

CHAPTER 4

PEOPLE

The diversity of my correspondents about the Dr. Laura letter is great and, to me, exhilarating. The love, the hate, the variety of people of many nations and religions who have contacted me is sometimes breathtaking. I must say, though, some communications have touched me personally much more than others.

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June 1, 200

Subject: An important question from Xxx in Israel

Dear Professor Kauffman,

Today I found a post on "End Homophobia" cause on facebook, citing a letter you wrote on the subject.

It starts:

"In her radio show, Dr Laura Schlesinger said that, as an observant Orthodox Jew, homosexuality is an abomination according to Leviticus 18:22, and cannot be condoned under any circumstance ..."

I was wondering if you wrote this incredible letter, and whether I can translate it to Hebrew and spread around.

Thank you very much

Xxx

chairperson of Tehila, a support organization for parents of LGBT

(the Israeli equivalent of the american PFLAG)

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As usual, I sent my standard reply. But I was not prepared for the following, which is without doubt the most touching I've received:

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June 3, 2010

Re: Dr. Laura letter

Thanks for replying.

I don't know why I had this feeling it wasn't you ...

I will ask one of my English speaking friends to properly translate both letters. I know the bible, but learned it in Hebrew, so I am not familiar with the English names ...

Anyway, I found myself working very hard lately to promote more empathy and acceptance to the gay community in Israel. Being a mother to a gay son never got me out to the public arena.

Only after the August 1st murder in the Tel Aviv gay youth center (my son, Xxx, was the young man who was killed there) I decided I can't stay home any more and joined the parents organization.

Finding the letter and your words that followed, empower my hope for change, and I thank you for that

Xxx

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I admire this mother's courage and determination to work for a more accepting attitude toward gay people. Religious revulsion and hatred of homosexuality (or condemnation of it as sin, which seems to amount to the same thing) may be

understandable in some way. But persecution and murder, regardless of the grounds for hatred of homosexuality or homosexuals, is to me just heartbreakingly immoral—immorality practiced in the name of protecting a twisted version of moral rectitude.

Here's another message I received from a courageous and proud mother:

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June 10, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman-

Sometimes I just do not know how to respond to the zealots - as they try to drown us out at rallies, Pride Parades and Out Fests. We keep a stiff upper lip and carry on with our 'mission' of advocacy - one person at a time. Thanks for the laugh. It is so true. Some messages are just not timely and must be re-thought based on current knowledge.

Xxx, PFLAG Philadelphia Board Member. Proud Mom.

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The only way I can maintain my sanity and sense of humor (both are said to be highly questionable by some people) in a world gone mad with hatreds is to turn to a lighter side—to joke or play a game. Maybe you do that, too.

One game we might play is thinking of people's names who fit a certain description. It's sort of like the game we've all played as kids or with our kids or our parents of finding letters of the alphabet on signs or license plates. You've got to spot them and find them in alphabetical sequence. OK, so, in *this* game you've got to name people who fit a certain category. Let's play the game with the category of people who

seem to believe that god speaks to them or that they can interpret the Bible correctly. We could play the game by first names or last names. Let's go with first names. Go!

A Al Sharpton (maybe Aimee Semple McPherson, an old-time—1920s and 1930s Canadian evangelist who was, apparently, a real scoundrel)

B Bob Jones (or, maybe, Bill O'Reilly, Billy Graham, Billy James Hargis—we seem to have hit a jackpot on B)

C Cal Thomas (or Coy Privette)

D Douglas Goodman

E Earl Paulk

F Fred Phelps

G Glenn Beck (or George Alan Rekers)

...

And so on. Don't recognize a name? Look it up on the Internet.

But, as I said, you could do last names. It's an easy way to amuse yourself. But there are other sources of humor, including some of the funny things sent to me, the presumed author of the Dr. Laura letter.

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May 25, 2010

With all due respect Dr. Kauffman, we do have computers up here in the great, white north.

Xxx

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It's great to get any communication from somebody with a sense of humor. Most everyone has a sense of humor, but some don't reveal it at all or cover it up pretty well in what they write. If I were to guess, it'd be that there's a positive correlation between religiosity and lack of humor—that the more deeply people hold their religious faith, the more likely they are to be dead serious, at least in what they write to me about the Dr. Laura letter. But, of course, the correlation is less than perfect, meaning that some very deeply religious people do see some humor in the Dr. Laura letter and my standard reply to those who write me.

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May 26, 2010

Dr. Kauffman;

I don't attend to Dr. Laura very much, but my son forwarded to me what he received third-hand as an open letter that you wrote to Dr. Laura in response to her apparent claims that the Bible rejected homosexuality as an abomination (copied, as I received it, below). If you did author this, congratulations, and thank you! You did a good bit of research, and were able to be incisive, articulate and *very* funny at the same time

Regards;

- A straight, devout Roman Catholic man.

P.S. Remember – *Faiths* are pure, if slightly different. It's *Churches* and the human beings who administer them that are very capable of being wrong-headed – because they don't ask for, or work for deeper understanding. My Church has its own share of issues of late. And to paraphrase Christ: "You will always have the

poor among you.” (And no one is poorer than loudmouths who neither seek deeply, nor think *for* themselves nor *about* our brothers and sisters.

