

Getting Together
(A Play)

By Billie Lyn Jensen

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Getting Together

A play by Billie Lyn Jensen, 1980

[Setting: The Parish Hall stage.

A wine and cheese party is in progress, both on and off stage. Two people are standing off to the right having a private conversation. No one else on stage is paying attention to them. A single "spot" is on this pair. It should appear that the conversation is just another one of many going on in the Hall...and that the lights and mikes are used simply to draw attention to this particular one, in much the same way that a person's attention is drawn to any interesting conversation.

A card-carrying mouse scurries across the stage with a sign that reads:

"I DO LOVE A WINE AND CHEESE PARTY, DON'T YOU?"

Flipping the sign over,

"SUCH GOOD TIDBITS ARE LIBEL TO FALL!"

The mouse exits stage left.]

Lyn: You know, I was reading an editorial in the paper the other day that really upset me. It had to do with Adam and Eve...and science vs. the Bible...and said something to the effect that "no one could take seriously any story in the Bible if it was contradicted by certified scientists!" I may not be a certified scientist, but it seems to me that's assuming an awful lot. I mean, I'm somebody, and I believe in the Bible!

Bill: Well, I do, too. But there are a lot of people who don't--especially when they're dealing with the Biblical version of Creation. To many people, especially in this day and age, it's just a pretty story that has nothing to do with "reality".

Lyn: But why are the scientists so...stubborn about it? Do you know that article actually made fun of anyone "foolish" enough to believe in Adam and Eve?

Bill: I can believe that, but the "other side" can be just as stubborn. There are plenty of people who only believe in an absolutely literal interpretation of the bible; and I've heard some of them call what the scientist's say "the work of the devil."

Lyn: I can believe that, too. It reminds me of a couple of kids in a name-calling contest! It's a shame that both sides can't sit down and

exchange their ideas. I mean, even a coin has two sides, but it's still one coin.

Bill: Well, that's true...but if you are one side of the coin, then that's the only side you can see...unless, of course, you're looking at a separate coin. But all that would prove is that the other viewpoint is separate from your own.

Lyn: I can see it all now...The Creationists see the Scientists as standing on their "heads"...and the Scientists see the Creationists as sitting on their "tails"!

Bill: I think a third party might call that..."name calling."

Lyn: True. But it all seems so unnecessary!

Bill: Well, it is unnecessary, for some; but for others, there will always be a problem until someone comes up with a biblical explanation for the scientific version...or a scientific explanation of the biblical one.

Lyn: Then, as a Christian Community, I think we ought to do something about it!

Bill: Such as? We don't have the answers--I certainly don't--and to think that we could possibly solve a problem that has bothered a good number of people for a goodly number of years seems a bit...presumptuous.

Lyn: Well, we may not have the answers, but we do have bits and pieces...and, after all, what did God give us a brain for? You know, there are a lot of good people turning atheists these days, maybe because no one has really tried to bring the two sides together.

Bill: True. It's a cinch it wasn't attempted at the Scopes Monkey Trial.

Lyn: That's because each side was trying to win. We need to start with the two sides and try to find a common denominator.

[She looks around at all the people, both on and off stage and an idea begins to form.]

For instance, look at all these people here! I bet there's more cumulative knowledge in this one group than a single scientist could acquire in a lifetime. That could be one of our sides!

Bill: Well, that's "true"...but you're overlooking something. This is a church function and one must assume that most of these people believe in God...or, at any rate, are not openly hostile towards Him.

You can't bring two sides together if you have only one side available.

Lyn: True, true! But!...

[She ponders for a second, then looks engagingly at Bill.]

We could throw in a "ringer"...you know, someone who pretended not to believe in the bible?

Bill: Aah...I don't know if I like that I think you're thinking.

Lyn: Oh, common on! You're good at creating characters. Didn't you write that play in the Fall? You even had a part in it...and you were terrific! And completely out of character!

Bill: *[Shakes his head and mutters under his breath, as an aside.]*
No...that must have been someone else...

Lyn: Oh yes you did...

Bill: No...though I think you had a part in the same play, if I remember correctly.

Lyn: Yes, but I was an angel.

[She tries to look angelic.]

What can I say?...But, you'd make the perfect "Devil's Advocate"! And, besides, no one would suspect. You're always so quiet and reserved. Who knows what caldrons bubble deep within? Me? I have just the opposite problem. Everyone always knows what I'm thinking.

