

CHAPTER 2

LOVE AND HATE

Some of the communications I've gotten about the Dr. Laura letter express, if not love for me (as the assumed writer) then at least great admiration for the letter. Others express hate, if not for me then at least obvious disgust for the letter. And some, of course, are hard to categorize. Which reminds me of "Pop Goes the Weasel" for some reason.

Yes, your honor, I do intend to connect it up. Maybe I woke up this fine June morning thinking about "Pop Goes the Weasel" and Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck because it was God's will (but that's more the topic of the next chapter). Be that as it may, I started wondering about the song and its many versions, sort of like the Dr. Laura letter and its many permutations. Now, let's see, does the song start "All around" or "Round and round?" And was it "the mulberry tree" or "the mulberry bush" or "the cobbler's fence" around which the monkey chased the weasel? Those are the only two animals I've ever encountered in this song; nothing like "the jackass chased the elephant." The monkey thought 'twas all in fun, apparently, but little did he know, I take it, that the weasel would go "pop." And I've never heard "pop goes the Limbaugh" or "pop goes the Mr. Creosote" (Mr. Creosote is a grotesquely obese man in a Monty Python movie who, upon being fed an after dinner mint does, literally, explode; be ye therefore forewarned, Rush).

Glenn Beck might explain that Limbaugh's first name (at least the one he uses on his radio show) is "Rush." "Hmmm," Glenn might explain, "that's the first part of Russia" (nobody—at least nobody who has a *real* American with a name, like Sarah

Palin) calls it Russ-ee-ah. No, definitely, Rush is the first syllable of Russia. And, you know where Russia leads—directly to communism. Or at least to socialism. So, sure, we just might have a secret socialist agent in our midst, posing innocently as an arch conservative to mislead his sycophants, also known as “ditto-heads” or copy machines (here, Glenn Beck—whose initials are GB, like for Great Britain, so watch out!—might note that “sycophant” sounds a lot like “psycho fan”). But Beck might also note that the term “social justice” was mentioned by the Nazis... AND, Feminazis and Limbanazis both end with the syllables na-zis, the same spelling as Nazis, so there you have it. Watch out!

I myself note here that Beck’s beard isn’t worth mentioning, but Beck’s beer is. I admit, I’ve suggested that Limbaugh is a gas bag that might explode. Glenn Beck wouldn’t do that. No, Beck would let *us* decide. “I’m just askin’ ... You can draw your own conclusions.”

But, I promised I’d connect this all up, and I intend to even if there isn’t any connection at all. As Rush and Glenn and Dick and George have demonstrated so well and so repeatedly, there doesn’t have to be any *actual* connection to connect things up, you can just *imagine* a connection or call one to mind. Truth, they intimate, is whatever you say that your listeners will believe. I believe it was someone named Bill who suggested that facts don’t matter, only perceptions. I imagine that’s true for lots of people. Maybe Bill said that’s the way the media business he’s in *does* work. I hope he wasn’t suggesting that that’s the way it *should* work. Regardless, he could help facts become more important. If he cared about them.

By the way, this “connecting up” when there is no actual connection doesn’t work so well with sewer pipes. But with ideas... you can make the stretch.

Your honor, as you no doubt perceive, I’ve wandered into the land of extremism, and I’m wondering to myself how the extremes that inspire so much love and hate get made. I do remember an old Republican politician of the 1960s whose initials were BG saying something approximating “moderation is no virtue and extremism is no vice in the defense of liberty.” The fact that he was a Republican is of no consequence here; it’s the moderation/extremism statement that’s at issue. Of course, if you maintain that you’re really defending liberty, that you just love your country so much it makes you cry, that you just want to take your country back from those who are trampling your liberty to speak out and want the freedom to run your business as you see fit without government interference and your right to keep your guns... well, then you can be as extreme as you want and call anybody who is “moderate” a traitor or a WINO (a “whatever in name only”). DINO, RINO, WINO. All the same idea to me.

Cool! (As they said in Civil War times.) And you can say somebody’s unfit for office if they call their political opponent a “nice person.” You remember that some people said Hitler was a “nice guy” too, and that saying somebody who holds a different view of things is a “nice person” just illustrates how the slide into totalitarianism starts. The extremists of the early 21st century are something of a hit, and they’re making both fame and money hand over fist. They learned a lot from watching old Joe McCarthy. See, he wasn’t a “Mr. Nice Guy!” Nosiree, he didn’t call any red-like individual a “nice person.” They were commies, and he rooted them out!