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Are there humorless atheists? Of course there are! I don’t think your religious beliefs give you a sense of humor or preclude it. People from every walk of life and of every persuasion—well, maybe not actually *every*, but certainly a great variety—have written to me. Consider the following, the *second* of which I received in response to my standard reply:

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March 24, 2007

I believe I have the right Dr. Kauffman for the below piece of letter you wrote...I had a bit of a problem finding an email address, but I persevered! So if this is NOT Dr. Kauffman, pardon the intrusion.

I so totally enjoyed your response that I read it over three times before sending it off to others. I just want you to know I am also printing it out and handing it to one of my students who is a lesbian Rabbi, with a great sense of humor.

Thank you for making my day! I am not sure how old this is, but I just got it for the first time and I am sure I am one of hundreds who has written to congratulate you on this hysterical response.

With admiration...

Xxx

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[later, March 24, 2007]

I got all the way to: ... "*Thou shalt not raise a false report*" (*Exodus 23:1*). ..."  
before I burst out laughing. Again.

If you didn't write it, you certainly do have a good sense of humor! Thank you for sharing it with me so nicely. I went on... "*Onanism is nothing to trifle with...*"

How could you NOT have written the original piece with THAT line! I can't take it.

How am I ever going to explain all this to my students. Don't mis-interpret me here. My students are not the academia type. I teach water fitness at my local YMCA. I INSIST on the class bringing in a joke on Friday. I also beg for "groaners" which, on that front, I have been attacked both verbally and with an assortment of deviant looks. OH! Would you mind moving over a bit on that altar? Thank you. I like being burned in tandem myself.

Well, once again, thank you for making my day. My weekend. My frothy explanation next Friday. Etc. And yes, I did mean it, I actually have a lesbian Rabbi in my group. Please don't report her to Dr. L.

Xxx

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Here's more, just to give you a sense of the variety of "takes" on the Dr. Laura letter and the kind of people who've written me.

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May 5, 2009

Dear Sir: I just read your wonderful letter to Dr. Laura Schlesinger. I am an employer in San Francisco, and many of my employees are gay. I cannot

countenance the hatred that is filled by her, the religious right and others. I find it remarkable in this time of financial crisis that evangelical ministers still find it better to fill their pews with hatred—of gays, of gay marriage, abortion—rather than love, especially when their flock so desperately needs compassion which is what I was taught Jesus represented. They used to do it with miscegenation and anti-semitism but those got sort of out of fashion. Now, all they have left are gays, and it makes me ill. You wrote a kind, even funny, retort to hatred and I thank you. I hope your life has been filled with blessings and I wish you many more. If I can ever be of assistance, I hope you will ask. Xxx

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November 8, 2009

Hi Dr. Kauffman,

I recently read your article "Homosexuality and the Bible" (10/29/09) and I wanted to tell you how fantastic it was. I am 25, both Gay and Jewish, and I am extremely fortunate to have a very supportive family. I'm fortunate in that my sexuality has never been an issue in my family. I sent your article to many friends and family members, and not only is it quite humorous (why *can't* we own Canadians?) - it's educational, insightful, and powerful.

Thank you, and I look forward to reading more of your work.

Xxx

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Hey, be my guest! Please *do* read more of my work! Want to read something else I wrote? Well, there's always *The Tragicomedy of Public Education: Laughing and Crying*,

*Thinking and Fixing*. That's something I wrote that's more academic than this little collection of letters. But the *Tragicomedy* book is really intended for a general audience of people interested in educational issues. It's not highly technical or anything. Boring, maybe, but you be the judge.

Here are some other messages, the first from a neurologist:

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November 8, 2010

Professor Kauffman:

I was forwarded your letter to Dr. Schlesinger: I don't know when you put it together but it was brilliant!! Thanks for pointing out the hypocrisy that is so rampant among the religious right!! Best...

Xxx

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May 13, 2010

Re: letter

Thanks for responding. It's always fun to meet new people, and the internet allows us to meet folks from almost anywhere. I'm glad I sought you out, even if you didn't write the article I thought you had. My dad was a dentist, but he died when I was only 23 months old. My mom coaxed me in that general direction, and I became a medical doctor. I thought about politics at one point along the way, but I'm way too honest and emotional/passionate about my beliefs to have gone in that direction. I probably would have self-destructed.

Warmly,

Xxx

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Of course, I've heard from gay people and advocates for them as well as straight people and homophobes. Here are some from people who, thankfully, are not only not ashamed of being gay but also have a sense of humor. The first letter is from a nice gay person. The second letter is from the editor of a publication devoted to gay and lesbian issues who had asked my permission to use the Dr. Laura letter, then got my standard reply (and my response to that editor follows).

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May 20, 2010

Mollie says, "Your letter to Laura Schlesinger was genius! My boss and partner just sent it to me. Thank you so much for that. I hope you continue to write many more open letters of such brilliance. Thank you!!!".

