



**according
to
john**



a play by

David John Preece

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DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

Bishop Richard Andrews Pilate	Actor One	High Priest
Steven Land Blind Man	Actor Two	Inquisitor
Susan Andrews Samaritan Woman Family Member Two	Actor Three	Mary Martha
Larry Schofield	Actor Four	Jesus
David Jackson	Actor Five	John
James Zealot One Roman Soldier	Actor Six	Bishop Paul York
Matthew Family Member One Roman Soldier	Actor Seven	Bishop Walker Pharisees Man
Judas Roman Soldier Bishop Alan DeClair	Actor Eight	John the Baptise Zeloit Two

The Set and Staging: The set resembles the Apse, a semicircular architectural feature of a church with a radiating vault. The Apse will have two acting levels, representing the Chancel and Sanctuary. The choir seats occupy the Chancel area with two additional areas representing the lectern and pulpit. The choir seats are arranged in order to give direct access to the altar from a center aisle. The altar in the Sanctuary area, will served as a table and desk. Three stained glass windows will encircle the wall of the Apse. Minimum props and furniture allow easy flow from one scene to another, without pause.

Characters appear and disappear, and may even be present onstage when not in a particular scene. This play is of light and shadows.

The play is written for a company of eight actors, seven males and one female. All of actors will play at least two roles. The distribution of these roles will be at the discretion of the director.

Costumes for the actors retelling the gospel are black contemporary, with minimum colored accessories to distinguish the different characters. For the trial, the actors will be conservatively dressed in contemporary clothes or appropriate church attire.

ANDREWS

Yes.

DECLAIR

Isn't it true that the Statement by the Bishops of the Church states there is in Scripture an evolving convergence on the ideal of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as the setting intended by God for the proper development of men and women as sexual beings?

ANDREWS

If my memory serves me, there was a lot of debate regarding that statement and it was not a unanimous decision.

DECLAIR

That's beside the point. Answer my question.

ANDREWS

I am. And what's more, it's not doctrine. What I do find so confusing about the statement is that it is not consistent with the scripture that God created man in his own image.

DECLAIR

Sexual activity of any kind outside of marriage comes to be seen as sinful, and homosexual practice as especially dishonorable.

LAND

I object.

(to Declair)

Is this according to the gospel...or is this your opinion?

DECLAIR

I based my arguments on the holy scriptures.

LAND

According to your interpretation, right?

DECLAIR

Let me remind the attorney for the accused, that I am not the one on trial.

(to Andrews)

Where do you stand on the holy scriptures?

ANDREWS

These scriptures on which you base your arguments have been written and rewritten and translated and retranslated from Greek to Latin to English to whatever so many times that frankly I'm surprised that any original truth is still there.

DECLAIR

So what you are telling the court is that you don't believe in the holy scriptures?

ANDREWS

I didn't say that. The only gospel that has kept the true message of Christ's teaching is the Gospel according to John.

DECLAIR

Why is that?

ANDREWS

In that Gospel, Christ makes no discrimination between the men or women, gay or straight...everyone has a place at God's table. And he certainly doesn't hide his feelings for John.

DECLAIR

What are you saying? That there is something unnatural between John and Christ?

ANDREWS

Love is not unnatural.

DECLAIR

I object.

ANDREWS

Read the gospel.

DECLAIR

Do you believe in the holy scriptures?

ANDREWS

Yes, but not the way you interpret them.

DECLAIR

Isn't it recognized that God may call some to celibacy for particular service in his cause? Only by living within these boundaries are Christians to achieve that holiness which is pleasing to God.

ANDREWS

So what you're saying is that anyone who is married or living in a committed relationship is not holy enough and should not be call to serve God. Is that right?

DECLAIR

I'm not the one who is being tried for heresy; you are. Did you sign a document that specifically affirms a bishop's right to ordain homosexual persons?

LAND

(To Bishop York)
Your honor, the Accusing Bishops are rewriting
history to serve their purpose.

DECLAIR

I object.

LAND

The arguments that are being presented in this trial
are based on a misunderstanding of the Doctrine of
the Church and the sources of such Doctrine. If I
may, I would like to pose a question to Bishop
Declair.

YORK

I can't see why not. Bishop Declair?

DECLAIR

I'm not the one who is on trial here.

LAND

I didn't say that you were.

YORK

It's only a question.

(to Land)

Proceed.