So, I'm trying to figure out how extremism is bred, how describing somebody as a "nice person" if they're, as they say, "on the other side of the aisle" gets to carry the stench of political death. How do people become radicalized for whatever cause, religious or political or ideological in some other way? I'm not sure just how it's done, but my guess is that it *starts* with moderation and good intention. I've seen this happen in my own field of professional work—special education. It seems to involve a sort of "one-upsmanship" (or, to the language police, "one-upspersonship") in which to be holier or more conservative or more liberal or more inclusionary or more constructivist or more behaviorist or more nativist or more homeopathic or more homophobic or more whatever than your competitor or opponent you have to become a bit more... whatever the extreme is. Your competition is always moving you slightly closer to the fringe, and pretty soon you *are* the fringe and don't even recognize that you've become a lunatic. And neither do those who've moved you out there, because they've been looking at you all the time as their leader, savior, sage, guide, shaman, or whatever and they tell themselves they don't follow nutcases. There are, indeed, liberal nutcases and conservative nutcases, but it's easier to recognize that they are such when they're on the end of the political spectrum opposite your leanings (and very, very few of us are absolute dead center).

I remember a colleague of mine in Virginia's Curry School of Education, where I retired after what some would consider a lackluster career, saying to me something like, "Man, just because I think there are a few kids who shouldn't be in regular classes, although I agree that most should be, these people are calling me a segregationist Nazi!" "Well, welcome to the world of inclusionary extremists," I wanted to tell him. It sort of reminds me of extremists in other things, like those who take positions like these:

- ✿ Nobody ever needs a gun for any purpose, and gun ownership should be prohibited, period. (Actually, I don't know anyone personally who takes this position.)
- ✿ Gun rights are never to be infringed, so it's simply not the government's business what guns I own or why I have them or what kind of guns they are. (Yes, some people do take this position.)
- ✿ Taxes are always too high, and whoever can cut taxes most is the best candidate, and tax cuts are always a good idea, and if you raise my taxes you lose my vote. (All you've got to do is listen to the radio or watch television or read bumper stickers, and you'll come across this idea.)
- ✿ Government *is* the problem, so minimal is always best government. (This is a pretty basic Republican notion, oft repeated since Ronald Reagan said "government *is* the problem.")
- ✿ More government is always the solution to any problem. (Actually, I haven't met anyone or heard of anyone who claims this, but I suppose it'd be embraced by leftist nutcases.)

And on and on, we could go, and where extremism will stop nobody knows. But, it's hard to be a passionate moderate, even if you lean a little left or right. You seem to stand for nothing, to be wishy-washy, to think nuance is ok. If you don't subscribe to ALWAYS or NEVER but think the issue in question requires some judgment, then you're assumed to advocate the opposite absolute. You have to duck the brickbats coming from extreme left and, especially these days, from extreme right.

But there's another phenomenon that's at work with extremism. It's what most people recognize as asymmetry or lopsidedness. Extremists love the idea of considering anyone who disagrees with them a proponent of the other extreme, not the middle or center or moderate view. So, if, as my education professor colleague found out, you back away from an extreme position on inclusion (what I might call the "full Monty" inclusion in which *all* students with disabilities of any kind, bar none, are assumed to be rightfully included in regular classrooms), then you're assumed to take the position that inclusion is always bad and exclusion is always good—not exactly what you think, but the way a proponent of limitless inclusion would like to describe you. And, of course, the "full inclusion" proponent will deny embracing the idea of limitless inclusion, although she or he will not admit that excluding any kid from anything would ever be appropriate.

Likewise, on issues like abortion or gun rights or taxes. Although, for example, someone might take the position that abortion is *always* bad, I don't know that anyone goes to the opposite extreme, claiming that abortion is *always* good. But, if you say abortion is *sometimes* better than the alternative, then you'll be portrayed as a "baby killer." Sometimes, people say something like "you only have one choice here." But they don't realize that only one "choice" means you have no choice at all. Choice means you can decide to do it or not to do it; it's up to you. And you won't be put to death if you make the wrong choice. Sarah Palin may have made a good choice—for her. But she doesn't want any other woman to be able legally to make a choice with which she disagrees. I think that means she doesn't want other women to have a real, live choice. I think that when choices are dead, life isn't a choice at all. You can't choose life when there's no choice. You're just stuck with it.

I stray. Back to the Dr. Laura letter. Well, I did and I didn't stray. Actually, the matter of homosexuality, which is what the Dr. Laura letter is about, *is* related to the idea of extremism. There's the idea that homosexuality is always bad. Period. End of discussion. Oh, my! First of all, there's the issue of whether homosexuality is a choice. And then there's the issue of whether, to the extent that it is a choice, it's always a bad choice. Consider the asymmetry of the extremism. On the one hand, you have many people who suggest that homosexuality is always wrong. But on the other hand you don't have anyone arguing—at least, nobody I've heard or read about, at least no one who has a following—that homosexuality is always good, that it's the only right way to live, that heterosexuals are a mistake of nature, that heterosexuals are living in sin, that they're evil, that we don't approve of their "lifestyle," and on and on with the invective directed only at heterosexuals. No, the extremism seems to be pretty much a matter of hate or invective or "Scriptural" condemnation directed at homosexuality.

