



THE
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE
FIRST FRIDAY
BREAKFAST CLUB, INC.

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CALENDAR

- ▼ The next FFBC meeting is 7:00 A.M., Friday, July 6, 2012, at Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, IA.
- ▼ R.S.V.P. by July 3 to JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or 288-2500 by phone.

First Friday News & Views

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7

BIBLICAL TRADITIONS REVISITED

by Jonathan Wilson

Keith Ratliff recently resigned as a member of the national NAACP Board of Directors and as president of the Iowa-Nebraska Conference of the NAACP because of the parent organization's courageous stance in favor of marriage equality. Before those resignations, Keith and his views on whatever subject were seen as synonymous with the NAACP. In interviews he correctly noted that there has long been a strong religious influence in guiding the mission of the NAACP. For him, as a pastor, the marriage equality stance was a bridge too far, and the all-important distinction between religious dogma and *civil* rights of law-abiding citizens couldn't salvage his long relationship with the organization. Prayerfully he concluded that the "Biblical tradition" supposedly favoring marriage only between a man and a woman must trump all else. He's to be respected for the commitment to his religious principles even though everyone knows that the mere strength of commitment doesn't validate the principles.

One has to wonder just how far Ratliff and others who agree with him want to go in supporting "traditional" things that have arguable support in the Bible. For starters, the tradition of marriage being exclusively between one man and one woman contemplated such unions only one time during the lifetime of both participants. As he advocates for a constitutional amendment restricting civil marriage to one man and one woman based on the Bible, intellectual honesty would require the companion limitation of *one time* only. Put that to a vote and see what happens. Go ahead; bring it on; we can then be done at least with that silliness and move on to issues that are actually important.

Even more "traditional," and with Biblical support, is polygamy. That's undeniable. Go ahead; read the Good Book. It's there and without condemnation. Do Ratliff-thinkers believe, as honesty would appear to require, that the Mormons had it right after all?

While they're looking for traditional things that can find Biblical support, how about the tradition of arranged marriages and the traditional role of women as property? Mere chattel? No different than cattle?

How about the traditional belief that the earth is flat, a belief that managed to survive with support from Biblical writers for more than 1492 years until Columbus proved it wrong?

How about the traditional belief that the earth is the center of the created Universe with the moon *and* sun revolving around it? That notion has Biblical support and long had the support of the church. Would Ratliff-thinkers join in condemning Copernicus for insisting otherwise?

How about the tradition of marriage being confined to people of the same race that was codified in the civil and criminal law, with church support, until Loving v. Virginia in 1967? That may seem like a long time ago to some readers; I was twenty-two years old already in that year.

And while they're at it, how about good-old-fashioned, "traditional" slavery? There's no question that the institution of slavery found Biblical support and was even countenanced by Jesus. Matthew 10:24. It's apparent to anyone familiar with the origins of the Southern Methodist and Southern Baptist churches that too many in the church were on the wrong side of that Biblical "tradition," and history as well.

For my money, I think Ratliff-thinkers would do well to re-read the apostle Paul's Letter to the Galatians. The question posed to Paul was whether non-Jews being asked to become Chris-

(Continued on page 2)

Traditions (cont.)

tians would be required to submit to circumcision in conformity with Jewish law (tradition). Paul answers unequivocally, “No.” Any contrary answer would have nipped in the bud, so to speak, the evangelical efforts of the early Christian church. Paul concludes that, if one has the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control -- there is no law whatsoever that applies. Galatians 5:22. If they don't find that compelling, perhaps Ratliff-thinkers would do well to re-read the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. or the mission of the NAACP.

After that re-reading, augmented with a bit of prayer, perhaps they can then get busy formulating an apology to the LGBT children of God in the grand “tradition” of many before them who got the real Truth in the Bible hurtfully wrong and have later apologized to the victims.

It was not I who brought religious dogma into the public square; it was the likes of Ratliff and VanderPlaats. Once it gets there, it becomes fair game for fair criticism to which it has not, unfortunately, been subjected within the confines of Ratliff's church congregation. And the question is: how much should the demonstrably mistaken, First Century thinking of the Biblical writers guide our civil rights today? Prayerful or not, the answer to that one should be easy.

David Horowitz

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, June 1, was Rabbi David M. Horowitz, national president of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). “We PFLAG folks will always continue to tell our stories and offer support wherever and whenever we are needed,” he said. “That’s one of the things we do best!”