You do want to do it! Sure, you do!...And you are going to do it, aren't you, Bill!

Bill: All right (if only to preserve my own life and limb). And, besides, it might be interesting. I suppose. After all, what have I got to lose...except, maybe, the love, trust, and respect of everyone here?

Lyn: Good man! Someone willing to risk all for a worthy cause.

Bill: God help us.

Lyn: I'm sure He will.

[At this point, the rest of the stage lights are switched on and Lyn urges Bill forward and into his "new" part. As a last minute aside to his partner, Bill adds the following.]

Bill: By the way, what part are you going to play in this...little venture?

Lyn: Trust me...

[Lyn continues to urge on Bill while the Mouse runs ahead of them across the stage, stops at middle stage and holds up sign which reads:

"THIS COULD BE A LITTLE RISKY!"

Mouse steals some cheese and exits stage right.]

Bill: Well, here goes nothing...

I still say that...

Lyn: [An aside as a loud whisper] Louder!

Bill: *[Clearing his throat]* Ahem! I still say that the book of Genesis is simple a bunch of stories, written by someone...or a group of someones...to try and explain how they thought life began. What grown person, in this age of scientific development, can possibly take seriously the story of Adam and Eve, for example? I mean, really! Two human beings, fully grown, simply plunked down, abracadabra. With all we've learned about evolution and the origin of the species? How can anybody give any credence to a story that's really cut out of the same cloth as the stork bringing babies?!

[There is a great deal of looking around during this speech to see if anyone is listening. A couple of people on stage are beginning to listen, and Tom wanders over to where Lyn and Bill are standing.]

Lyn: Well then, how would you say that human life began? When the first apelike creatures started walking upright? Or, maybe, when monkeys first came down out of the trees? Or further back...to the reptiles...or the fish?

Bill: Well, there is something in each one of us that came from those things. If you talk about the cells that make up our bodies, then you'd have to go back even further...to the time when cells became divided into two kingdoms--plant and animal. In fact, why stop there? Scientists tell us that as some point in time, cells had the characteristics of both plant and animal! The essence of our physical makeup had to have been a part of these cells, as well.

[And then, remembering his dual role, he adds...] But that's all a far cry from Adam and Eve!

Lyn: Maybe...maybe not. What do we know about those cells? What were they like?

Bill: What were they like?... Well, fairly certainly they ate!

[And he helps himself to a tray of cheese.]

And they probably moved around.

I don't know what they did for amusement...That was before television. Probably took long drives in the country on Sunday afternoons...sat around long winter evenings darning socks, that sort of thing...

Aahhh. Other than that, they had to eliminate waste...and, of course, they had to reproduce themselves.

Lyn: In what way?

Bill: What do you mean, "In what way?"

Lyn: How did they reproduce?

[At this point, Barbara happens to overhear and stops by to comment.]

Barb: Did I hear someone say "reproduce"? I hardly think that's a topic for a wine and cheese party, do you?

Bill: *[Much relieved to have someone else do the talking for awhile.]*

That depends on what you know about cells.

Barb: Oh, you mean it's a serious discussion. I don't know whether that's a topic for a party, either...but...what the heck! I haven't had a serious discussion in ages. What about cells?

Lyn: Well, we were wondering how they reproduce.

Barb: Oh...Well, that depends on the type of cell.

[Bill and Lyn exchange pleased and surprised expressions.]

In general, there are two main ways: asexual and sexual. The single-celled protozoa reproduce by fission; that's an asexual type. You know, that's where one individual simply divides into two. Amoebas and paramecia are forms that reproduce this way. So are bacteria and algae. In fact, fission is the main method of reproduction found in all single-celled plants and animals.

Lyn: Maybe even a cell that is both plant and animal?

Barb: Definitely! But there are other forms of asexual reproduction. One is called "budding." That's when a new individual grows, like a limb, from the body of its parent. When the bud is mature, it drops off and begins its adult life.

And then there's another called "regeneration." That's the growth of a complete organism from one of its parts, like when you take a cutting from a plant, like a geranium, and it grows into another complete plant. Starfish and earthworms can reproduce in this way, too. In fact, so can people. Bill, your liver will regenerate!

Bill: What!? Here in front of everybody?

Barb: Yep. And the healing of a cut might be called a form of regeneration, too.