LAND

(To Declair)

Bishop Declair, is it correct that the only
recognized sources of the Doctrine of the Church are
Holy Scripture, the Apostles' Creed, The Nicene
Creed and the Book of Common Prayer?

DECLAIR

Yes.

LAND

Thank you.

DECLAIR

But...

LAND

But the accusation contends that the Doctrine of
this Church is founded in the resolutions and
teachings by the House of Bishops. Is that not true?

DECLAIR

Yes.

LAND

So the accusation is based upon a false premise?

DECLAIR

(To York)
He's badgering me.

YORK

(To DeClair)
He's what?! Oh please.

(To Land)
Mr. Land...what is your point?

LAND

My point is this. The resolutions of the House of Bishops are not recognized sources of Church's doctrine. Therefore, the claim that non-celibate homosexual persons may not be ordained is not from a recognized source of doctrine from the Church.

DECLAIR

This is outrageous.

(To York)
The attorney for Bishop Andrews is misconstruing the truth.

LAND

The truth?! I'm just setting the record straight. You and your spin doctors --

DECLAIR

The record stands on its own.

LAND

And the record is warped.

YORK

That's enough.

DECLAIR

Did you hear what he said? Warped--

YORK

Both of you. Let me remind you again that this is the House of Bishops...and not some daytime television court program.

(To Land)
Please. Stick with your arguments.

LAND

But...they have distorted the facts, fanning the flames of fear and destroying the lives of these innocent people in the process --

YORK

We'll be the judge on that. Please...just the facts.

LAND

Alright.

(Collects himself)

The accusation charges Bishop Andrews with two acts which it alleges constitute heresy, "holding and teaching doctrine contrary to that held by this Church" in violation of Canon IV.1.1. Specifically, the Accusation charges that on September 18, 1990, Bishop Andrews dissented and voted against a resolution of the House of Bishops.

(To York)

If I may, I would like to ask Bishop Andrews a question?

YORK

Proceed.

LAND

Were you the only bishop who voted against the September 18, 1990 Resolution?

ANDREWS

No. There were 75 bishops who voted against the resolution...besides myself.

LAND

What was this resolution?

ANDREWS

It was a resolution censuring a fellow Bishop for his ordination of a gay man.

LAND

Was this a doctrine?

ANDREWS

No.

LAND

Your accusers claimed that in 1994, at the General Convention in Indianapolis, you, along with seventy other Bishops, signed a petition, called "A Statement of Diversity" which was counter to an earlier and narrowly passing Statement issued that year regarding the issue of "banning the ordination to Holy Orders of homosexual men and women." Is that correct?

ANDREWS

Correct.

LAND

Does an issue on which there are such widely divergent views constitute the Doctrine of the Church?

ANDREWS

No.

LAND

Your accusers state that in 1990, you ordained to the priesthood the Rev. Larry Schofield, a homosexual man living in a committed relationship of long standing with another, and alleges that such ordination was "in violation of the Bishop's ordination vow to conform to the doctrine of the Church".

ANDREWS

I did ordain Larry but there was no doctrine of the Church on the issue of whether it was permissible to ordain non-celibate homosexual persons.

LAND

Does the Church have a doctrine of sexual morality?

ANDREWS

Yes, I believe it has to do with love, with consent, with caring, with commitment.

LAND

Will you cite the scripture and tradition that support your view?

ANDREWS

I have read the Gospels over and over. I wanted to find out what our Lord had to say about homosexuality. And it isn't there. Jesus never mentioned homosexuality and neither did Jesus hold up heterosexual marriage as the only acceptable human condition. His second great commandment, "Love thy neighbor as yourself," is about love and compassion. He teaches us about loving and caring relationships. And then I look at the relationship between Larry Schofield and his partner, David, and I ask myself "Is there something about their relationship that is inconsistent with the message Jesus brought to us?"

(beat)

And I say, no.

YORK

Do you have any more arguments to present?

LAND

No.

YORK

If there are no more arguments, the Court will adjourn and deliberate on the information it has heard in today's proceedings.

(The lights dim down on the courtroom setting and go up as the soldiers lead Christ to Pilate. The Zealots surround Jesus.)

PILATE

What charge do you bring against this man?

ZEALOT 1

If he hadn't been doing something evil, do you think we'd be here bothering you?

PILATE

So what evil has he done?

ZEALOT 2

Well...I..

PILATE

That's what I thought. You take him. Judge him by your law.