Some people seem to love the letter to Dr. Laura, others to hate it. Let's look first at some love letters (well, love messages in this case, to be really accurate, as some of the messages I've gotten are emails and some are paper letters). Remember, the communications are about the Dr. Laura letter, and some of what I've received express love for the letter I didn't write but loathing of Dr. Laura. (Remember, too, that the communications are reproduced as I received them, and if there are typos in them, be my guest—interpret them as you will, but I think you'll get the drift in most if not all cases.)

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May 22, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman:

A friend of mine forwarded to me your marvelously expressed e-mail to Laura Schlesinger. I refuse to acknowledge the cow as "Dr.," as I feel she is in no way deserving of that title within the respected profession of psychology.

I have listened to her infamous radio program and cringed at her self-righteous, narrow-mind, sexist, and generally harmful advise. Schlesinger lives in an atavistic fantasy world, one in which women are female caricatures that are subservient to men, males are soft-minded beasts that can be easily manipulated by controlling women, and gay people are condemned to God's wrath. I continue to tune in to her show, because I am in continual disbelief at what issues from the woman's mouth--rather like a gruesome accident at which one is compelled to gawk.

Your intelligent and humorous open letter to her tickled me to my very core. Schlesinger cuts off radio callers who hold opposing views, and she denounces her critics from her self-constructed pedestal of superiority. She cannot ignore your credentials and expertise of biblical scripture. It is satisfying to see the bully belittled.

Kudos to you for stepping up to the plate and putting that silly twit in her place.

Regards,

Xxx

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Well, I might claim some knowledge of the Bible, which comes up most obviously in the next chapter, but the real kudos should go to the anonymous writer of the open letter to Dr. Laura. Here's another message that came to me from a lawyer in the

UK:

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May 19, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I wanted to congratulate you on your excellent letter to Laura Schlesinger – it was forwarded on to me as an email. Nice to know that it travelled across the proverbial pond!

Kind regards

Xxx

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Here are some more communications that, were I actually the author of the letter to Dr. Laura, I might consider “fan mail.”

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April 30, 2010

Just a note of thanks for that hilarious posting. Delighted to see that humor is alive and well in C'ville.

All best

Xxx

April 30, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I thought that you might be amused and pleased to know that I just received a copy of your letter to Dr. Laura Schlesinger from my daughter, who lives in a

remote corner of Botswana. I have no idea how your letter to got to her but it is obviously being widely circulated.

I greatly enjoyed your letter to Dr. Laura. If there are more like that please do share them.

Regards,

Xxx

May 23, 2010

Subject: Hi

Hi Dr. Kauffman, I just wanted to tell you that I really enjoyed your response to Dr. Laura and shared it with my FB friends :) Great job!

Xxx

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And you wonder why I'm pessimistic about this false attribution stopping anytime soon? Jeeez! As you'll see, the whole thing, with my name attached, really has "gone viral" because people in various parts of the world are forwarding forwards of forwards and putting the letter with my name on it on various networking Internet sites. And, of course, I'm somewhat concerned that some fundamentalist may abjure skepticism about authorship of the letter, just as he or she avoids skepticism about fundamentalist religion, and want to off me because of my unbelief or sin or blasphemy or something. There's plenty of hate in the world already, and lots of it seems to be blind. But, on we go. Most people in the world, or at least most of those who've sent me a message about this letter, aren't driven by blind rage.

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May 4, 2010

Prof. Kauffman...

A friend just passed along your note to Dr. Schlesinger.

I haven't laughed that hard in years.

Thank you for brightening my day.

Regards,

Xxx

May 7, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman, Thank you for writing such a brilliant letter!

Sorry, I don't know when this appeared- or where (this was forwarded to me today)- but, I could not have enjoyed it more.

Many thanks again,

Xxx

May 7, 2010

Subject: Your Dr. Laura letter

One of our friends happened to mention you were on FB so I thought I'd seek you out and thank you for the above mentioned letter. I received it in an email and promptly put it in my notebook and shared it with friends and relatives. Any responses I received back were great, funny, and heartfelt. Those that I did not receive back, well, spoke for themselves - lol

Thank you again for your wisdom and wit!

Xxx

Xxx

May 10, 2010

Dear Mr. Kauffman,

A friend of mine just sent me by e-mail your open letter to Dr. Laura Schlesinger about homosexuality.

To be honest, I don't really know how I got the nerve to write to you, but anyway; I just wanted to thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

I have enjoyed every word of this letter. You cannot imagine how good it feels to see that some people are still willing to fight stupidity, and not with any weapon: with wit.

Mr. Kauffman, I hope you won't be mad about this message and my intrusion in your privacy, but I was so excited that I had to do something ! Thank you again, you made my day.

I wish you the best.

Sincerely,

Xxx

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I'm sort of pained by the thought that someone would think I'd be angry with them for writing to me or anyone else about this letter. Now, I do admit that some of the messages I've gotten have been sort of a pain in the ass because they're so long and

didactic or disdainful or downright abusive. But somebody writing to thank me? And for something I didn't even do? I'll take that kind of message any day! No problem. What kind of misanthrope would be angry about it?

