

Returning for a second time to FFBC as guest speaker in May was Martha Willits, a long-time friend and ally of our community, both personally and professionally. A native of Eagle Grove who raised her family in Des Moines, Martha has always been vitally involved here, working as a teacher in the Des Moines Public Schools, serving for a dozen years as an elected member of the Polk County Board of Supervisors, and heading the United Way of Central Iowa from 1996 to 2004.

As President and CEO of the Greater Des Moines Partnership (www.desmoinesmetro.com) since 2004, Martha Willits is responsible for operational oversight of the Partnership's annual multi-million-dollar budget which supports economic development programs growing the metropolitan area, member business development and networking programs, government policy and legislative strategies at local, state and federal levels, as well as program support for all the affiliated chambers of commerce. She is also responsible for maintaining strategic alliances with business, education, and government throughout the community and the entire region.

On May 6, Martha outlined to us the Partnership's latest ambitious project, called "Capital Crossroads" (www.capitalcrossroadsvision.com), a new envisioning strategy to succeed and bring forward the Partnership's previous successful endeavors in community development. She pointed first to accomplishments in

education, the arts, and health and recreation that the Partnership has already realized, citing in particular public arts (foundation of the funding agency Bravo Greater Des Moines and creation of the Pappajohn Sculpture Park in the Western Gateway) and the proliferation and connection of recreational trails for hiking and biking.

Now, she said, the vision must be even larger. Central Iowa is already blessed with an unusually large group of civic leaders and institutions who are truly and continually engaged in the vitality of our region. What's needed now and in the near future is a cadre of as many as 10,000 workers -- who must come from outside Iowa. That means making our nine-county region even more attractive. Capital Crossroads' guiding principles are therefore talent, opportunities, and sustainable growth, based in community participation and input.

Martha's presentation was wide-ranging and swift -- the time flew by -- and concluded with a few questions and remarks from her many friends in the audience.

- CAPITAL CROSSROADS -

Greater Des Moines and Central Iowa is indeed at an important crossroads point. The region has vibrant neighborhoods, a strong business community, dynamic arts and recreational attractions and a desirable quality of life. But the region also has its challenges. Local leaders feel the time is right to take advantage of opportunities and address challenges through a clear vision and plan for Iowa's capital region. This process will result in the development of a new five-year vision strategy for the region.

The Greater Des Moines Partnership, Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, Iowa State University, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Bravo Greater Des Moines, United Way of Central Iowa, Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino and other key partners have retained national consultant Market Street Services to facilitate the development of Greater Des Moines and Central Iowa's strategic plan. The development of Greater Des Moines' community "product" -- the interrelated complement of economic, workforce and community assets that makes the region one of the nation's top mid-sized metro areas -- must be taken to the "next level" if the region is to remain a star performer. Determining exactly what this "next level" represents will be the defining feature of the region's strategic visioning process.

While every day and every month are special and will never come again, consider July 2011. It has 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays, and 5 Sundays. That won't happen again for 823 years!!

It was reported that Donald Trump went to a psychiatrist and was diagnosed as an egomaniacal nut case. Trump wanted a second opinion, so the doctor said, "Okay, I also think you're ugly."



Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.

Thor

Review by Gary Kaufman

The summer cinema season is upon us and my first venture into the season was to see **Thor in 3D**. If this is a precursor to what there is to come, you had better head for the bomb shelters because they are coming down heavy! To illustrate the excitement of someone experiencing this movie in “gripping” 3D, for my first viewing both my partner, Michael, and I fell asleep! For the second viewing, Michael, again fell asleep – and this time it was an 8 p.m. show! I, unfortunately, was not as lucky, and stayed conscious during the second viewing of the film.

To say the 3D action was less than gripping is a vast understatement. Although there are brief instances, especially in the early part of the picture where the story is based upon battles among the gods and there are some exciting 3D affects, a substantial share of the rest of the picture has all the excitement of watching in 3D two people chatting in a bar. And not even having a very exciting conversation.

I must admit, I have not ever read the comic book series upon which this movie is based. When I was a lad, an “action comic” was an adventure of Uncle Scrooge and his nephew Donald Duck. Apparently, in the comic book, Thor gets sent to the modern day world, and this is where the movie really falls apart. The theatrics and the drama between the war of the gods worked well when it occurred in the world of the gods; it really comes up lacking when placed in a modern setting. And the cheesy dialog once the movie gets into the modern setting is excruciating to endure. It makes you want to go out and get some nachos – anything rather than having to listen to such drivel.

So folks, I highly recommend that you miss this one! But if you fail to heed my warning and decide to venture into the land of **Thor in 3D**, I recommend that you try the XD in 3D version that is in at least one theater in town. Although I did not see the film in that theater, I walked in to see the difference. The quality of the 3D was far better than the quality in the standard 3D theaters. For the modern 3D to work, I think it needs the quality of the high definition XD theater. Otherwise, it is definitely a waste of money, especially on this film. So mortals, you are forewarned!

