



First Friday News & Views

June, 2015

Volume 20

Issue 6

*The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.*

A Response to our Bible Thumping Detractors by Jonathan Wilson

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, June 5, 2015, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by June 3 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

Thumping their Bibles, some modern-day, so-called Christians seek the credibility of God in their condemnation of their gay brothers and sisters, pointing judgmentally to various isolated texts. One of their favorites is Romans 1:24-27. Believing in the priesthood of all believers, the following exegesis is offered to help set the record straight.

Romans 1:24-27 “Therefore God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

Romans is a letter from Paul to an early Christian church in Rome that he had never before visited. Paul never knew Jesus during Jesus' life time. The first of his several letters to churches and individuals was written about 25 years after the crucifixion. Rome had at that time fallen into a pattern of debauchery, depravity, decadence, and unbridled excesses. In that context, Paul wrote his letter to this early church that he very much needed as he sought to preach the Gospel in the western Mediterranean.

The passage is less about God “giving them up” or turning away from mankind in anger, and more about mankind, in the exercise of free will, completely turning away from any recognition or acknowledgement of God. A Biblical example might be the behavior of God's people while Moses was on the mountain receiving from God the Ten Commandments; they turned from God and were worshiping a golden calf. A modern-day example might be the behavior of some at notorious Spring Break celebrations, or the behavior of some at Mardi Gras in New Orleans, or the behavior of some at Gay Pride parades. In each case, the scripture is talking about **behavior**, behavior that represents an utter disdain for God and a focus instead upon pleasure purely for the sake of immediate pleasure.

People, regardless of sexual orientation (gay, straight, or bi) are capable -- and sometimes guilty -- of decadent **behavior**. That is the thrust of Paul's condemnation in Romans 1:24-27. Turning away from God is what Paul is talking about and condemning.

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Paul believed the earth is flat. Paul believed the earth is the center of the created Universe. Paul believed the sun revolves around the earth rather than the other way around. Christ's church believed the same until somewhere around 1492 when Columbus set sail.

And Paul believed that all of God's children are straight; that all of God's children -- every single one of them -- is heterosexual in orientation. It is perhaps understandable that, against the backdrop of that belief, Paul would view same gender intimacy in any context as an example of depravity when he was seeking to condemn human excesses that ignore God.

We readily forgive Paul and other Biblical writers for their mistakes of fact, and we recalibrate what is written in order to find the capital T Truth that is sought to be conveyed in the Scriptures by the inspiration of God. If this were easy to do we wouldn't need clergy and there wouldn't be thousands of "Christian" denominations.

As a matter of fact, some of God's children are gay. It's pointless to debate what percentage, the fact remains. This fact was not recognized until the early 1900s, more than one thousand nine hundred years after the Scriptures were written. Same gender intimacy is a fitting example of decadence and depravity only if one clings mindlessly to the 1st Century belief of Paul and others of his time that every person born is heterosexual. Such people must cling to a known fiction in order to preserve their preconceived notion that all same gender intimacy is sinful.

Gay people are just as capable of decadence and debauchery as anyone else, but the mere behavior of engaging in same gender intimacy is not, by itself, synonymous with decadence, debauchery, or sin. Gay people are also just as capable as anyone else of responsible, committed, same-gender, monogamous relationships.

It would be a mistake to accept Paul's lack of differentiation between the two and conclude that same gender intimacy, whether decadent or responsible among gay children of God -- whether promiscuous or monogamous among gay

children of God -- is, in both cases, utterly sinful and condemns gay children of God to hell, regardless. That cannot be the capital T Truth of the Scriptures, and it most certainly is not the Gospel.

While I'm not a Catholic, the utterance of Pope Francis, the nominal vicar of God on earth today, may be instructive when he said that if gay persons seek God and are of good will, he does not judge them. In that one statement he acknowledged that there are gay children of God, that they should seek God, that they should be of good will, and that they should not be condemned. For Catholics, mind you, that's supposedly God talking.