Tom: Gee, Barb, I didn't know you knew so much about this.

Barb: Well, you might say it's been an "interest" of mine for a long time. All it took was a little research. Hey, but what's this discussion really about?

Lyn: Actually?

[She looks at Bill for a second, then turns back to Barb.]

Adam and Eve?

Barb: What?

Bill: Yes, and a rather far cry from cells, too!

[Bill turns, rather pointedly, to Barb.]

Now, here's a person who appears to know what she's talking about! So...how do you think life began?

Barb: I haven't the vaguest idea! But, I suppose that at some point in time the conditions were just right for that...spark of life.

Lyn: Well then, what do you think the first cells were like?

Barb: They probably reproduced by fission. After all, we can only go on what scientists know about the simplest cells today. There aren't many fossils of the earliest cells to look at.

Bill: I still don't see how Adam and Eve come into this.

Lyn: Maybe that's because we're thinking of Adam and Eve as only people.

Bill: O-o-only people?

[He is beginning not to act, at this point.]

What's that supposed to mean?

Lyn: Well, we've just been looking at people...

(She gestures to the audience.) Sorry about that...

And we've even traced them back to some sort of a beginning. Why not try looking at Adam and Eve in the same way? The only difference is...that the bible says they are the beginning, of people at least. So, rather than throwing out the whole story, just because we've pictured something with a name as having...*[She looks around and indicates Bill's feet]...two feet and ten toes [Bill looks at his feet]*, why not search for something that makes more sense? I mean, even a protozoan has a "name"...and it means something! "First Animal," I think.

Barb: Right!

Lyn: So, what does the name "Adam" mean?

Bill: It means I need a drink...

[And he goes to refill his wine glass.]

Barb: Nah, Bill; it doesn't mean that at all!

Tom: Hey, where's Dick? He can look it up in his Strongs Concordance. He always has it on him.

[There is a general bustle and calling for Dick, who is in the audience...carrying his Strongs Concordance and a briefcase of books. When he's finally spotted...]

Lyn: Come on up here for a minute, will you, Dick? We have a question for you.

Dick: I hope I can answer it.

[Dick makes his way up to the stage, pulls out a lectern from behind the curtain and arranges his information on it.]

The mouse, by this time, has snuck back on stage and is munching on cheese and drinking some wine. At this point, it holds up another one of its signs:

"THIS OUGHT TO BE GOUDA!"

The rest of the people on stage begin to gather around for the discussion.]

Barb: Dick, we want to know what the name "Adam" means.

Dick: Oh, I don't need a book for that. Adam means "Mankind" in Hebrew.

[Dick looks it up anyway.]

Lyn: But if we're looking at the beginnings of things, let's look at the beginning of that Hebrew word, as well. I mean, even words have their origins.

Dick: Well, "Adam" comes from a root word meaning "to show blood."

Lyn: Aha! And we're back to cells, again!

Bill: Ahhh...Wait a minute. You're not saying...I hope you're not saying...You're not saying that Adam was only a single cell!?!?

Lyn: Only a single cell? Our bodies are made up of single cells. A baby begins as a single cell. But, no; you're right. I'm not saying that Adam was only a single cell. If that were true, there wouldn't be so much controversy over the whole Adam and Eve story. Anything that has only one interpretation isn't open to argument.

Bill: Then what are you saying?

Lyn: I'm saying to search for the truth...but with an open mind. If a scientist (or any one of us, for that matter) has two conflicting sets of data, and they're both supposed to be dealing with the same topic, then it seems to me we ought to take a close look at one...or the other...or both of them. We might find that we've been making some assumptions...

[She motions to Bill's feet.]

...without even realizing it.

Dick: This sounds pretty deep to me.

Tom: You haven't heard the half of it! How about some wine?

Dick: Ohhhh yeh!

Barb: I like the idea!

Bill: About the wine?

Barb: No! The cells, the cells! What if Adam was a single cell...or even a group of cells. Then the creation of Eve would make sense!

Tom: I told you "You haven't heard the half of it"!

Barb: Now Tom, listen to me a minute. If we think of Adam as a cell, then the whole story of the Garden of Eden makes sense: It's progressive steps in reproduction?!

First, you have Adam. Then you have Eve coming from Adam, but in the same way that "regeneration" or, possibly, "budding" occurs. In either case, a whole individual is formed from part of another individual...But...for some reason, the new offspring was a little different...