The economy is so bad . . . I received a pre-denied credit card application. So bad . . . if you get a bank notice of “Insufficient Funds” you need to call and see if it’s you or the bank. So bad . . . the mafia is laying off public officials. So bad . . . Motel Six isn’t leaving the light on anymore.

My M. O. (cont. from page 4)

movement. The principal characters are “colored” maids who work in white people’s homes, and who endure sometimes humiliating job situations and yet forge strong bonds with members of the families they work for, especially with the children. When a young white woman returns from college and wonders what became of the maid who literally raised her, she enters into a realm of secrecy that is defined by color. Her resulting research becomes a national bestseller, bringing further strife and yet newfound freedom for all concerned. I understand the book has been made into a film to be released later this year. I recommend you read the book before the movie comes out since Hollywood has a way of butchering good stories in the name of cinema.

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the June 3 meeting no later than June 1. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Dr. Raynard Kington, President of Grinnel College. The June meeting will also feature the winners of our FFBC Scholarships.



Thanks to Byron Huff for his introduction of May speaker, Marth Willits, of the Greater Des Moines Partnership. Thanks to Mark Koskamp for checking out the Hoyt Sherman piano in preparation for our July meeting with the Des Moines Metro Opera.



Save the Date: In addition to our regular meeting on the first Friday of July, there will be party (some insist on calling it a picnic) on **July 16** from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., jointly sponsored with PROS at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden.



Save the Date: An overnight excursion is planned among FFBC members and friends to Shera’s Restaurant in Elkader, Iowa, on September 17-18, 2011. More details to follow.



Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Fred Mount for coordinating the book exchange.



Consider making a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund and/or designating FFBC as the ultimate recipient of your United Way pledge .



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Des Moines, Iowa*

JUNE 2011

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My M.O. (Monthly Observation)

By Steve Person

It's been a month of interesting and diverse reading for me. I usually don't have three books going at the same time, but each was compelling in its own way and genre. One was a book of philosophy, one a biography, and one a novel.

By far, the most important book I've read in quite some time is Christopher Hitchens's **God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything**. When released in 2006, it became a **New York Times** number one bestseller. Regardless of one's religious persuasion—or lack thereof—the book is a thoughtful analysis of the world's main living religions and some of the dead ones, too. All religions, according to Hitchens, are man-made but claim divine inspiration. "Almost all religions from Buddhism to Islam feature either a humble prophet or a prince who comes to identify with the poor, but what is this if not populism?" Regarding Jesus, Hitchens states, "The best argument I know for the highly questionable existence of Jesus is this. His illiterate living disciples left us no record and in any event could not have been 'Christians,' since they were never to read those later books in which Christians must affirm belief, and in any case had no idea that anyone would ever found a church on their master's announcements."

As for Islam, Hitchens claims, "There is some question as to whether Islam is a separate religion at all....Islam when examined is not much more than a rather obvious and ill-arranged set of plagiarisms, helping itself from earlier books and traditions as occasion appeared to require."

The chapter entitled, "The Nightmare of the Old Testament," deals with Jewish law and lore. "...as was said in the book of Genesis, god made all the world in six days and rested on the seventh (leaving room for speculation as to what he did on the eighth day)." In his analysis of the Ten Commandments, Hitchens affirms, "It would be hard to find an easier proof that religion is man-made." The chapter entitled, "Is Religion Child Abuse?" the author says, "As to immoral practice, it is hard to imagine anything more grotesque than the mutilation of infant genitalia. Nor is it easy to imagine anything more incompatible with the argument from design. We must assume that a designer god would pay especial attention to the reproductive organs of his creatures, which are so essential for the continuation of the species." Interesting and provocative reading at its best.

Karen Abbott's **American Rose, A Nation Laid Bare: The Life and Times of Gypsy Rose Lee**, delves into the true story of America's most famous strip tease artist. Unlike the glossy and cleaned up Broadway sensation, **Gypsy**, this book gets to the often unpleasant truth regarding its subject, her sister June Havoc, and her domineering and fascinating mother Rose Thompson Hovick. Abbott is a good writer, but I question when any biographer employs direct quotations about its subject, especially since the subject has been dead for more than forty years. The author simply cannot know what was actually said between Gypsy and her younger sister during their vaudeville days. Still, the book is well researched and a worthwhile read.

I have been waiting for nearly two years for Kathryn Stockett's novel, **The Help**, to come out in paperback, and it finally has. I am not much of a reader of novels, but this one is well written and looks at a small slice of daily life in Jackson, Mississippi, during the early days of the civil rights

(See EDITOR, page 3)