Paul's letter is saying the same thing -- people should not turn away from God and should not engage in irresponsible, decadent, sinful behavior. His letter must be recalibrated to recognize the fact that there are gay children of God, if one is going to capture God's Truth. We forgive Paul and other Biblical writers of his time for their obvious mistakes of fact and doing so enhances, not diminishes, our understanding of the Truth that they were inspired by God to convey. We do those writers and the Holy Scriptures a disservice if we tenaciously choose to bind ourselves to their factual errors. In doing so we are bound to miss God's Truth and Christ's Gospel in the Scriptures.

Every person who would genuinely seek to understand this Scripture should first ask themselves, "Are there gay children of God?" Yes or no? If the answer is yes (which it undeniably is, I think), then Paul made a mistaken factual assumption and Romans 1: 24-27 must be recalibrated in order to hear from it the Word of God.

🕒 *A testimony to our societal decadence is the fact that there's ice hockey in Phoenix, Arizona.*

🕒 *Dance like no one attractive is watching.*

🕒 *A bird doesn't sing because it has the answer; it sings because it has a song.*

🕒 *What disease did cured ham actually have?*

🕒 *How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?*



And You Thought You Weren't a Racist

by Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, May 1 was Jennifer Harvey, professor of religion at Drake, who presented an insightful – and most disturbing – historical analysis of the Civil Rights movement in the US over the last 60 years. Calling her account the “undertold story” of how black/white relations have (not) progressed since the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, she noted that recent riots over police brutality in Ferguson and Baltimore are only the latest evidence of white failure to understand how the standard concepts of “racial reconciliation” (in churches) or “racial diversity” (in, e.g., academia) are not working.

Although Harvey acknowledged the real contributions of whites in the sixties’ “freedom” movements around lunch-counters and voter registration in the south, she reminded us that Black Power met a wall of white resistance almost from the first. [For example, even today the Web page of The Union of Black Episcopalians, describes its history this way: “The (nineteenth-century Episcopal) ‘Conference of Church Workers among Colored People continued until the mid-1960s, although it gradually gave way to the *Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity* (ESCRU) founded in 1957. But although ESCRU seemed more in tune with the political thrusts of the Civil Rights Movements, it was unable to adapt to Black Power and ceased to function.”]

While whites seemed willing to envision the presence of non-whites in white institutions, they (we) were not willing to countenance the granting to non-whites – or to their own institutions – meaningful economic power. What is needed, Harvey said, is a radical shift in how justice-committed white Christians think about race. She called for moving away from the reconciliation paradigm that currently dominates interracial relations and embracing instead a *reparations* paradigm.

It was a truly sobering morning in our little corner of America, as Harvey showed us the necessity of our sacrificing -- of bringing "white" racial identity into clear view in order to counter today's oppressive social structures.

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Jennifer Harvey is Associate Professor of Religion at Drake University and an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches (U.S.A.). Her academic degrees come from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California (B.A.), and Union Theological Seminary in New York City (M.Div. 1997, Ph.D. in Christian Social Ethics 2004). She has taught in Drake’s Philosophy and Religion Department since 2005, where her courses focus on the encounters of religion and ethics with race, gender, activism, politics, spirituality, justice and just about any other area of social life in the U.S. A regular contributor to the Huffington Post, she is an author for the blog “Feminist Studies in Religion” and also keeps her own blog “formations: living at the intersections of self, social, spirit.” She is the author of **Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation** (2014) and *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty* (2007) and co-editor of **Disrupting White Supremacy from Within: White People on What We Need to Do.** “My greatest passions,” she writes, “continually return to racial justice and white anti-racism. I work with faith communities, non-profits, and various other groups seeking to deepen their justice commitments.” Jennifer Harvey can be reached at jennifer.harvey@drake.edu.

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP for the June 5 meeting no later than June 3. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email him at JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our scheduled speaker will be Reverend Dr. Larry Sonner, a retired United Methodist minister who performed a marriage ceremony for two lesbian children of God and put his ordained status and retirement benefits at risk in the process.

Thanks to Gary Moore for his introduction of our May speaker, Jennifer Harvey.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. Book donations are always welcome. Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for helping coordinate the book exchange.