Bill: Yeh. One was a boy and one was a girl.

Barb: Possibly a mutation?

Tom: I always knew my wife was different. She always bites off more than she can chew!

Bill: Like an apple?

[Laughter.]

Dick: Well, Eve was the first to take a bite.

Lyn: But it wasn't necessarily an apple. There's another one of our assumptions. According to the Bible, it was a "fruit." Who knows what kind?

Tom: Maybe that's where the phrase "Be fruitful and multiply" comes from.

Barb: Maybe so...but, there's another type of reproduction, more complex than fission. It's called "conjugation," and it's the process of passing some of the nuclear material from one cell to another. Like an apple?...Or, rather, a fruit?

[Silence.]

[Then a burst of almost anger.]

Dick: I'm sorry! But I just can't see taking a beautiful story like the Creation and reducing it to something so...so STERILE...as a bunch of cells going about their business of reproducing!

Bill: (*Chuckles.*) Sterile! I like that! A "sterile creation"!

Dick: But it's much more than that!

Lyn: Of course, it is. If it weren't, there'd be no reason for you to be so upset. There's always more than one way to look at something. Sometimes, I think that I never look at the same thing in the same way twice...Right, Tom?

Tom: Right! Like in a marriage, for instance, there are at least two ways to look at everything.

[*He puts his arm around Lyn.*]

Bill: At least!

Dick: Well, I believe there were actually two people named Adam and Eve...and a place called the Garden of Eden!

Lyn: And perhaps there were. But that point of view has been looked at from "six ways to Sunday." What would happen if we looked at Adam and Eve, not as two persons, put as a "people"...a group of people. When did they live?...

Dick: Well, (*somewhat mollified*) if you count up all the years between the "begats" and combine that with some other bits and pieces, that would put them at roughly 4000 B.C.

Lyn: Does anyone know where the Garden of Eden was?

Dick: Not exactly. But it was somewhere around the Trigris and the Euphrates Rivers.

Lyn: Somewhere in the Fertile Crescent?

Dick: Yes.

Lyn: Well, wasn't 4000 B.C. about the end of the Stone Age?

Barb: Yeh, just about.

Tom: I remember that from history. The people had been up in the hills, but they had to come down onto the plain of the Fertile Crescent. They'd been hunters and gatherers...but they had to come down to begin farming.

Dick: Like the Garden of Eden. They gathered fruit from the trees, but had to leave. They had to go out from the garden to till the soil!

Lyn: Right. It's just another way to look at that same passage. There may be as many ways to look at it as there are people.

Bill: Wait a minute...You've got 4000 B.C., right?

Lyn: Right.

Bill: This is 1981 A.D., last time I looked.

Lyn: Right.

Bill: You can't be saying that the first cells began just 6000 years ago.

Lyn: No...that does seem a bit unreasonable, doesn't it?

[Mouse holds up another sign:

"EVEN A GOOD SWISS HAS HOLES IN IT."]

Tom: Hey, you know...maybe we're not looking at time in the right way.

Bill: Time is time...is it not?

Tom: Not when you've been married as long as I have!

Lyn: Ahhem!

Tom: Ah, I mean, ah...How time flies when you're having fun? Why it seems like only yesterday...

Lyn: Nice try.

Barb: Hey, guys, how about this: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past"?

Tom: That's even better!

Barb: Yeh!

Dick: It should be. It's from a psalm written by Moses.

Bill: That figures.

Lyn: And deals with time?

Dick: Time, the way God sees it.

Lyn: But that's just what we need! Moses was supposed to have written Genesis, right?...All right, I know there are all sorts of arguments to the contrary...but, at least according to Moses, Genesis was given to him by GOD! And also, according to Moses, God sees time differently than we do! So...maybe the time in Genesis is in GOD-TIME, and not MAN-TIME.

Barb: What have I said?

Bill: What has she said? [*Referring to Lyn's last comment.*]

Lyn: Don't you see? If you witness something happening...when no one else is around...and you want to describe it to someone else, wouldn't you tell it from your point of view? The way you saw it?

Bill: Well, certainly. If no one else was there, what other "point of view" is there?

Lyn: Exactly. And wouldn't you have to put it in terms that the other person could understand?

Bill: Well, you certainly wouldn't use words or concepts that the other person is unfamiliar with. That would defeat the purpose of the whole thing.

