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Review: 'Word of God' succeeds at delicate satire



Special to Juice

Matt Hanify, John Cisar and Thatcher Williams star in "The Bible: The Complete Word of God (abridged)."

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:: "The Bible: The Complete Word of God (Abridged)"

Where: Viking Theatre, Grand View College, 2811 E. 14th St.

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday through Dec. 18

Tickets: \$10 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors and \$2 for Grand View College students.

with constant costume changes.

Satire is a delicate art, where it is tempting to get carried away and ham lines or overcompensate for comedic effect while performing. To the credit of the three actors, they never cross the border between acting and showboating, though they sometimes do come awfully close.

Mad props to the stage manager who hustled up the dolls, cardboard cutouts, toys and trinkets that populate the sketches and add to the absurdity.

Though "Bible" pokes holes in the logic of the bible, the humor is always in good nature, more like friendly ribbing and never acerbic. Take for example this zinger: God must have a sense of humor. He leads the people of Israel through the desert for 40 years and makes them settle in the only place in the Middle East without oil. Or how about a more esoteric quip, "Jesus was a Carpenter." "You mean he was a bulimic?" asks another character.

"Bible" makes for a good laugh with a couple of groaners. The play is performed at Viking Theatre in Grand View College and uses the venue to its fullest extent.

Though it's no easy task to trim the Bible down to a two-hour show, a drawback of the play is that it requires a more than basic knowledge of the Bible and its stories to fully connect with what's happening on stage. The prerequisite of a knowledgeable audience is a risk that comes with performing satire. In the case of "Bible," someone unfamiliar with the book might just see a jumbled mass of stories about lions, sacrificing children and a crucifixion.

by **choyon manjrekar**
juice correspondent

And then God said, "Let there be ozone depletion and strip malls."

You probably won't find that line in the leatherbound bible you stole from the Holiday Inn. But that's how the book of Genesis reads according to "The Bible: The Complete Word of God (Abridged)."

"Bible" is the latest performance by theater group "Theater... for a Change." The trio of Matt Hanify, John Cisar and Thatcher Williams amble through the good book and all its segments within two hours. Bible stories are lampooned using blues routines, bad wigs and audience participation.

From the Old Testament to the end of the New Testament, the men take the audience on a romp through the "greatest story ever accepted as fact." The result seems like a catechism class taken over by the bad kids. According to the "abridged bible," the Tower of Babel was the result of penis envy and Rachel (a woman taken in by Jacob) was impregnated by God just because she had a part on "Friends" and divorced a hunky actor. The jokes rely on the comedic device of anachronism and are delivered with the crisp timing required of a satirical performance

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