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May 20, 2010

Hi Jim --

Aha! you're not the author of this clever bit of prose. Oh well, I'll run it anyway and perhaps sign it as "anon". I gather it's been kicking around the Internet for quite a while. But how did it come to be attributed to you?

Anyway, thanks for your swift response and for sending your "standard reply", which I also enjoyed. Be well,

Xxx

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May 20, 2010

You may indeed, print the original letter as far as I'm concerned because, although I didn't write it (and it shouldn't be attributed to me), I think the letter is, as you say, brilliant and hilarious. As far as I know, it's now in "public domain" and doesn't require any permission, particularly because no one has any real idea who wrote it. You might print the Snopes piece, at least in part, but for that permission I suppose you'd need to ask Barbara Mikkelson.

Far less brilliant and hilarious, but with the same intent, is my standard reply to those who think I wrote the letter. And you have my permission to use my reply, which I did write, with my signature in any way you wish.

I have, by the way, received loads of emails from all over the world about this, most to my great pleasure congratulatory but some really hateful or attempting to be instructive about the Bible, the Torah, or some other religious text which, according to the writer's interpretation, prohibits homosexuality.

All the best,

Jim [Yes, me]

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Speaking of nice gay people, here's something else that's illustrative of how gay people experience the loss of loved ones and the sadness that follows. It illustrates also the viciousness of religious bias against people based on their gender or gender orientation. I might point out, as well, that 38 years with a partner beats the average heterosexual marriage by quite a few years. The writer mentions "For the Bible Tells Me So," a movie that I highly recommend.

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February 16, 2010

Hi Jim,

I want to thank you for taking the time to reply to my e-mail. I was very pleased to get it. E-mailing me is just fine.

I appreciate you recommending I see "For the Bible Tells Me So." I will rent it. I don't pretend to be any kind of a religious scholar or any kind of a scholar for that matter. But it seems only common sense to me that equal rights should apply to everyone. I have recently been excommunicated by the Catholic Church for going to a service where two women were ordained into the priesthood. Our bishop released to the press that any catholics attending were automatically excommunicated. It took place in Xxx, XX and it did make the national news. At one time I thought it would be terrible to be excommunicated but it has just solved a lot of problems for me. For the past few years I have been upset with the church for their attitude toward Gay Men. And their chauvinistic attitude toward women. I personally feel the church should be fighting for our equality. I am sorry for the hate mail you have received do to the article you didn't even write. I did enjoy reading you comments on the subject.

Just a note on Xxx. He was my partner for 38 years. He was a good man and he loved me and my family. And we him. He died two years ago. I still miss him but I am finding life goes on.

Again thanks for your reply.

Sincerely, Xxx

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And there are the responses to my standard reply:

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May 7, 2010

Re: Dr. Laura letter

Well... it sure seems like you could have written the letter! Interpretation is interpretation is.... Thank you for the Old Testament lesson, I bet you would have been great to listen to in class.

Our ears perked up when we saw you were Special Ed as my partner is as well, here in NY with a private agency at this time.

It was a pleasure chatting with you, would you mind if I shared this last email with my friends? Best of luck to you in your retirement, and thank you again.

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Yes, many of my correspondents have friends, even friends with different perspectives, even gay friends or offspring or relatives who are gay, and some are even gay themselves (and they're all, of course—as I say tongue in cheek—going to hell because they actually condone or practice homosexuality)!

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May 8, 2010

Subject: Thank you

I just wanted to say thank you for your letter to Laura Schlesinger, it made mine and my husbands day and the day of many of our gay and lesbian friends.

Xxx

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May 8, 2010

Re: Dr. Laura letter

hahaha I'm still a fan even though you didnt write the original. Your reply was just as entertaining. If only the rest of the world was as dedicated to the scriptures as you are. Lovely to chat, I have to go now and find an X-Gay camp to attend, so that I might vanquish the demons that control my unholy desires ;)

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March 26, 2010

My husband printed off a copy of your letter to the fine doctor. Our youngest daughter is gay. I laugh every time I read it, which has been several times in the last 24 hours. Bless you for your bravery and wit. With much admiration, Xxx

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April 19, 2010

Hello Professor Kauffman,

I received it from my mother-in-law and I'd like to forward it to others, but want first to verify its authenticity. Did you write the piece below? It's not on [snopes.com](http://snopes.com) yet.

Thank you.

Rock Chalk Jayhawk,

Xxx

B.A., Political Science, KU, [year]

& Proud of my wonderful brother, who is gay

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This last one is especially dear to me, as I also attended the University of Kansas for my doctoral program in special education.

Here are two interesting and contrasting perspectives. The first is from someone who defends Dr. Laura's against my (presumed on the basis of the Dr. Laura letter) statements (actually the presumption that Dr. Laura's ostensible comments aren't justified on the basis of Scriptural quotations is also implicit, if not explicit, in my standard reply). The second is from someone who sees Dr. Laura as a bully.