ZEALOT 1

We're not allowed to kill anyone.

PILATE

But you want me to do it, right? You slander him and accuse him of doing "evil things" that you can't substantiate.

ZEALOT 2

He's calling himself the King...and he's not.

PILATE

He calls himself the "King", huh? That's it?

ZEALOT 1

That's blasphemy!

PILATE

(Doubting)

Is it?

(To the Zealots)

Why don't all of you go over there and let me talk with him, okay?

(To Jesus)

Is this true? Are you the "King"?

JESUS

What's it to you?

PILATE

Look...let's get something straight. I'm not a Zealot...okay?

(more)

PILATE (cont'd)

Some of my best friends are...but I'm not.

(Becomes self-conscious)

Why...do I look like Zealotish to you?

(Beat)

Your people and your high priests turned you over to me...and said that you have done evil things. Is this true? What have you done?

JESUS

I've done nothing but spoken the truth.

PILATE

Well that's one strike against you. Tell me something...do you call yourself a king?

JESUS

Yes...but you see my kingdom doesn't consist of what you see around me. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But I'm not that kind of king.

PILATE

Look...you're not answering my question. Are you a king or not?

JESUS

I am what I am. I was born and entered the world so that I could bear witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has a feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.

PILATE

What is the truth?

JESUS

Love one another.

(Pilate walks over to Zealots.)

PILATE

I find nothing wrong with this man.

ZEALOT 1

What?!

ZEALOT 2

But he-

PILATE

He has broken no laws and has hurt no one. I can't charge him with anything...he is innocent.

(more)

PILATE (cont'd)

(beat)

Now I'm going to give you an opportunity to save face. I know it's your custom that I pardon one prisoner at Passover. Do you want me to pardon him?

ZEALOT 2

What?! Are you kidding?

ZEALOT 1

Not this one. You know that your reappointment is coming up and I believe you need as many supporters as possible. If word got out about this at the temple, things could go against you.

PILATE

Okay...so whom?

ZEALOT 1

What about Barabbas?

ZEALOT 2

Yeah.

PILATE

Barabbas?! You've got to be kidding! Hell, he has a police record a mile long.

ZEALOT 2

But he's a freedom fighter.

PILATE

Is that what you call him? He sells firearms illegally on the black market.

ZEALOT 1

We want Barabbas.

PILATE

This is disgusting. You are disgusting.

(To the soldiers)

Take him away.

(As John speaks to the Inquisitor,
Jesus is dragged away into the darkness
by the soldiers.)

INQUISITOR

Are you saying that Pilate sentenced him even though he had committed no crime?

JOHN

Yes.

INQUISITOR

And then what happened?

JOHN

The soldiers took Jesus away...and then they whipped and humiliated him.

INQUISITOR

Are you lying to me?

JOHN

No.

INQUISITOR

You're lying. My people would do this injustice.

JOHN

But they did.

(beat)

The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, stripped him and made him wear a purple robe and then they spat and beat him, mocking him. Then Pilate went back again to the Zealots.

PILATE

(Gives up)

Okay. But I want you to know that I do not find him guilty of any crime.

(Jesus is brought back to Pilate.)

PILATE

(continuing)

Here he is; the Man.

ZEALOTS

Crucify him.

PILATE

You take him. You crucify him. I find nothing wrong with him.

ZEALOT 1

We have a law.

PILATE

What law are you talking about?

ZEALOT 1

Our law, of course.

PILATE

This is not law...this is only your religious doctrine.

ZEALOT 2

He must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.

PILATE

What? Son of God?

(To Jesus)

Where did you come from?

(Jesus says nothing)

You won't talk? Don't you know that I have the authority to pardon you, and the authority to crucify you?

JESUS

You haven't a shred of authority over me except what has been given you from heaven. That's why the one who betrayed me to you has committed a far greater fault.

PILATE

(To the Zealots)

I cannot do this. This man has done nothing. I cannot convict an innocent man of a crime he hasn't committed.

ZEALOT 1

But he's unnatural.

(beat)

If you pardon this man, you're no friend of Caesar's.

ZEALOT 2

Anyone who calls himself the "king" defies Caesar.

PILATE

I am to crucify your king?

ZEALOT 2

We have no king except Caesar.

PILATE

Fine. Get him out of here.