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May 11, 2010

Dr. Kauffman –

You are hilarious!!

Do you mind if I fwd your response to my brother-in-law who sent me the original Dr. Laura letter?

The use and abuse of Scripture is, no doubt, rampant in many spheres – a sign, I think, of a culture at war with its values, heritage, and direction...

But then, to what do the sheeple turn?

Thanks for your response,

Xxx

May 12, 2010

Fabulous, just fabulous

I remember this monologue on *West Wing*, with Martin Sheen asking these questions of a Schlesinger like character and ending with a bit about her being seated through and reminding her that while it's usually OK for a woman to remain seated when men enter the room, when the POTUS enters it is customary for ALL to stand, whereupon she awkwardly rises, having been properly humiliated by the Presidents intellect and command of the situation. (I love long

sentences) Laugh? I thought the tears would never stop streaming down my leg.....

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And, even though *all* versions of the Dr. Laura letter have that *question* about owning Canadians as slaves and lots of versions have the P. S. about owning Canadians, many Canadians seem to take it with good humor:

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May 13, 2010

Subject: was this letter really written by you?

Hello Mr.Kauffman,

This email was sent to me today and I wanted to know if you were the one who wrote it, and if yes, IT'S BRILLIANT! If no, IT'S STILL BRILLIANT!!

namaste,

Xxx from Vancouver, Canada!

(ps..we're not for sale! hehehe)

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But, then, there are other responses, too. I haven't fully decided in my own mind whether the following is intended to be complimentary or not. I am, in fact, an atheist, and I plead ignorance of the Talmud. Still, I'm just not sure what's intended, if anything, to be funny and what's not. Mostly, I think it's funny, even if it wasn't intended to be.

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May 18, 2010

Subject: RE: I want a Canadian too!

Dr. Kauffman...

1. is an atheist
2. is ignorant of Talmud
3. is ignorant even of the Written Torah
4. does not know biblical Hebrew
5. does not know that the word "abomination" does not appear in the Torah
6. does not know that no one was allowed to "smite"
7. does not know that sacrificial worship was only done in the Holy Temple, not in Virginia, or even in Bethlehem
8. knows less than nothing about Jewish Law or Jewish laws

I used to own pigskin gloves; I wore them right on my skin; I played football with balls that were made of genuine pigskin. no problem.

Dr. Kauffman is clearly grossly ignorant of the laws governing the ethical treatment of servants discussed in the Torah (and significantly expanded on in the Talmud, based on the Torah), nothing at all similar to slaves he might have owned in the pre-Civil War South. The same Torah that allowed a system of servitude thousands of years ago (Did we not have indentured servants in this country?) as necessary for an agricultural society, along with the penal code, disallowed it for the past two thousand years. Dr. Kauffman, in which century do you live? Not in ours!

No Orthodox Jew has EVER asked a woman if she is in the midst of her menstrual period. Are you crazy?

Dr. Kauffman would never burn a bull on an altar. In "this day and age" no one

sells daughters "into slavery" (again, the wong word). 2,800 years ago, YOU, Dr. Kauffman, might have done so, if you were impoverished and knew that after a few years she would marry the wealthy man's son. We Orthodox Jews all wear cotton/polyester blended clothing; it was NEVER forbidden (even in the Torah), but I forgot: Dr. Kauffman is totally ignorant of the original Hebrew, Jewish Law, and Orthodox Jewish practice. Most of us get normal haricuts (Dr. Kauffman hasn't seen mine); what planet did Dr. Kauffman come from?...oh, I forgot: Dr. Kauffman is totally ignorant of the original Hebrew, Jewish Law, and Orthodox Jewish practice.

Shall we talk about the Sabbath, Dr. Kauffman, which is the 4th of The Ten Commandments? Do you observe The Ten Commandments, Dr. Kauffman? Any of them? I presume you don't keep #4. Oh, I forgot: you are clearly an atheist; you must not even keep The Ten Commandments.

If a God created this world and made His will known to a whole nation that was at the foot of Mount Sinai, and gave them the Law, he would not want it to be damaged and destroyed by those who would distort it into an unrecognizable state.

Dr. Laura was never a fully observant Orthodox Jew. She liked it, it made a lot of sense, but not keeping all of it allowed her to miss many points and lead her astray.

Until the day you die, Dr. Kauffman, which could happen any day, there is always hope for you.

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And here's one that's obviously written tongue-in-cheek (sorry to repeat the Dr. Laura letter, but most of us haven't committed it all to memory, so I think I need to repeat it to make the "Dr. Rob" responses make sense).