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December 19, 2006

What an interesting letter, written out of context. I have heard Dr. Laura talk about homosexuality on her radio show on several occasions. One of her close friends is Tammy Bruce, a gay activist and former radio commentator herself. I have heard Ms. Bruce herself defend Dr. Laura's statements (in context) on gay issues – and her track record on how she treats her gay friends such as Ms. Bruce -- which for some reason are often taken out of context by people such as **your** source for the remarks below.

I have looked up Dr. Kauffman's e-mail address(es) at UVA and have copied him on this message.

Xxx

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May 24, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman,

Is this you (below)? It is terrific. It came to me from a friend/relative in England. I am going to send it to my friends and community who will appreciate it.

I only heard Laura Schlesinger on the radio once or twice. (It was in an office; I had no control over the dial). I thought that she was a dangerous bully.

As they say in Hebrew, "Kol ha kvod".

Xxx

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I've "met" some really talented people because of this whole fiasco regarding the Dr. Laura letter. A video? Read on.

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May 24, 2010

Hello Mr Kauffman. I have seen this post several times now and enjoy how you presented the questions. I wanted to see if I can make a video around the post, with your blessing.? I am developing a gay/allied online reality style news site/show and think I can incorporate this into the show someday. I wanted to check with you early, in case we do develop the piece. I will give proper credit too.

The site in development is [www.ThatsSoGayLIVE.com](http://www.ThatsSoGayLIVE.com) and we are about a week away from Launch. We are anxiously awaiting our new website which will have a "news" type feel to it versus 'simple posts' (which is seen in the beta website we currently have up).

Any guidance would be great....OR better, yet, do you want to make a video about this topic and send it in?

Smiles.

Keep up the good work.

Thank you

Xxx

[And after sending my standard reply I received this]:

What a great response! I love you already and dont know you. Ok, If I do a video then Ill make a shout out about "author unknown" and I will aim to send it to you, for your viewing pleasure

Stay as cool as this email presents you.

Hugs

Xxx

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I've even received the combo marriage/Canadian message.

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May 26, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman,

I loved the letter to Dr. Laura that was attributed to you! Bigotry masked as religion is particularly offensive.

I am really writing to you about owning a Canadian. My sister does own one. She married him over 20 years ago.Please don't tell him though. He just thinks that he is a spouse.

Your fan,

Xxx

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Here's something I got in response to my standard reply.

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May 26, 2010

Re: Dr. Laura letter

Dear Prof. Kauffman,

Well, I never! Now that I've looked at Snopes, I see this letter has been doing the rounds since 2000 and I suppose you've been fielding bouquets and brickbats since not long after! I hope it's mostly bouquets.

Many thanks for your reply which is, if anything, wittier. Exodus, Genesis, Leviticus - you know your stuff. I am at a disadvantage, not being familiar with the Old Testament. Perhaps this is where I've gone wrong in Life. I have much to learn.... but not from Dr. Laura!

All the very best from England.

Xxx

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And on and on it goes, with people of wildly different backgrounds, professions, and perspectives. The responses that follow are either to the Dr. Laura letter as the person found it or to my standard reply.

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May 25, 2010

Subject: Leviticus 18.22

Dear Sir. Our friends in the US sent us a copy of your brilliant recent response to the views of Dr. Laura Schlesinger on her radio show with regard to homosexuality. Thank you so much for a great read. I was by faith Evangelical until my early 20's when I realised how sad it was to see things in totally black and white. Your thoughts threw a new light on passages which of course we tend to gloss over now in everyday life.....what a difference 2000 years make?

The Canadians aren't really that bad are they?

Regards

Xxx :-)

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January 12, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman:

Thank you for your letter to Dr. Laura in question of her beliefs regarding homosexuality. I don't know when you wrote it, but it could not be more timely right now, and I am sharing it as widely as possible, with the title, "Because the Bible Tells Us So: Leviticus Gives It to Us," and credit to you.

The lethal seriousness of your message is not lost amidst its humor, as witnessed by the brutal law against homosexuality proposed in Uganda, and the court challenge to constitutional marriage discrimination here at home.

We are all the same.

Sincerely yours,

Xxx

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May 26, 2010

Thanks for your Re: Dr. Laura letter

I apologise for jumping in on you messages. Not knowing of the history I assumed as my friends had just sent it - it was a current situation.

Someone was naughty and just assigned it to you....modern technology has a lot to answer for doesn't it?

Your letter in reply is also very good - are you sure you didn't write the original?

Thanks for your time in replying and good to talk to you.

Regards

Xxx :-))time in replying and good to talk to you.

Regards

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May 12, 2010

Just wanted to let you know how much laughter your letter to Dr. Laura generated out here. Your scholarship is downright Talmudic.

Xxx

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May 12, 2010

Re: Dr. Laura letter

James, I appreciate your sense of humor. Your wit had me chuckling out loud as I read your response to my inquiry. Sorry to bother you. I promise I was not looking for a debate...

Although, Onanism is a little on the outskirts of "hot topics" for Bible studies.