Rabbi Horowitz delivered his own story in a highly amusing -- even stand-up -- fashion that connected directly with his audience: when his daughter came out to them as a lesbian (on the eve of her college graduation), he and his wife “cried all night! I was sure I was the only parent in the world who had a gay child. (I don’t know who I thought birthed gay children.) I believed I was the only clergy person to be so afflicted.

“[But] PFLAG introduced me

to people who were just like me; parents and even *clergy* parents. Still, I moved forward with some fear. What would people think? What would the members of my congregation think?

“But on the course of my personal journey, something incredible happened. As I came out as the parent of a lesbian daughter, so did more than 200 families in my congregation who had a close connection to the LGBT community. As I learned more and found myself around this new and expanding family, I became comfortable ... and was able to reach out to others. That ability to connect with people -- especially those in the very start of their own learning and acceptance process -- keeps me an active part of my local chapter today.”

Rabbi Horowitz emphasized that “we are no longer your parents’ or grandparents’ PFLAG. We began in the 1970s basically as a support group. But times are changing. We’re way past that basic “PFLAG-101” model. It’s time for us to move on to “PFLAG-201” with increased focus on education and advocacy. Anti-gay groups like “Focus on the Family” are now spreading dangerous misinformation about our families and community. It’s time for us to join together in raising our own voices, to tell the world that **PFLAG truly understands what real family values are all about.**”

David M. Horowitz is rabbi emeritus of Temple Israel, Akron, Ohio; he served that congregation from 1983 to 2001. Prior to that post, he served congregations in Indianapolis and Hammond, Indiana; in retirement, he also served a congregation in Gold Coast, Australia. Horowitz has been a part of PFLAG Akron, Ohio, since 1990, and he joined PFLAG’s National Board of Directors 2002. Horowitz’s work was the topic of a chapter entitled “Every Day the Rabbi Helps Gays,” in Dan Woog’s **Friends and Family/True Stories of Gay America’s Straight Allies**, and he wrote the chapter “David” in **A Family and Friends Guide to Sexual Orientation**, ed. Bob Powers and Alan Ellis. Rabbi Horowitz has been married to his wife, Toby, since 1963 and they have two children, Wendy (married -- by her rabbi father -- to her life partner Julian, a transgender man) and Daniel, and three grandchildren. He can be reached at pflagpresident@aol.com.



www.pflag.org

The Purpose of Church

By Jonathan Wilson

The world offers a smorgasbord of religious traditions to non-atheists: Judaism, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Mormonism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i, Chinese Folk, Confucianism, Jainism, New Religion, Parseeism, Shintoism, and Sikhism, Mandeianism. The Protestants boast literally thousands of denominations.

Each religious faith and denomination impliedly seems to claim it has the purpose of life, the existence and nature of God, heaven, hell, what is and isn't "sinful," and what-have-you, all figured out. All un-provable stuff looking for believers. Each implicitly says that all the others have it wrong in one or more particulars. They are forced to focus on seemingly trivial differences in order to maintain their identities as separate faith traditions. When any two of them disagree on whatever topic, however, one or both of them must be wrong. The best, therefore, that can be hoped for is that one -- and only one -- is correct in every respect, and all the rest have missed the mark. For most people, picking that one will be a shot in the dark. Most likely, none of them has it right in all particulars. That leaves each individual with the task of learning as much as possible from whatever source, formulating operating assumptions about religious and philosophical questions, growing in wisdom as Jesus purportedly did also (Luke 2:52), and reformulating those operating assumptions as circumstances and insight dictate.

If fellowship with like-minded folks is desired, one should continuously shop for a religious tradition that best fits, and preferably one that, above all else, values continual questioning and searching, which is our plight -- the curse and joy of the human condition.



*"This, then, is what we stand for: truth, justice and the value of a single human being."*Spenser Tracy to the courtroom, **Judgment at Nuremberg**, 1961.

1492: The year the Spanish Inquisition began and Columbus proved the world is not flat.

BRIEFS & SHORTS

Be sure to RSVP for the July 6 meeting no later than July 3. E-mail JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com or call him at 288-2500. Our speaker will be Matt Russell, agronomy professor at Drake University. He and his husband operate an organic farm.

Ryan Crane will be the new Scholarship committee Chair. Thanks to Allen Vander Linden for his years of exemplary service. Those wanting to serve on the committee should contact Ryan .

Thanks to Ryan Crane for his introduction of our June speaker, Rabbi David Horowitz, national president of PFLAG. Thanks to Scott Klinefelter for helping shepherd him around during his visit .