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May 18, 2010

Subject: Fw: God's law

Dear Dr. Laura: **actually, this is Dr. Rob assigned to answer for Dr. Laura.**

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination... End of debate. **you are quite welcome! yes, you now know how to end the debate and win. it's an abomination, case closed. good for you.**

I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's Laws and how to follow them. here is my advice:

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians? **a friend of yours claims? who the hell is this? Mexicans? then ask your friend. actually, I think your friend may be correct on this.**
2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her? **you have to**

check her out first and see what she's worth then strike a reasonable bargain. get an extended warranty plan too, caveat emptor, and all that.

3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of Menstrual uncleanness - Lev.15: 19-24. The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense. **if you dont know, then it is better if you have no contact with women at all.**

4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord - Lev.1:9. The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them? **now hold on, dont go overboard and start smiting anybody. you can purchase a portable fume extraction system with a large filter. simply plug it in, turn it on, and hold the intake funnel apparatus over the burning bull on the altar. this will remove all smoke and offensive odor and your neighbors wont smell a thing. go for it!**

5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it? ***now here you go again wanting to smite somebody. maybe you really need some psychological help. dont take matters into your own hands, and certainly keep the cops out of it! either ask your nearest Rabbi how to handle this issue, or hire a professional hitman to do the job. I would go with the hitman. many can be found on the internet or in Las Vegas.***

6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination, Lev. 11:10, it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle

this? Are there 'degrees' of abomination? **another idiot friend of yours???** I suggest you quit hanging around with early releasees from mental institutions pal. anyway, yes there are degrees of abomination, shellfish are lowest on this scale and homosexuals are at the top of the abomination scale. you should never eat homosexuals but eating shellfish should be okay unless you have allergies. if you somehow discover a gay shellfish, dont lose any sleep over it.

7. Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle-room here? **oh, there is some wiggle room dummy. lighten up and stop taking everything so literally. if this really bothers you then go get Lasik surgery on you eyes. actually you have a more important problem, a defect in your brain!**

8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19:27. How should they die? **see- I knew it, ha, I thought you were a homosexual! what's all this preoccupation with smiting, killing and death?? honestly! anyway, some of them may die of AIDS if they're not careful, thats in Lev. 19:69. the rest are not your problem.**

9. I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear **gloves? bullshit- you dont play football ever! you play volleyball. your starting to annoy me with all these**

childishly inane questions. start trying to grow up and figure things out for yourself. by the way, pigs taste good too.

10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev.19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? Lev.24:10-16. Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair, like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14) **your uncle now, what happened to your "friends?" ummm...wait a minute- 2 different crops, uh, garments of 2 different kinds of thread, um, cotton/polyester, uh..cursing and blasphemy, the whole town to stone them, sleeping with in-laws....your questions are getting tedious and this one is too complicated for me. just go ahead and burn your uncle and aunt at a private family affair and then forget about it and move on.**

I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I'm confident you can help.

this is true, and I'm glad you came to me for advice. hope you have learned something and can now go forward with your life. one suggestion: quit asking so many ludicrous, irrelevant, immaterial questions, people will think you are kind of stupid!

Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

you are quite welcome my lad, and good luck to you.

Your adoring fan. **now, now, lighten up on the hyperbole. you make me blush.**

James M. Kauffman,
Ed.D. Professor Emeritus,
Dept. Of Curriculum, Instruction, and
Special Education, University of Virginia

(It would be a damn shame if we couldn't own a Canadian:) **Oh GOD yes,
would'nt it, I'd prefer owning a Canadian to a wetback any day!!!**

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Mexicans should be forgiven if they take offense at the reference to them in the letter to Dr. Laura or to their being called “wetbacks” in the above email. But, then, I suppose lots of people, certainly including homosexuals, can take offense at many things that are written or said. But here’s an email challenging me to address the Arizona immigration law of 2010.

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May 17, 2010

Hello Dr. Kauffman,

A friend of mine sent me your open letter to Dr. Laura, and I have to say it gave me the biggest chuckle of the week. Just wanted to take a few minutes to tell you it was enjoyable, witty, and hit the nail on the head (Dr. Laura anyone??) Thank you for sharing a very clever and provocatively written statement, that truly hits home. Now can you write a letter about the profiling issues about immigration here in Arizona?

Sending you my best,

Xxx

Well, Arizona. The possibilities here are nearly endless. “Sorry, your honor, I just thought this guy looked like a Canadian, so I brought him in.” “Yes, you have to carry the right kind of papers with you even if you are an Italian, and the papers you trained your dog on won’t do!”

Ok. Back to the Dr. Laura letter. Here are some more communications of appreciation. You might call them love letters.

June 16, 2005

Dear Dr. Kauffman,

An email was forwarded to me that apparently you wrote in response to a comment that Dr. Laura made. I would just like to applaud you for your wit and insight. It was rather humorous to read and refreshing. Way to stick it to the man...or woman in this case. Thanks for your thought provoking comments and humor...it was much appreciated!

Xxx

May 10, 2006

Dear Dr. Kaufman,

I read an internet article written by yourself re Laura Schlesinger's use of the bible as a support for her own bigotry (spelling correct?).