Thanks for answering me

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May 12, 2010

Subject: Letter to Dr. Laura

Mr. Kauffman - we just read your letter and could not agree any more. We have always desired a Canadian of our own as well. But really, we wanted to thank you for posting your letter. I would be very curious to know whether she bothered to write back. My wife and I believe that there is no choice in homosexuality, although there are always exceptions to the rule. We are saddened by how divisive this still is. We don't quite understand why. Why are Christians so hateful in regards to homosexuality, our Federal Govt, our President, Ntl Health Insurance and etc. We are Christians, we love our church and we love our God but we also know that the final call is not ours, we are not the judge as your letter clearly pointed out. We looked you up and just wanted to say thanks. I am going to put your letter in my Bible and Lord knows what kind of debate it will stir up.

Xxx

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May 27, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I want to thank you for your articulate "open letter to Dr. Laura Schlessinger".

My mother, who is 73 and lives in Florida, emailed it to me and her sisters. In a moment, I will forward this onto my three children.

Hypocrisy and self-righteousness permeate the soul of every human being.

Fortunately we carry other traits as well such as critical thinking, compassion and humor.

Thank you for demonstrating these latter traits and expanding the discussion into the realm of common sense.

Xxx

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May 27, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman,

Thanks for this fabulously funny and intelligent letter, I haven't laughed so hard in a long time!

Best Regards,

Xxx

BC, Canada (once I'm owned by an American, what can I expect in terms of the payment of my monthly bills?)

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May 27, 2010

Hello,

I am a co-President of my high school's gay-straight alliance, I would like to personally thank you for the humorous yet serious letter you wrote in response to Dr Laura Schlesinger's prejudiced comments on her radio show. I loved that you conveyed your message humorously, the whole thing made me laugh. While I know that many people are in support of promoting tolerance it is nice to see

some actually take action like you did because I know first hand what kind of intolerance is out there and see it everyday.

Xxx

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November 28, 2005

Professor Kauffman.

In response to your letter to Dr Laura Schlesinger.

1. I am an atheist heterosexual Jew.
2. Religious Jews can give you much elaborated answers to all your "deep" equations which they believe is true as the sun rises in the morning. So can followers of any other religion.
3. I believe they have a right for their view as so does anybody else.
4. Judaism also states: Thou shalt not kill., Thou shalt not steal. And much more.
5. Live and let live.
6. That said, open and honest communication based on respect and compassion is the answer.

Have a nice day, Xxx

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September 2, 2009

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?

You cannot own any slaves in the USA. It is against the law.

Talmudic law requires respect for the law of the land.

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?

Market prices are set in the public slave market... check it out in Saudi Arabia.

But unless you are destitute and she is under the age of 12, forget about it

(Maimonides, Laws of Slavery 4:2.)

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.

You're right.

Best avoid contact with women altogether, unless they feel comfortable discussing their menstrual status with you.

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?

This issue is mitigated by the prohibition (Lev. 17) of bringing sacrifices outside of the Temple. Unless you reside in Al-Aqsa...

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?

Better leave it to the Sanhedrin...which was formally self-recused from jurisdiction in capital cases even before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in

70 CE.

In the meantime, just set a good example by observing the Sabbath yourself with dignity and inspiration.

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?

Very definitely.

The original Hebrew calls shellfish (actually, any water-dweller without fins and scales) "sheketz", the neuter gender equivalent of "shiksa." So coming home from the beach with anything other than gefilte fish or your heimishe wife is a no-no. Jewish children need a Jewish mother.

By contrast, homosexual intercourse (male only) is labelled "toevah," which can be translated as "an inappropriate swelling," and similarly applies (Deut.24:4) to remarrying a wife, divorced originally for infidelity, after she married (and was divorced or widowed by) another man.

These are all Jews, but sub-optimal partners.

Aim higher!

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?

Reading glasses are questionable, but extreme nearsightedness is definitely problematic.

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?

Comfortably in bed at the age of 120.

Not a capital crime.

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?

Ironically, since a football is not made of pigskin but cowhide, you are more likely to be wearing pigskin in your gloves.

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-

For different crops and garments, see #8. For blasphemy, see #5.

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)

See #5.

I know you have studied these things extensively and thus enjoy considerable expertise in such matters, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

Your adoring fan.

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

Xxx, M.D.

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Wow! Then there are those who've not only found me and found out about me but may have something in common with me besides my amusement by the Dr. Laura letter. I don't try to hide my atheism or my Mennonite background. And I'm really glad to hear from people who are or think they are related to me, especially if they have a sense of humor.

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May 3, 2010

Hello, Mr. Kauffman,

You had made a posting at Atheist Nexus that all of your relatives were theists. Actually, I am a descendant of Xxx Kauffman of Xxx County, XX and I think it is quite likely that we are related. I think most, if not all, of those Mennonite Kauffmans who settled in Indiana were related from back in Pennsylvania. I came upon your name in one of those email "forwards" that contained your response to "Dr. Laura", sent to me by another member of a Xxx group of "free thinkers" with which I participate.

I suppose I should first double-check that neither the letter to "Dr. Laura" nor the posting at Atheist Nexus was something done fraudulently to "smear" you (sigh). The internet is a strange and very public forum. I learned that when I was a teacher in a small, conservative community and made the mistake of posting a rather innocent posting that revealed religious doubt. I thought of it as going out into that large world, but soon learned the error. Public is public and it includes

your nearby neighbors, too.