Consider a tax deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. Contact Jonathan Wilson for details.



IOWA TEACHERS DESERVE OUR APPRECIATION

For more than 30 years, the National Parent Teachers Association has designated the first week in May as a special time to honor the men and women who use their passion and skills to educate our kids. [Teacher Appreciation Week](#) is a celebration of the contribution and sacrifice teachers make for students, schools and communities every day.

In classrooms across Iowa, talented, hardworking teachers are nurturing a new generation of thinkers, doers and dreamers. They prepare our students to take on the challenges of the future. Our best teachers are role models who show students how to work hard, think hard and become well-rounded, engaged grownups. They encourage our children's passions, inspire their imaginations and help them realize the best in themselves.

I ran for the Legislature to build on Iowa's reputation as a leader in education. One way I can thank our teachers is with my vote to fund local schools—the backbone of our communities. Adequate funding will ensure the continued success of teachers and schools in providing opportunities for our kids.

As you thank your children's teachers this week—or perhaps a special teacher who's had a big impact on you—we will be working to show our appreciation here at the Statehouse. Senate Democrats remain committed to increasing student achievement and improving teacher quality.

Thanks to all the teachers, parents, school board members and students who are e-mailing, phoning, petitioning and visiting the Capitol to encourage all legislators to provide enough dollars to give local schools the resources they need to avoid teacher layoffs, larger class sizes, and cuts to course offerings and extracurricular activities. Your advocacy has helped make serious discussions about school funding a reality.

RELATED PHOTOS

Download high-res versions of photos at www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy/photos.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.



Senator McCoy is an Assistant Senate Majority Leader, chair of the Commerce Committee and chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Budget Subcommittee. He also serves on the Appropriations, State Government, Transportation and Ways & Means committees.

A Reflection

by Cliff Paulsen

The following is a continuation of the series of personal reflections by FFBC members.

I arrived in this world in the early hours of January 13, 1924, in a small farmhouse near Sebek, Minnesota. It was a Sunday. Like others in rural Minnesota, I attended grade school in a one-room schoolhouse. I wasn't particularly adept at throwing a ball, nor was I as strong as some of my classmates, and I was occasionally given a hard time about that.

When I went to high school I caught the school bus. There was a boy on the bus that I liked and who liked me. He was in the same grade. When school let out in the afternoon we would grab our jackets as fast as we could and run to the bus and get a seat near the back of the bus. We would cover our laps with our jackets. That allowed us to fondle each other. And I was thus introduced to same gender attraction and expression. Correspondingly, I never took a girl to any school events.

I had skipped second grade, so I was only 17 when I graduated from high school. Nonetheless, World War II was raging, so I had to register with the draft board the following January. Had I identified as a homosexual, I'd have been exempt from the draft, but also an avowed criminal. Not an option.

Before being drafted, I decided to attend a business college in Minneapolis. A woman at the college told me to arrive at the school on a certain day. That day arrived and my parents and my sister accompanied me to catch the bus. When I boarded that bus carrying only a small suitcase I was on my own for the first time and, at age 18, I was headed for a big city about which I knew nothing. After enrollment, I took up residence in the Wartburg Hospice.

After three or four weeks of day classes and working nights, I began attending night classes so I could get a better job during the day. That turned out to be a job at a grain merchant office. In the same building Cargill, Inc. was also located and a friend from school worked there. I went up to the Cargill office and, despite their knowledge of my 1A draft status, I was hired.

Shortly, one of the other hospice residents that I knew to be gay paid me a "visit." After he left I realized that I was one of those horrible homosexuals. I thought, "So what, I enjoyed it." It felt real. It felt authentic. It felt true. It became

reciprocal. As it turned out a lot of the guys who lived at the hospice were gay.

Regardless, we were all classified 1A and drafted in May 1942. Basic training was in California. I was then sent to Australia where I was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division and loaded onto one of several ships headed to New Guinea to help another Division take the island from the Japs. After a couple months I was also involved in a campaign to take control of the Admiralty Islands, followed by one to take the Philippine Islands. We knew that we would invade Japan next. My life repeatedly was on the line defending a country where I was not free openly to be me.