I have to say it was extremely amusing and hopefully she was lost for words, though I doubt it.

Needless to say I have forwarded your article to several hundred people and hope it will make itself heard globally.

Thanks and regards,

Xxx

Hong Kong

September 10, 2009

Dear Professor

Your sagacity has spread to the UK. A friend sent me the below which is attributed to you. Absolutely brilliant piece, hats off to you! I was wondering what - if any - reply you received?

Kind Regards

Xxx

November 23, 2009

Hi Professor Kaufman,

Awesome letter you submitted to Dr. Laura! It was very clever and quite comedic :-) I appreciated your approach to the subject matter and as I Christian, I believe God has a sense of humor too!

Kind regards,

Xxx

November 24, 2009

Hey James M.K.

Hope this finds you over in UVA USA.

Received a most amusing circular email over here in South Australia penned by you .

Re.

the literal taking of all written in the old testament

Very clever and amusing,you have obviously done your research;are there really people who take literally what is requested of them from a 4000 year old Bible into their daily lives??

Did she ever reply to you

Would be most interested in reading it!!

Have some Kauffman friends in Buffalo WYO -are they your relatives??

All the best,take care

Xxx

March 31, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I read with much interest and delight your brilliant response on the pathetic attack against homosexuality. I loved how my in morning email was something that made me laugh right out loud but, at the same time, I was sad that there are still so many people in the world who use a fundamentalist belief in 'holy text' to justify their position on so much.

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your words. I hope you have received more

accolades than hate mail over your intelligent and well-crafted letter. I, for one, will be more careful at the border in case offing Canadians does indeed become the choice. I might have to move to Texas to be with our grandson, son and daughter-in-law. Then again, they are planning to rewrite the textbooks in Texas (oh my!)...so maybe I'll stay put and hope for the best.

With best wishes from Canada,

Xxx

March 30, 2010

Professor, I was just sent and read your open letter to Dr Laura. You are my new hero! Brilliant ! The neo-cons won't change but at least we can laugh at their self-serving use of the bible to defend their prejudices. Writing from Canada.

Best wishes...

March 26, 2010

I am just now aware of your 10-point rejoinder to Dr. Laura back in 2004; thank you very much for your erudition and wit. Did you receive a reply (HARDLY likely !!) --and if you did, is it possible to be directed to where I might read the answers to god's law???

[...and, later the same day from the same person, after I sent my standard reply...]

Dr. Kauffman --

You are treasure enough and it isn't likely that concourse (I avoided the legitimate term "intercourse") with Dr. Laura would improve your value.

Thank you, Sir,

Xxx

April 22, 2010, from the UK

If, truly, you wrote this...then you are an absolute star!

Cheers,

Xxx

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Then, there are the ones that are hard to interpret as anything but hateful. Usually, they start out with some sort of disclaimer (like “Oh, if it isn’t really you who wrote this, then I’m hating the wrong person!”) and proceed to an explanation about how there’s a religious basis for the hate (which is for the sin, not the sinner; although, actually, the body in which the sin resides may have to be killed or maybe tortured to get the sin out) and secularism is ruining the nation if not the world and how pointy-headed people with advanced degrees think they’re smart but real intelligence belongs to God and His people and if you’re not a Christian then everything you do is suspect... You get the drift, but here’s an example:

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May 25, 2010

Please excuse me but are you the Dr. James M. Kaufman, PhD educator and university professor, who wrote this insulting piece about Dr. Laura?

If you are not, then please accept my apologies, disregard this memo and then delete it, because it is not intended for you.

If it is you, then here is what I have to say:

Kind of beneath the expectations for a University level professor, wouldn't you say?

I am not as smart as you, I only hold 2 engineering degrees but I do not have a doctorate. But I do know a rat when I smell one and a fraud when I see one, and you may well be one. Various sites on the Internet have you profiled as a likely Athiest. <http://www.dailyatheist.net/?p=937> If this is true, or if you are a secularist, then you may indeed be a fraud regardless of your 200 plus published papers and lifetime of good works that you have done.

Here is why. You like to quote Leviticus out of the Bible, a part also considered part of the Jewish Torah, that was likely written by Moses, the prophet of God, as a guide to the priesthood (aka. Levites) on how to conduct God's spiritual work among his chosen people, the Jews. It was written 1000 years before the age of Christ, or do you wish to mock that part too and claim that he never lived or was never the son of God? Isn't that what you secularists and atheists do? And surprise, things were different then. Leviticus was written to educate the Jewish clergy of it's time and to serve as guide, looking forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. The fact that slaves existed and 'burnt offerings' were required, may seem out of touch with today's reality, was just Moses' interpretation of God's requirements for the clergy given the conditions present at the time. Why do you mock an entire religion, that of the Jews, because

of what was written 3000 years ago ? Just because you don't like Dr. Laura's anti-gay message?