My grandmother was Xxx. Both of her parents came from Mennonite backgrounds, but she was raised as a Lutheran, I think. From then on it was straight downhill, I guess. I was raised as an Episcopalian and I have to say the transition to my current lack of belief was quite difficult. But, once you realize that all the human need and wishing can't enter at all into the equation as to whether or not there actually is a God, the difficulty becomes just something you have to live with. But... still difficult.

Anyway, I just wanted to tell you how very, very much I enjoyed your letter. My children (both grown) enjoyed it as well. They have promised me a Canadian for my birthday. I have hinted that a lumberjack would be very thoughtful.

Thanks,

Xxx

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I'm always interested in history and languages, too (even though I speak only one, and that one haltingly).

=====

May 28, 2010

He he ha ha ho ho!

A further critical analysis may add some clarity.

Given the fact that vowels were not used in ancient Hebrew and the possibility exists of occasional misspelling in the much transcribed and translated texts, often obfuscating the true meaning of the word, it is now conjectured that the original

may have been.....

"Homosexuality ....A bum in motion".

Can I buy a vowel?

Xxx

=====

Well, sorry, I'm not Jewish, but I don't delete things because I'm not.

=====

September 9, 2009

Dear James

I was sent this letter that claims to be penned by you. If you are Jewish, please read on, if not please delete.

I am guessing this email was just a joke, however on the small chance you were being serious, I thought I should just send you a few points.

While I don't agree with people publicly quoting controversial passages from the bible, sending around an email that is not factually correct is also a concern.

1. The Rabbi's are allowed to make rulings more stringent than what appears in the bible, this covers points 1 & 2
2. Point 3. Niddah has been proven by psychologists to help in a marriage, they call it a break from sexual activity each month
3. Point 4. The Temple no longer exists and therefore neither do sacrifices
4. Point 5. People today do not understand what the Sabbath is, there is a concept in Judaism that someone does not get punished for something he

doesn't know.

5. Point 6. I don't know how degrees of abominations work, however I do know that it is the only forbidden sexual act that is called an abomination.

6. Point 7. The alter no longer exists

7. see Point 5.

8. Point 9. ?

9. Point 10. The forbidden combination is wool and linen, not cotton and polyester

If you are Jewish and interested, I suggest you have a chat to your local orthodox Rabbi, he is much better equipped to answering these questions than I am.

Xxx

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Probably it's safe to say that some of my communications have come from the fringes of society. I'm not sure how you'd classify this one:

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April 11, 2010

Dear sir, Among your bible quotes mentioned in your piece concerning homosexuality, you quote the word 'abomination'. A pity that you had no occasion to use the word 'obamanation'.

Also, having nothing to lose I hope, I attach a rather wild piece of mine for your delectation, in the hope that you might read as much of it as you can stand. I can't

remember everything I left in instead of out, so may I apologize in advance for anything that offends instead of amuses.FT

[attached 9 single-spaced pages ending as follows]

So, may I confess that I always thought god and religion were hateful and revolting bullshit, right from the beginning. Actually I write these pieces:

1. for the fun of showing that the worst thing you can do to the crapartists is to take them at their word and use their own bullshit against them;
2. because working and playing with ideas and words and irony and sarcasm is fun anyway;
3. to explode their hideous evil bullshit and replace it with some truth and intelligence.
4. in moral outrage and idealism.

So, if you still don't like what I write, may I apologize for embarrassing and offending you by offering you something that I didn't know is too good for you.

Xxx

=====

Then there are professional acquaintances and fellow UVA employees who, along with lots of other people, were fooled by the Internet.

=====

May 11-13, 2010

Jim- Your response was sent to me by a minister friend. It may turn out to be one of your most widely circulated publications. Thanks for pointing out the silliness of some of the "right" and how they try to influence those who follow their

narrow way. I hope life is treating you well and, other than this blurb, that you are behaving yourself. Xxx

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May 13, 2010

Dear Dr. Kauffman:

Is it true you wrote the letter below? It was sent to me as an email and I want to tell you that if it is true and you did write this, THANK YOU so very much for saying what you have. When people take "items" from the Bible that suite their purpose but then ignore those that may contradict, it really get my hackles up.

We all need to keep an open mind and not take the words of the Bible so literally.

If we lived 2000 years ago it would be different. Now we need to learn to live and let live and be accepting of the different views of others. It is not written anywhere in the Bible that "our current interpretation" is correct. People need to get a life - follow the 10 commandments, be honest in your dealings with others as you would expect from them, and don't have such a high opinion of yourself.

Again, thank you for writing what you did.

Your fellow UVA member,

Xxx

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Again, I'm often stunned by the variety of my correspondents' lives and beliefs.

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May 15, 2010

Subject: It says so in the Bible...

This is brilliant! We need more Prof's with a sense of humour like this one.

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May 14, 2010

I commend you for your humor, insight and "eye for an eye", tit for tat, quid pro quo, approach to the very loose mouth of Dr. Laura. I am not a listener of her program, but I have certainly read and heard much about her pompous, "holier than thou" attitude. Congratulations on making a statement that countermands her rigid approach and does it in such a humorous manner.