Congratulations to this year's nine scholarship recipients: Claire Boeke of Ames; Alexander Brown of Council Bluffs; Logun Buckley of Des Moines; Arianna Dahlin of Iowa City; Chanse Dunn of Sioux City via Hinton; Sarah Henderson of Wilton; Ruth Riedl of Iowa City; Derek Steinauer of Marion; and Fabio Vidal of Des Moines .

Out Networking meets the second Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the Kirkwood Lounge (the new home of The Des Moines Social Club), 400 Walnut Street. It is the social, business, and philanthropic networking organization for anyone who is gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or supportive.

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

Also, consider a tax deductible contribution to our scholarship fund, or ask United Way to direct your contributions to FFBC .

Photos of 2012 Award Winners

Photography By Gary Moore



Alexander Brown



Arianna Dahlin



Chanse Dunn



Derek Steinauer



Fabio Vidal



Claire Boeke

Better to see something once than to hear about it 1000 times .



Logan Buckley



The Scholars with Mr. Horowitz and Mr. Vander Linden



Ruth Ann Riedi



Sarah Henderson



Why We Should “Occupy”

By Tony E Hansen

www.tigersndragons.com

The recent protests, called Occupy, or the 99%, have struck a chord with people in this country. Occupy needs to go beyond the protest into a viable reform movement. For decades, powers-that-be have been able to sidestep issues and pacify people using marketing campaigns and rhetorical nonsense. Some are all too willing to accept the rhetoric and deceptions as part of a “gospel” that capitalism is good for all Americans. Remember, capitalism is essentially justification to exploit resources and inequalities in society. Something needs to change or our democracy faces potential unraveling on a grand scale. All boats do not, in fact, rise when more water is given only to the 1%.

Due, in part, to the supposed gospel of capitalism, we have seen the rapid disintegration of faith in government and public sector institutions while corporations have become multinational, “too-big-to-fail” behemoths with a corollary increase in power and influence upon public policy. The only tool that the public has against these powers is through the public institutions but, with deregulation, as well as revolving doors between government and Wall Street, it is easy to see why that tool is inadequate to protect the little guy from those big guys. Yet, Americans are willing to allow private firms, beholden only to their shareholders, to manage public institutions with a belief that these private firms will do a better job. Further, these corporations want the public taxpayers to pick up the tab to build supporting infrastructure or insist upon tax breaks because they are “job creators.” If government is made of people and private companies are made of people, where do we see improvement? Perpetuation of economic inequality and gross over glorification of corporate power is the central grief raised by the Occupy movement.

With the pervasive influence of corporations upon public policy, Americans feel excluded from the process that is supposed to include them. This coincides with research I did for my dissertation. Regulations and the tax code are rigged so that only corporations -- and not individual entrepreneurs -- can take advantage of capitalism. Both political parties are willing to give corporations and the wealthy bailouts and tax breaks, but they balk at the idea of helping people forgive student loan debt or stay in houses. People may have made “poor decisions” to get the loans and houses, but the wealthy made money from accepting those decisions. Yet, they do not want to be responsible for their part in those decisions. Apparently you have to be a millionaire before you “deserve” government assistance.

Education is supposed to be a means to achieve social status: a social equalizer. A simple high school education is no longer enough to sustain a person in the working world. Increasingly, employers are looking for people with expensive college degrees, and with that requirement, many Americans

also build up substantial debt to pay for school costs. Thus, people want to get high paying jobs with “stable” companies and banks, but they have to rack up large amounts of debt to get the credentials that *may* get a job (let alone a well-paying one). This is one of the big issues being echoed in the Occupy protests: that of the crippling costs of education loans.

Debt obligates people to creditors; in this case, the creditors are the banks. The banks barely service the loan but instead just shuffle papers with a guarantee by the federal government. One should wonder how we can allow young adults to rack up education debt without a job and no way to discharge it and, yet, no bank will loan the same people money for a mortgage without jobs or resources. Banks should not even be involved. Increasing education debt levels will not help stimulate the economy.

There is an increasing unwillingness of people to compromise, especially from the Tea Party. There is increasing unwillingness to allow alternative opinions, and there is even a growing willingness to profess complete falsehoods in the name of policy positions that service only the most able in this country (e.g. supply-side economics, military build-ups, defunding public schools, deregulated health care and financial systems). Ironically, there is a complete disregard for the concept of frugality (a core conservative value) with a perpetuation of gluttonous appetites for all things material through a vain, adolescent, boastful, selfish claim: “It’s mine.” This is incivility at its worst and is a primary objection raised by many of the Occupy movement.