And Dr. Laura, has converted to Judaism once she got married to her husband and has embraced her new religion. I am not Jewish but I have listened to her on and off over the years and she is absolutely spot-on with her advice to young people, as any senior citizen would likely be, correct likely 99% of the time on the advice that she gives out to young people. Here in California, we even agreed so much with her position on homosexuality that we changed the state constitution in 2008 to 'eliminate the right to gay marriage', a position (aka. Prop 8) that she and a majority of Californians voted for. You can thank your liberal comrade in arms, Attorney General Jerry Brown (former Gov. 'Moonbean') for inserting that polarizing language into the proposition, in an effort to sabotage the initiative. And yet it still passed. What do you have to say to that?

I don't know what the cumulative effect of your life's work for children has been. But I would argue that Dr. Laura has had as much of a profound effect as anyone. And isn't it funny, but in those hundreds of documents and papers of yours, I never saw a single reference to the Bible in anything that you ever cited as a part of what you wrote? Why is that, if you are so smart? Yet, you feel compelled to mock the Bible 'all in good fun' and try to create a false issue, by making Dr. Laura seem like a hypocrite? The Bible is God's infallible word, so says another septuagenarian PhD educator and theologian, Dr. Charles Stanley.

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And lastly, tell us why 25 out of the original 27 signers of the Declaration of

Independence were theologians and/or had theology degrees? Only Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin were not. Yet the document was written, we all know this, with divine inspiration based upon the commonly accepted Judeo/Christian values and concepts known at the time. How do you secularists and atheists like them apples?

You like to quote Leviticus out of the Bible yet I did not see one reference to the Bible anywhere in your professorial writings. Am I wrong, or why is that? Seems to me that you are the true hypocrite here, not Dr. Laura. The average American is smarter than you elitist PhD academicians think that they are. Indeed, it is the elitist secularists and athiests such as you and Barack Obama that are destroying the true fabric of this country. And you people will be stopped. Put that in your esteemed professor's pipe and smoke it.

Sincerely,

Your non-adoring non-fan,

Xxx

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This person misspelled my name, got my degree wrong, and obviously didn't read all of my publications (I do quote the Bible in a few, but perhaps not as would meet approval of this person). And, as you and I may have expected, I got another equally condemnatory email in response to my standard reply. Although this person expressed in that email great admiration for Bill O'Reilly and some evangelists in response to my standard reply. I don't share that admiration.

I try not to let condemnatory, argumentative, didactic, or threatening letters get me out-of-sorts. Almost always, I can just ignore them and not let them spoil my day. Perhaps this is because one of the things I learned in teaching emotionally disturbed children is that when students choose to condemn, argue, threaten, or become pedantic (and everyone who's taught students with emotional or behavioral disorders has run into kids who do), the best bet is to disengage and turn to something less irritating. Engaging in verbal battles, getting involved in verbal or physical shoving matches, and so on... not smart. Let it go. There are better ways to spend your time than trying to get "pay-back" or bring the perceptions of a person with "issues" into line with yours.

But the previous writer's guess about my being an atheist and a secularist? Spot on! Not that I think people have no right to their religious beliefs or no right to have none at all or that, as I believe Thomas Jefferson suggested, a neighbor's religious beliefs "neither break my bones nor rob my purse." Of course, religious people can be downright abusive and immoral; so can atheists. In fact, I don't think it's a good idea to become an atheist evangelist. But, to some extent, I suppose it's easy for anyone who holds any religion dear to mistake an atheistic nonevangelist for an evangelist; any evangelist or fervent believer is likely to see anyone who doesn't believe in *their* religion as another evangelist.

And, perhaps it's worth noting that the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." It seems the founders of the United States of America were pretty careful to write a secular constitution and to separate secular law from religious precept. I think that was wise.

I really don't know why, but the religious emails I got made me think about how Kentuckian Rand Paul, early on in his campaign for the U. S. Senate in 2010, said the government should just butt out and not force businesses to comply with the civil rights laws of 1960s. Maybe his view is that the Ku Klux Klan will ride nobly to the rescue, as it did in the 1915 silent film of D. W. Griffiths, *The Birth of a Nation*. Maybe the KKK will ride to the rescue to background music of *The Ride of the Valkyries*. I don't pretend to think that I know what was or is in the mind of Rand Paul, but, somehow, I think it's probably not a good idea for the government to butt out of civil rights issues or for civil rights to be based on what Scripture says or what someone says their god says. Somehow, the love of states' and businesses' rights just don't seem to click very well with the kind of hate that denies people their civil rights. And an important civil right is the right to worship any god you choose or none at all.

Then, there's a Senator who said he's all for consumer protection, but the consumer protection bill he was against would be abusive. And, then, there's the Congressman who apologized to British Petroleum for suffering abuse at the hands of the U. S. government. I guess the consumer protection bill the Senator was against just wouldn't protect the banks. It would actually abuse them or the bankers who run them. And government has no business asking a business to pay for its damage to our environment. Oh, my!

