

*Continued from previous page*

opportunity to people who, as wandering nomads, had been ruled by the oppression of might makes right. But to lift up one or two such rules out of context, attempting to apply them to our life and times with no understanding of their origin, is irrelevant and exploitive.

If we are to take all these ancient laws at face value, we had better alert the God squad that they will be working overtime in enforcement.

If a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave, betrothed to another man and not yet ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free; but he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the Lord, to the door of the tent of the meeting, a ram for a guilt offering. Leviticus 19:20-21

In that our society does not recognize the legal condition of slavery, it would be difficult to apply this law to our life in the here and now. I lift up this particular passage because, in isolation, it is clear to us that it is unenforceable inasmuch as it is not relevant to our times. In context, however, it is of great interest. The bully who invades the tent of a slave woman and violates her personhood is held accountable. In the days of desert wanderings with no definable community, he could have raped her with impunity. In the evolving community of the Hebrews, he is at least held accountable, and if he does not acknowledge his sin he will be punished by God and not forgiven. Please note that the woman caught in this situation is not summarily killed as was the custom of the desert people of that time. She is quite rightly held blameless. This law, when read in context of its time and circumstance, demonstrates a mature mercy among a people beginning to organize into a responsible community. It also begins to recognize some human rights of women.

Bear with me a few more moments. I am not a biblical scholar, only an humble preacher. But I want to share with you how I have been taught and led to understand such biblical writings as we find in Leviticus.

When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden; three years it shall be forbidden to you, it must not be eaten. Leviticus 19:23

There can be no equivocation on this. IT MUST NOT BE EATEN. I am not going to speculate on the ecological soundness of letting a fruit tree mature before using its fruits...or leaving three years worth of fruits for the grazing animals. I want you to understand that as a preacher I am not going to write a sermon covering this particular prohibition.

Now let us go to a law involving sexuality; a law which in fact is one of a series of prohibitive laws involving family

and sex.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. Leviticus 18:22

Abomination is a strong word. It is somewhat foreboding. The writer of Leviticus thought it was an abomination to eat shellfish or to eat the flesh of peace offerings on the third day.

A later statement regarding sexuality and sexual practice is stronger than the one I earlier stated.

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them. Leviticus 20:13

John Boswell, who is a scholar, presents the argument that *abomination*, in the case of these passages in Leviticus, has to do with ritual life as opposed to justice. In his definitive work, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, Boswell says: "The Levitical proscriptions of homosexual behavior fall in the [ceremonial] category. In the Greek, then, the Levitical enactments against homosexual behavior characterize it unequivocally as ceremonially unclean rather than

inherently evil" (pages 101-02).

The ritual laws were somewhat equivalent to giving up something for Lent, or women or men required to wear something on their heads while in worship. Similar Levitical laws of ancient times forbade men from trimming their beards or cutting their hair in a certain style. The pronounced death penalty was largely ignored, as was the law itself.

I will not go into a long list of social circumstances that might have had a role in formulating such laws. Suffice it here to say that our times have changed, and the incidental and ritualistic character of the sexual, hygienic and dietetic laws seem to negate their relevance to our time. I want you to know that as a preacher I am not going to devote a sermon to any such proscriptions. If the literalists are to be listened to at all, I am afraid they must concede perfect sexual freedom to lesbians in that the proscriptions are directed solely toward men.

*Ed. Note: The second and last part of Rev. Halbe's address will be published in the September issue of Community Connections.*

## Gay Self-Defense Workshop Offered

Lambda Connections announces that the "Safeskills Associates Self Protection Programs" will be conducting a workshop in Charlotte, NC, for lesbians and gays. A workshop for women will be held Saturday, September 14, 1-5 PM, and one for men on Sunday, September 15, 1-5 PM. The workshops will be held at the Wyndham Garden Hotel, off Tyvola Road near the coliseum.

The workshops will cover awareness and prevention, assessing violent situations, defensive fighting skills, and creating safety. All physical abilities are welcomed; please call by September 2, so arrangements can be made to meet your individual needs. All attendees should plan to wear loose fitting clothing.

The workshop fee is \$30.00, and is due with pre-registration by September 10. Send to Lambda Connections, PO Box 12072, Charlotte, NC 28220. Info: (704) 535-8435--Press release

# CLUB CABARET

101 NORTH CENTER STREET, HICKORY, NC (704) 322-8103



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MISS HICKORY USA  
Pageant

SATURDAY, AUG. 31  
MISS GAY USA  
SABLE CHANEL

THURSDAY, AUG. 1  
THE  
TEXAS HEADLINERS

**AUGUST**

THURSDAY, AUG. 1  
TEXAS HEADLINERS

FRIDAY, AUG 2  
*Grace Jones & Akasha Pharoous*

SATURDAY, AUG. 3  
*Melissa Montgomery*

SATURDAY, AUG. 10  
MISS HICKORY, USA  
(THE PAGEANT)

FRIDAY, AUG. 15  
*Roslyn Rogers & Tiffany Bonet*

SATURDAY, AUG 17  
*Melissa Montgomery*

FRIDAY, AUG. 23  
*Toni Lenoir & Melissa Montgomery*

SATURDAY, AUG. 24  
*Akasha Pharoou*

SATURDAY, AUG. 31  
MISS GAY USA -  
**SABLE CHANEL**

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