JOHN

(To Inquisitor)

They took him away. Carrying his cross, Jesus went out to the place called Skull Hill, where they crucified him. It read, "Jesus the Nazorean...The King." Many of the high priests objected.

ZEALOT 1

(To Pilate)

"The King?!" What?!

(Beat)

Pilate!

PILATE
What is it now?

ZEALOT 2
That sign.

PILATE
What about it?

ZEALOT 2
He's not the King! The sign should be rewritten.

ZEALOT 1
It should read, "This man said, I am the King."

PILATE
What I've written, I've written.

ZEALOT 2
But --

PILATE
There are no buts. That's the way it is.

JOHN
While he was dying on the cross, his mother came.

MARY
Where did I go wrong?

JESUS
Mother, it's not about you so quit blaming yourself.
(beat)
You've been a good mother. It's not your fault.

MARY
But if I had done things differently. Maybe if I had pushed you into sports instead debate and the drama club...maybe this wouldn't have happened to you?

JESUS
No matter what you did...this would still have to happen.

MARY
What will happen to me?

JESUS
(Referring to John)
Mother...this is your son.

MARY
What are you talking about? But according to Jewish law, that means he's your...

JESUS

(To John)
John...here is your mother. Take care of her.

JOHN

I will.

JESUS

It's done...complete.

(The lights dim out as he dies.)

JOHN

(Extends his hand toward her.)
Please, take my hand.

(The lights dim as Mary reluctantly
takes John's hand.)

YORK

Please take your seats, so that we can proceed with
the findings in this Court.

(Beat)

First, the Court has found that there is no article
of faith stating that it is impermissible to ordain
a non-celibate homosexual person which must be
accepted by all members of the Church. The Accusers
claim that "doctrine" is the teaching of the Church
as determined by the formularies of the Church,
including declarations by the House of Bishops.
Based upon that mischaracterization of the
"formularies of the Church" and its sources, the
Accusers reach the false conclusion that "The
Teaching or doctrine of The Church, is that it is
not permissible to ordain a practicing homosexual."

(Beat)

It is the finding of this court that there is no
basis for bringing Bishop Andrews to trial on a
charge of holding and teaching Doctrine contrary to
that of the Church Canon or violating any of his
ordination vows. This attempt to use the Church's
judicial process to resolve an issue on which there
is no agreement must fail. The accusations of heresy
against Bishop Andrews are dismissed.

(The lights change. Andrews watches
Schofield as he delivers the Eucharist.
Schofield lifts up the wine and bread.)

LARRY

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Christ
took bread. And when he given thanks, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat.
This is my body which is given for you.

(more)

LARRY (cont'd)

Do this for the remembrance of me."

(beat)

After supper, he took the cup of wine and when he had given thanks, he give it to them and said, "Drink this, all of you. This is the blood for the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

(beat)

The gifts of God for the people of God. Take this in the remembrance of Christ.

(Suddenly, a man jumps up in the audience and runs down the aisle toward Schofield.)

MAN

Shut up! Shut up! God doesn't want you here. Jesus doesn't want you here. You got no right. Not in my church. You shit!

(He pulls out a gun, aims at Schofield and Andrews, firing several shots at them. Both are hit. As the assailant runs out of the theatre, Andrews catches Schofield as he falls to the floor. There is mass confusion and hysteria...screaming and crying. The lights dim as a body is lifted up and carried to the sacramental table. As his body is covered and prepared for burial, the assembly solemnly sit down on benches. York resumes the liturgy over the dead body.)

YORK

O Father of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our brother. We thank you for giving him to us, his family, and friends, to know and to love as a companion on our earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our course on earth, until, by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. You only are immortal, the creator and maker of mankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created me, saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

(more)

YORK (cont'd)

(beat)

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing but life everlasting.

(beat)

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant, Larry. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace and into glorious company of the saints in light. Amen.

(beat)

Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

(As the body of Larry is carried from the church, Andrews comes out of the shadows. David stand alone. Susan stands back and watches.)

DAVID

Why has God forsaken me?

ANDREWS

He hasn't.

DAVID

(Turns to Andrews)

Then why did He do this?

ANDREWS

God didn't. Man did.

DAVID

His last words were to ask me to take care of our children and that he would go and make a place for us.

(beat)

Why did they do this to him? He harmed no one.

ANDREWS

I don't know...I don't know.

(Susan walks over and puts her arm around David to console him. Together, they leave the church. Andrews stands alone as the lights dim out.)

THE END