Lyn: So, what's so different about God describing what He saw...but from His point of view?

Bill: Since...He was the only one around at the time.

Lyn: Right. But in terms that Moses, or any of the people of Moses' time could understand. After all, what did the people back then know about cells? Or different types of reproduction?

Bill: To them, it was probably a simple matter of one generation following another.

Barb: But, what does that have to do with "time"?

Lyn: It means that...let me see if I can get this straight...It means...that if God told Moses that Adam lived for...What was it?...930 years?...Then that's how God saw it. What we need to do is figure out how long that is in our time.

And, the first thing we need to do is figure out how many days there are in 930 years.

Bill: Something like that.

Lyn: Tom, you're the math teacher.

Tom: Ok, ok. Just happen to have my trusty calculator here! Let's see...That's 930 years...times 365 days in a year...which would make 339,450 days that Adam lived.

Lyn: No.

Tom: What do you mean..."no"?!

Lyn: The psalm! Each day to God is like a thousand years to us. So, you have to multiply those days by a thousand. We want to look at it in terms of "our time."

Tom: Oh, ok. That's easy. That's 339 million, 450 thousand years that Adam lived?

Bill: And I use to think that 930 years was a good, ripe old age...

Barb: But what does that do to an "Adam and Eve Cell Theory"?

Lyn: We won't know that until we figure out how far back Adam and Eve lived. Which means we have to figure out how many GOD-YEARS there are in all of Genesis. Ahhh...I think it's around 2000.

Dick: 2106, to be exact. That's figuring all the "begats," from Adam to Jacob.

Tom: The Whole Thing, huh?

Lyn: That's a lot!

Tom: Ok, let's see. That would be 2106 times 365, times the 1000...which would make it 768,690,000 years ago...our time.

Barb: 769 million years! By golly, that would put Adam and Eve smack at the end of the Pre-Cambrian time period. That's the earliest time period of earth's history (prehistory, actually). Very little is known about it, except that it's during this time that the first cells were supposed to have begun. Why...I'll bet if scientists took a close look at Genesis, they might find answers to questions they've only been able to guess at?

Lyn: I bet if we all took a close look at it, we'd find a veritable "gold mine." There appears to be something for everyone. And speaking of "something for everyone," I could us some of that wine and cheese. How about you, Bill? You look like you could use another refill.

Bill: Oh yes...

[While Lyn and Bill get some more wine and head back to their original positions stage right, the conversation continues with those who are left behind.]

Dick: I still think there was an Adam and Eve, but that business about the Fertile Crescent was interesting. And I'll bet a lot more could be done with the Hebrew derivations of names...

Tom: Yeh, probably so. You know, those numbers were interesting, too. Get your stuff and come over here, Dick. I wonder what was going on during Noah's time?...

Barb: Boy, Tom! We could have a ball with that one. When did Noah live, anyway?

Dick: And, the Bible mentions something about "Nephelim" during Noah's time, too...something having to do with Giants...

Tom: You don't suppose that could be about dinosaurs, do you?

[Etc., etc. Their voices get softer and softer. The stage lights are turned off and, once again, the spot is on Lyn and Bill, who are off to one side.]

Bill: Well, that went better than I'd expected.

Lyn: I thought it went rather well, actually.

Bill: Not that we've proved anything. Who knows what was intended when the book of Genesis was...ah...handed down.

Lyn: Yes. But at least there are people willing to re-look at an old topic. The trouble with being "dead certain" about something is the finality of it all. When we stop searching, we stop growing.

Bill: Do you think the Creationist and the Evolutionists will ever really get together?

Lyn: Who knows? There seems to be at least two sides to everything...like the coins that we were talking about, earlier. And maybe that's where the real treasure lies.

Maybe "coming together" isn't about finally agreeing that several different things can be seen in one, single, all-encompassing way...

but, rather...that it's ok to view a single thing in a variety of ways.

Bill: Why is it that I get the feeling you have something particular in mind when you say that?

Lyn: Well...I was kinda wondering about the Patriarchs....Did you know

that there are 23 of them?

Bill: Ye-e-e-s.

Lyn: And that there are 23 pairs of chromosomes in a human cell?

[Lyn has a broad grin on her face as she says this and the two of them walk off the stage while still commenting...]

And...you can't have evolution of species without an evolution of chromosomes, ya know...

[Voices fade as Bill and Lyn disappear off stage.]

The End.