I suspect your retort has gone viral! Respectfully, Xxx.

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May 13, 2010

Subject: Dr Laura Schlesinger

Read your letter to Dr. Laura. Thanks for that!!

Xxx, Rabbi

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May 22, 2010

Subject: Your response to Dr. Laura Schlesinger

Dr. Kauffman - I was sent your reply to Dr. Schlesinger today and I must say that it's absolutely priceless! Wonderful reply and you obviously put a lot of work into it in order to be able to pull up all those other references about "God's Law." I'm a Canadian and am glad that it seems that we can't be owned!

I agree it's a problem for anybody in the major religions who takes their 'main

texts' as being word-for-word as truth - unfortunately, it seems too many of them do. Thanks for your entry on this - I think it might just become an Internet classic!

Cheers,

Xxx, Northwest Territories, Canada.

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May 10, 2010

Dear prof. Kauffman,

As an orthodox Jewess I very much enjoyed your remarks to Dr. Schlesinger. Too often we see in Orthodox Judaism that a very selective choice is made of what is forbidden or allowed. And not only that. It is still very much a patriarchal oriented religion that to day leaves women who want a divorce chained to their husbands. A solution could be found for the situation but obviously it is not on the priority list of the rabbinical authorities.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Xxx

Israel

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May 28, 2010

Subject: letter to Dr Laura Schlesinger

Good morning.

I simply must thank you this morning for your letter to Dr. Laura, recently posted on my facebook page by one of my young friends from Ireland. Not only does the letter provide warm humour with my morning latte, but it contains true grit based

on direct quotes from the good book. Splendid!

Having been raised by a fanatical convert to the LDS church, I was frequently the recipient of such "proofs" as Dr. Laura uses for validation of her personal views.

As I listened to the many verses being quoted from the bible by my mother, to illustrate that my personal search was inappropriate, and not condoned by the Good Lord himself, (her words) my skepticism was re-enforced. I could never understand why all answers were to be satisfied with a quote. You have succinctly provided a manuscript that explains that to me. I really needed to thank you.

Isn't it interesting that tolerance, respect, love of fellow man (which I believed to be the basis of Christianity) is but a placard for the antithesis?

I look forward to reading more of your publications.

Sincerely,

Xxx,

facebook "Xxx"

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June 2, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

A friend of mine sent the email pasted below to me, which is credited to you. I am curious whether you actually wrote it, and if it accurately reflects your original letter. I generally dislike email chains, so I thought to verify the veracity of this one, since your email address is posted on the UVa website. I apologize for bothering you if this is a complete nuisance, but I couldn't locate it on

[Snopes.com](http://Snopes.com) or Urban [Legends.about.com](http://Legends.about.com).

On a related matter, as I understand the substance of your comments, and as you may well know, the New Testament records the new covenant, instituted by Jesus, who was sent by God the Father, which modified the earlier covenants God made with the Jewish people. Some laws were changed, some were not. I believe that the one about homosexuality was modified, but not eliminated. Whether Dr. Schlesinger recognizes that, I don't know.

Sincerely,

Xxx

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June 3, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I wish to commend you highly for your erudite inquiry of Dr. Laura regarding the application of the OT law code in our day and age, which is obviously so needy of an improved sense of godliness. I am sure that you will get wise and detailed response to each of your 10 numbered queries from the personal pen of Dr. Laura herself, considering that she has lately been promoted to the premier international position of Senior High Priest of Sexual Wisdom; and so must have her host of ethereal minions busy straightening out the world by giving careful instruction to such thoughtful and congenial inquirers as you - and doing it in her name personally.

I decided that since your carefully crafted biblical inquiries of Dr.

Laura indicated not only your great wisdom but also your genuine devotion

to the sacred text, that I would inquire of your CV just what sort of fellow you really are. Having read it in detail, plus everything else I could get this old computer to raise on line, I noted among other things that you attended Goshen College. Since I attended Calvin College nearly a hundred years ago, we would undoubtedly have met on the basketball floor except for five obstacles. First, you are probably not nearly old enough, since I am now nearly 80, to have been playing at the time I was, second, Calvin was probably so wrapped around the axle regarding beating the daylights out of Hope College every year at that time that we may not have gotten around to playing Goshen College, though we should have, third, it is possible that the Goshen students were so busy working faithfully on Mennonite Peace Studies that there may have been no Goshen College competitive sports in those days, fourth, I never made first string on the team so I may not have been on the floor at that time, fifth, come to think of it, I never even made it to Varsity Level basketball so I was probably not even in the stands watching the game of those good for nothing guys who were merely jocks and really should never have been in college in the first place, Baseball having been my game! Well, however that all was, it was lovely to see your piece to Dr. Laura. I am still laughing and sending it, tongue in cheek, to all my friends, neighbors, and countrymen, especially my text critic scholar friends of the SBL.