There is an ugly and heavy hand of religion being deployed in public policy development. Respect for religion has morphed into an idolatry of religion, specifically Evangelical-Protestant sects, as a framework for public policy. There is little room for alternative ideas about religion in the media or public arena with the heavy pronouncement by the various religious zealots despite the constitutional limitations upon American government with respect to religion. Religious fundamentalists are among the worst with respect to compromise since they consider their “marvelously superior” position, or cause, as a *calling* rather than a simple viewpoint. All other opinions cannot possibly matter because the apparent “will of God” is on their side. There is a forgone conclusion that the other opinions are inferior, regardless of just nature or destruction that the zealots’ opinions may justify.

The late author Ray Bradbury stated, “we insure the future by doing it.” Thus, if we do not want to see the rollback of programs and services that protect Americans, we should *occupy*! If we want civility in government rather than adolescence, we should *occupy*! If we want respect for religion rather than religious law, we should *occupy*! If we want to restore faith in our society as an aggregation of the individual goods, we should *occupy*! If we want government for the 99% instead of the 1%, we should demand accountability from lawmakers; *occupy* and VOTE!



"An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea." ~The Buddha

*Everything works out satisfactorily in the end; if things aren't satisfactory, it isn't the end yet. **The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel** (editor's note: mature content; this movie is inappropriate for anyone under the age of 60 -- for those over 60, it's a must-see).*

From the Pastor's Pen

By Rev. Jonathan Page

Like many of you, I had the pleasure of attending some of the gay pride festivities in Des Moines this month. As the sun baked my tender bleach-white skin, I listened to one of this year's honorees recall the struggles of the gay rights movement and rejoice at the progress that had been made. Glancing around the crowd, I realized that many were not paying attention to this moving testimony. Lube wrestling, beer, and potential liaisons were grabbing attention away from the speaker. Being at that point sober, I got to thinking, specifically about H.R. Niebuhr's classic work **The Meaning of Revelation**. I am a bit of a dork, after all.

In that book, Niebuhr argued that although discrete historical events occur, we cannot describe history objectively. All history, all events, are filtered through a person's perspective. There must be a person who views, experiences, and then interprets an event. Therefore, while objective history might exist, all accounts of history are subjective. We recount what we experience and what we see, rather than what actually happened in some reified sense.

When we interpret events in our life, we try to fit each occurrence into a logical framework, a narrative that makes sense of the event in our own larger context. Each of us has many narratives that make up our self-identity, and sometimes these narratives are conflicting, but we still fit them together so that we have a sense of who we are. What is true of individuals is also true of communities. Communities have governing narratives and they fit events into those larger contexts. According to Niebuhr, the Bible is the attempt of the people of Israel, and later Christians, to fit events into the larger narrative of God's role in their collective life. For example, when the Israelites crossed the Red, or Reed, Sea, they experienced the hand of God delivering them from their captivity in Egypt. It fit into the larger narrative of Israel as God's chosen people, destined to inhabit their own land. No doubt the Egyptians interpreted events differently. The Israelites told and retold this story, and it likely changed over time. Eventually, the story of the Exodus became a crucial part of Israel's narrative -- of Israel's experience with God in the world.

Here is the key point for the gays: each community has its own narrative, its own story. Events in that community's history get placed within that narrative, and then get re-enacted in the ritual life of the community. How well an event is embodied in a community's ritual helps to determine how central that event is in a community's self-identity. Every time a person gives a testimony or participates in a ritual, he or she recounts a narrative and places certain events within that larger story. This is true for individuals and for communities, both religious and secular.

I could not help but be struck by how the Capital City Pride celebrations in Des Moines are used to ritualize and remember the communal narrative of gays and lesbians in our

society. Pride parades happen every June to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall Inn riot of 1969. This yearly celebration has two effects: it magnifies the role of Stonewall within the larger struggle for gay rights, and it shapes the way the community tells its own story and embodies its own communal reality.

This is where religious people can teach the gay rights movement a thing or two. Several years ago, I had the pleasure of hearing Timothy McCarthy, an activist and Harvard faculty member, deliver the Papadopoulos Lecture at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. The lecture, entitled "Stonewall's Children," lambasted the gay community for its own historical amnesia. Younger gays simply do not know much about gay history. The more accepting that society has become, the less relevant the history of the gay rights struggle is to younger gays. McCarthy, in my mind justifiably, sees this as a big problem for the community. Those who have greater acceptance, whites who self-identify as gay or lesbian in major metropolitan areas, no longer see their links with those still in the midst of the struggle, racial and ethnic minorities, those who are non-gender conforming, and those in rural areas. The question is how can we use ritual, like pride parades, to retell our story in ways that promote further liberation and action on behalf of those who need it?