Then one day we had a ceremony for several reasons. The first order of business was a surprise; I was awarded a Bronze Star for exceptional service. The second order of business was to inform us we would start training for the invasion of Japan, a very difficult job with high casualty rates. Very bad news, indeed.

Before the actual invasion came, however, the Emperor of Japan surrendered. Very good news, indeed. The war ended. I would get home alive.

After getting back I returned to work at Cargill. And I returned to cultivate a gay way of living, albeit surreptitiously. It was, after all, 1945.

I worked about four years in Minnesota before being transferred to Portland, Oregon. That was one mighty straight environment and -- I tried. I attended sporting events, had a girlfriend, and every Sunday we went to church together. Not surprisingly, it didn't really work for me.

I was successively transferred to Fresno, San Francisco (fun while it lasted), and West Sacramento. Then on to Plainview, in west Texas. Booo! That was going to be a bummer . . . until I met gay cowboys and gay oil field workers. Yeah!

That was followed by a move to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for twelve years, and West Des Moines for two years before taking early retirement.

I enjoyed a long and satisfying career with a single employer, interrupted only by my service in the war. I feel fortunate to have lived to see the rights I risked my life to defend finally extended to me and others like me.

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- *God prefers kind atheists over hateful Christians.*
 - *A child must think you care before it will care what you think.*

FFBC

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Des Moines, Iowa

June, 2015

*First Friday
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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

A Book Review by Steve Person

17 Carnations

It is said that the dead cannot be libeled. That being the case, author and royal correspondent Andrew Morton has done his damndest to sully the reputations of the long dead Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Morton, you may recall, authored the best-selling **Diana: Her True Story**. It was the book that ultimately helped to lead to the divorce of Charles and Diana, a marriage that was doomed long before this unprincipled writer found no problem with taking advantage of an emotionally distraught princess in order to make himself rich. He succeeded with both.

The subtitle of **17 Carnations** is **The Biggest Cover-Up in History**. Morton, it seems, must never have heard of Watergate and Richard Nixon. It is Morton's thesis that the Duke of Windsor (formerly King Edward VIII) and his wife, the former Wallis Warfield Simpson, were Nazi collaborators during the darkest days of Britain's struggle in World War II. He claims—without proof but only third-hand gossip—that Mrs. Simpson was the lover of Nazi Germany's ambassador to the Court of St. James before the war. Hence, the title of the book: evidently the ambassador sent on numerous occasions seventeen carnations supposedly as a reminder of how many times they made love. This questionably reliable "fact" came from one of Mrs. Simpson's housemaids. So much for credibility.

Morton bases his book on the existence of some Nazi documents recovered after World War II known apocryphally as "The Windsor File." Morton contends that Britain's royal family went out of its way either to destroy these documents or to keep them secret forever. Even though the Duke and Duchess were tarnished goods to the new king and queen after the abdication of Edward VIII, Morton claims the file contained information that implicated other members of the royal family, as well, as Nazi collaborators during the war.

Morton offers "proof" of the Duke and Duchess's treachery by quoting such sensationalistic authors as Charles Higham, Christopher Wilson, and Kitty Kelly as experts on the lives of the Windsors. Of course, they are not. That would be like saying the **National Enquirer** is an expert on Elvis Presley. Furthermore, Morton dismisses Edward VIII's official biographer, Philip Ziegler, as being "benevolent" toward the Duke of Windsor. Ziegler, as official biographer, enjoyed access to the Royal Archives at Windsor, a source never made available to specious authors like Morton.

For many years, these so-called secret files were kept just that until their eventual publication in 1957. The files revealed nothing concrete against the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in 1940 before the Duke was dispatched to The Bahamas as governor of that colony for the duration of the war.

Morton's attempt at "sunshine" reporting is nothing more than a rumor-ridden, gossip-mongering, innuendo-obsessed publication that specializes in hyperbole, name-calling, and vitriol. He should be ashamed of himself as he laughs all the way to the bank.