

“Abomination” — a misunderstood word

VIEWPOINT

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RELIGION is supposed to speak with compassion as well as opprobrium.

The *New York Times* recently reported that gay groups are protesting a decision to air a Dr Laura Schlesinger television show. Dr Laura has called homosexuality “deviant” and derivative of “biological error.” While she has also said gays are “as entitled to love and respect as all human beings”, her many other remarks have caused harm and hurt to gay people.

I grew up with a close relative who is a gay Orthodox Jew, and I've seen his torment and suffering when pronouncements of this kind are made. More important, Dr Laura cites the Hebrew Bible to bolster her views, and I believe this is done mistakenly. Her condemnations are more a reflection of her personal opinions than of what the Bible says.

In the Bible the sin of transgressing the Sabbath is treated as seriously, if not more seriously, than homosexuality.

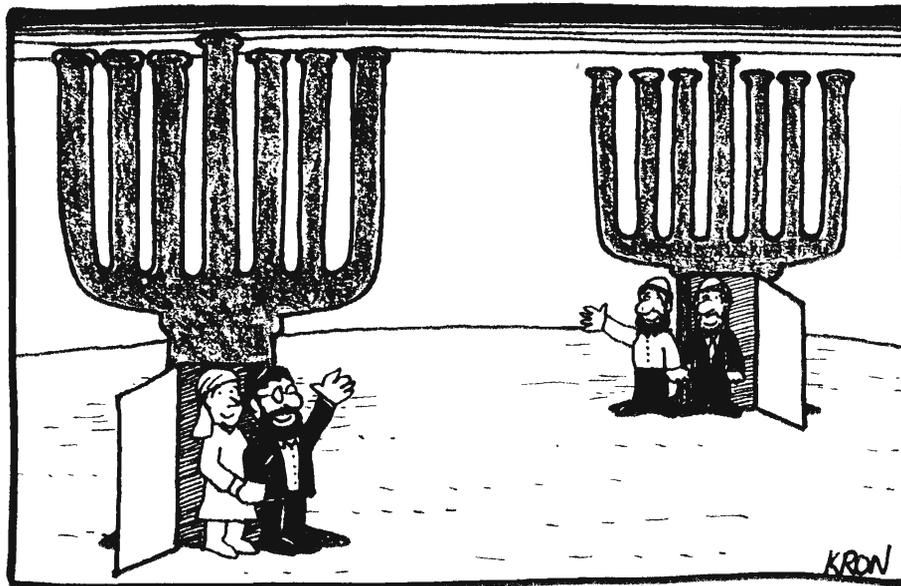
Religionists like to isolate homosexuals for special opprobrium because the Bible calls homosexuality an abomination. What they fail to point out is that the Bible uses the same word for eating non-kosher foodstuffs, as in “Thou shalt not eat any abominable things” (Deut 14:3). Likewise, the Bible uses the word “abomination” to describe the act of a man remarrying his ex-wife after she has been married to another man.

Furthermore, the act of bringing a blemished sacrifice to God's altar is called an abomination (Deut 17:1). And the Book of Proverbs declares that there are a number of things that “the Lord hates and are an abomination to Him. A proud look, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood. A heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief. A false witness that speaks lies and he that sows discord among brethren.”

Given that all these things are an abomination, we have to ask why religionists don't condemn liars with the same vehemence that they condemn homosexuals. Would Dr Laura describe

those who are arrogant as coming from some “biological error”?

One justification that she could theoretically offer is that it's a sin against nature. But as Professor David Greenberg of the University of Chicago demonstrated in his 1988 study *The Construct of Homosexuality* — the most methodical sociological study ever of homosexuality throughout history — in every era, especially in ancient times, homosexuality has been commonplace.



And for those who say human beings are biologically constructed for heterosexual sex — constructed so that we can be fruitful and multiply — let's remember that coitus is (hopefully) a very small part of sex between a man and a woman. Those who employ the natural-law argument against homosexuality would logically prohibit anything but missionary-position sex between men and women (which many religions

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do, though not Judaism). God didn't create the mouth for kissing. And forget oral sex, which would have to be dismissed as being as unnatural as having sex with someone of the same gender.

Dr Laura's mistake is simple. The Hebrew Bible contains two kinds of laws: religious and

moral. The crime of murder is not only a sin against God (religious), it's also a sin against humanity (moral). The same is not true of the prohibition against eating a cheeseburger, which, in Judaism, violates a religious law, but no ethical norms.

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tion. While he is not living in accordance with two of them — the commandments to marry and to have children — and is violating one of them, there are still 611 others that he can faithfully keep.

Even devoutly religious people occasionally gossip and employ “a proud look ... and a lying tongue”, both of which are violations of God's commandments. But that shouldn't stop them trying their best to live in accordance with God's teachings in every other way. As a man who believes in God's laws, I can't embrace or endorse gay marriage. I've spent my life and career trying to promote the institution of marriage, the beauty of having children and a reversal of the divorce rate. If this statement offends or hurts my many close friends who are gay, I apologise. Please forgive me, but I cannot alter my religious convictions.

Most of the Jewish men and women who are guests at my home for Friday-night dinner drive there, and I can't condone that either. Yet I welcome them with open arms — they're my brothers and sisters, whom I love and respect. Still, the Sabbath is holy and must be honoured. As a matter of fact, in the Bible the sin of transgressing the Sabbath is treated as seriously, if not more seriously, than homosexuality is. Yet Sabbath desecrators are hardly decried by religious leaders with anything like the same vehemence as gay men and women are.

As the product of a broken home, with a wonderful mother who has been by herself for more than 20 years, I have witnessed the pain of loneliness. Indeed, the first thing the Bible declares to be bad is loneliness. So while I can't condone gay marriage, I absolutely condemn the ridiculous claim that gay relationships are the vilest thing in the world that should be fought tooth and nail. Religious people should get over their all-too-apparent homophobia and reverse the discriminatory policy that holds homosexuality as an aberration marked by God for special censure.

The practice of homosexual sex is a sin, like any other sin. But just like heterosexuals, gays are God's children, capable of bringing light and love to a planet whose darkness is caused not only by sin, but also misguided judgment.

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moral, imperative, unless we want to decry all singles as immoral.

Religious people should stop treating gay men and women as if they're biologically deviant or distant from God. The relative I spoke of, although gay, is, I believe, closer to God than I am. He is extremely generous with his time and