Obviously, pride celebrations need to be fun. They need to attract people and make it worthwhile to come. But they also need to maintain their edge. How can those within the gay community who feel marginalized celebrate themselves in the parade alongside more staid groups like churches and PFLAG? The moment you lose leather and whips, you begin to lose something important. Can the stage performances maintain their edginess as well? Can they also recall history and retell the story in empowering ways? Overall, I was impressed with the balance that Des Moines Pride maintained between fun, personal expression, pride, and activism. But if we want to carry on the struggle, we need to ensure that our yearly rituals maintain their power in forming communal identity. Religious groups do this well. Can the gays?

Jonathan Page is senior pastor of the Ames United Church of Christ, 217 6th Street, Ames, Iowa. Sunday service at 10:45. He can be reached at jon@Amesucc.org.

In the category of news little covered by the media in the US: "George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and six other members of the Bush Administration (Rumsfeld, Gonzales, Addington, Haynes, Bybee, and Yoo) were found guilty of war crimes by a tribunal in Malaysia. A member of the prosecution team was an American law professor from Illinois University's College of Law. The tribunal submits its findings and records to the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the United Nations' Security Council. Note to the convicts: international travel is **not** recommended."

Relationships where both parties are committed to the relationship don't end. When that mutual commitment is lacking, they should end.



FFBC

*First Friday
News & Views*

Des Moines, Iowa

JULY 2012

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My M.O. (Monthly Observations)

Winter King: Henry VII and the Dawn of Tudor England

by Thomas Penn

By Steve Person

About thirty years ago, I became interested in my family's genealogy. This was long before the advent of the Internet and "Ancestry.com." The only way to document one's family tree involved hours of painstaking, first-hand interviews and research in various libraries and genealogical societies.

I began with my mother's side of the family. One of her uncles had already begun the process and gave me all the information he could find, but it only went back five generations. My mother's ancestry was Swedish, and in Sweden, birth and burial records were sporadic, at best. I turned to my father's side of our family.

It was there that I discovered a treasure of a human being. He was married to a distant cousin of my father, and he liked doing genealogical research to fill the days of his retirement. He had begun with his own family but encountered the kind of brick wall that I had with my mother's ancestors (Swedish again). He decided to research his wife's ancestors and struck genealogical gold.

When I first met him, he said, "You have no idea who you are, do you?" I had to admit I didn't. I would go to his home once a week and write down all the information he had found about my father's side of the family. I discovered when the spelling of my family's name changed, a grandfather who fought in the Revolutionary War, a deacon who helped found Rowley, Massachusetts, a four-time colonial governor of Massachusetts, a direct connection to Anne Bradstreet, the first American woman poet to be published, etc. And that was just in this country. The research went back to the late fifteenth century in Yorkshire, England, (The English were—and still are—meticulous record keepers), and one Edmund Dudley. Edmund, about 20 generations back as one of my grandfathers, was Chancellor of the Exchequer (Treasury) to King Henry VII, founder of the Tudor Dynasty and victor at the Battle of Bosworth Field that deposed Richard III. When Henry VIII came to the throne, it was during his first year as king that he had my ancestor beheaded. I never knew why—until now.

It seems Henry VII had given Edmund and other trusted cronies unilateral powers to levy and collect trumped up fines in the king's name. If a person didn't pay, his lands and wealth were confiscated and dumped into the king's coffers, with generous handling fees along the way for Grandfather Edmund. Henry VII became the richest monarch in Renaissance Europe and Edmund didn't fare so badly, either. Of course, this ancestor of mine operated well outside the law, but Henry VII WAS the law, so Parliament had little power to stop what was going on. Henry, however, could not stop the built up resentment against Edmund and the other counselors, and when Henry VII died in 1509, it didn't take long for Edmund to find himself in the Tower of London and for the new king to be rid of him.

I thank Thomas Penn for his well-researched and well-written biography of Henry VII. He had no idea he gave me valuable information about my wayward ancestor, but history is history. Aside from my personal information, I would recommend this book. Many biographies have been written of Henry VIII and his six wives and of his second daughter, Elizabeth I. Few have been written about the dynasty's founder, and fortunately, this one is an excellent book.