I'll be damned if I can figure out a lot of these love-hate things. Love of consumers, hate of federal regulation? I'm not sure I can connect those up in any logical way. And, then there's the TEA (Taxed Enough Already) party, which I think sort of likes (or, at least once liked) Rand Paul. Our local newspaper ran as its lead story on May

25, 2010 an account of how the local Tea Party got upset because of what they perceived as unfairness. Liberals, they complained, were allowed to protest at our Congressman Tom Periello's office but the police shooed away the Tea Party activists. Turns out the parking lot in front of Congressman Periello's office is privately owned as part of a business. What do these people want? Government interference (remember, Periello is a Congressman) in the owner's right to regulate who can and can't gather on private land? According to Paul, as I understand what he said about civil rights, private businesses and individuals should be left alone, and if people don't like it that their civil rights are abridged by a private business, then that's too bad. Civil rights are not the government's business when it comes to businesses, he suggests. I might argue that it is.

Somehow, the political conservatives who talk about how government *is* the problem and we need a lot less of it, like the kid on CNN (Jonathan Krohn), seem to see no self-contradiction in saying that government *is* the problem but we should respect the constitution. Hmmm. Oh, I see, it's just the way the government is run, which is unconstitutional even if the Supreme Court says it is? Krohn's disease (as opposed to a truly nonfunny digestive disorder, Crohn's disease) seems to be an epidemic in which self-contradiction is a major symptom. Let's see, here: Government's the problem, but we should respect the way it's set up? We should have smaller government, but it should not demonstrate its respect for life by abolishing the death penalty (which is, after all, a state's right) but by abolishing your choice, if you're a woman, of terminating your pregnancy?

Something isn't making a lot of sense to me here. Let's see... "Thou shalt not kill." Hmm. Oh, I see, that's only innocent adults that aren't to be killed. And who, pray tell, decides innocence? Is there wiggle room on collateral damage?

But, I'd rather end on up-notes than on downers. So, here are some more love-the-Dr.-Laura-letter messages:

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April 26, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman,

Your response to Dr. Laura Schlesinger's comments about homosexuality as an abomination has been making the rounds at Queen's University [in Australia] where I am a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatry. I must say that I really enjoyed your response - including your understandable disappointment at not being able to own a Canadian.

Let me just assure you that we Canadians pride ourselves on our ability to rise to the occasion - especially if it is the service of the greater good. In that fine tradition, please be assured that I would be more than happy to loan you a Canadian or two whenever you feel the need.

Best regards,

Xxx

May 24, 2010

Dr. Kauffman,

If you are the one who so elegantly wrote a response to Dr. Laura Schlessinger's

comments regarding homosexuality and Leviticus 18:22, I must commend you on your letter. It was very much to the point without being nasty. It was hilarious too. Thanks for brightening my day. I have forwarded it to friends as well for their enjoyment.

Xxx

May 24, 2010

Bravo!

Brilliantly done!

Your dismantling of Dr. Laura proves that facts can be both funny and fatal!

Now please consider this: Write a piece taking down the Scalia/Alito mindless adherence to stricter-than-strict construction of the *constitution*.

Or, please consider this: Encourage someone of equal brilliance at the University of Virginia to write such a piece

We'd all benefit if Scalia/Alito was exposed with equal dexterity to the idea that If the word of *God* isn't eternal and unchanging, perhaps the words of the *Founding Fathers* aren't either. Or, to couch it in more accessible terminology...*it's the thought that counts*.

Thanks,

Xxx

[And, after receiving my standard reply]

Thanks for your reply. It's going up on my wall right next to the material you deny having written. Also, thanks for the word onanism. I was unfamiliar with it

so I looked it up. Turns out that *onanism* is the most thoroughly as well as the most clearly illustrated subject I have yet to come across on Wikipedia. This must be viewed as singular evidence of the eagerness of so many people to have a hand in the furtherance of knowledge of every variety.

thanks,

Xxx

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More on Onanism in the next chapter.

Probably the Scalia/Alito/Constitution issues are more than I can address. I do invite anyone, whether at UVA or not, to write about fundamentalism in constitutional interpretation. But... oh, I forgot, neither the Bible nor the Constitution (sorry, Koran, but this probably applies to you, too, and it probably applies to all holy books and documents) needs any interpretation because it just says what it says. Period. End of discussion. Words is words.

Until the next chapter. (Hey, if we start interpreting things, then our Bible or Constitution is like any other text, which means it could be interpreted in different ways!) But, ok, I just feel compelled to share one more:

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June 6, 2010

Dear Prof Kauffman

Thank you for the below. I love it! After I read it - I googled you to see if you were real and to gauge the authenticity (not being a bible student) and so I thought I'd just let you know I appreciate how clearly and cleverly you make a point!

Thanks again. I am in Australia - so this must be doing the rounds.

Cheers

Xxx

Fundamentalist Morons

(It's Not Only The Muslims That Are Guilty)