It would be lovely to meet you and have a schnort of Kartoffle Schnapps,

as I conclude that Kauffman is the clue to a Zinzindorfer German derivation. Dutch Reformed is not much different, except on the things that count. We liked a Schnapps or Beer, but drank them with a deliciously guilty conscience. You guys could do it thanking God for his gifts. You guys were right and we were wrong about a lot of things: Arius, Pelagius, Arminius, Providence, and Just War Theory. My mother was in spirit really a Zinzindorfer, I think, and perhaps that is where I got my heretical appreciation of the Anabaptist traditions, down on the ground practical operations being more important than abstract theorizing.

In any case, I hope this is a good day for you.

Xxx

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June 7, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman,

I did a search on the Univ of Virginia website and got access to your e mail address.

I hope I have not mistaken you for someone else, but I read a letter you wrote to Dr. Laura Schelssinger, on her attitude towards homosexuality, a letter that is being widely circulated on the Internet. I have to thank you for that letter! Not only was it incredibly funny but at the same time it really hit the point home hard. I just wanted to thank you for writing it, I wish I had been a fly on the wall when she was reading it, I would have given anything to see her reaction to it.

Again, thank you.

Xxx

India

P.S. - My son who lives in DC and works for Pres. Obama is gay, so obviously I have more than just a vested interest in seeing her be put firmly in her place!!!

P.P.S. - Believe it or not, there was a time years ago when I used to listen to every word she uttered on the radio. I cannot imagine why.....!

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June 5, 2010

Dear Dr. Kaufmann,

This is a fan letter from someone who recently read your trenchant and ironic response to Dr. Laura Schlesinger which is circulating the world as I write! ( I live in Barbados). I found it extremely funny, to the point and a great learning experience. You managed to encapsulate in a few short paragraphs a complete answer to the religious fundamentalists who refuse to admit that the Bible was written by humans, many of them ignorant humans and may be just a tad out of date in many of its instructions!

Did you have any idea that it would go around the world as it is doing? Did Laura Schlesinger dare to write a response or does even she know when she is defeated?

My thanks for a few moments of pure enjoyment when I read it.

And as a Canadian, I know we will not stand for being owned by anyone (anymore than we are right now by the US....)

Xxx

Film and Theatre Producer,

Heritage Consultant, Writer

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June 6, 2010

Professor Kauffman,

I enjoyed your letter to Dr. Laura. One thing I dislike is a hypocrite. As a result I did my own research some years ago and thought you might enjoy some of my own discoveries which I've pasted below:

As a Jew I often have to remind other Jews who think their religion has higher values than others of these bible sections:

Have you ever read the horrible behavior and atrocities recommended against non-Jews?

*"Ezra 9 and 10: (recommends sort of an ethnic cleansing)*

*"The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites."*

*I'm sure if the Christians had been around at the time this was written, they certainly would not have been excluded.*

*Ezra goes on to discuss the horrible consequences of intermarrying such people with abhorrent practices. The solution to bringing such foreign women into their homes is expressed by Shecaniah as being a covenant with*

*their God to “expel all these women and those who have been born to them.”*

*Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6*

*“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee to the land into which thou goest to possess it, and shall cast out many nations before thee, the Hitti, and the Girgashi, and the Emori, and the Kena’ani, and the Perizzi, and the Hivvi, and the Yevusi, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, and thou shalt smite them, then thou shalt devote them to utter destruction; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; ...For they will turn away...from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be inflamed against you, and he will destroy thee speedily. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their asherim, and burn their carved idols with fire. For thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God.”*

*After this neighborly advice the passage continues with the Ezra message that Jews are holy and others are not. That you should remain separate and not mingle with others. The danger with all this is perceiving oneself as being special and not just unique.”*

Check out this interesting and related opinion in the New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/24/opinion/hug-an-evangelical.html?scp=1&sq=intolerance+and+christianity+and+islam&st=nyt>

Regards,

Xxx

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June 9, 2010

Dear Professor Kauffman

If you did indeed write this reply to Dr Schlesinger, then you need to be congratulated.

Somehow I feel sure Laura had the courtesy to reply to you, admitting what a bigoted, lowly creature she is, and thanking you for opening her eyes to her prejudice.

With best wishes from a fan across the pond.

Kind regards

Xxx

PS Although there is a stretch of water between us, you could sail directly from the US to the UK without touching any other country. This technically makes us neighbors. I would therefore like to respectfully suggest that if it becomes difficult to buy a Canadian, I'm sure we'll be able to sort something out from our population of sixty million souls. I wonder whether you would accept Mr Tony Hayward as your slave? I'll see what I can do to facilitate the purchase from this side.

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The upshot of all this is that the experience of receiving so many communications has reaffirmed my belief that most of the people in the world must be good folks with a sense of humor. They don't all think alike, but most of them aren't mean spirited or

fearful. Most of them have a sense of humor and are accepting of the fact that a very substantial percentage of the human population is homosexual, that homosexuals are people as deserving of love and respect and freedom as are those who are heterosexual. Most people seem to understand that interpreting any holy writ to mean that homosexuality is an abomination is, itself, an abomination—a shameful moral failing, an interpretation that meets with strong disapproval in a free and humane society.