

## CAL THOMAS

In the continuing cultural war over the issue of homosexuality and efforts to win acceptance of the lifestyle as normal, one source that is rarely mentioned in polite and educated company is the Bible.

Now, an exceedingly polite and educated person, Pulitzer Prize-winning author James A. Michener, has invoked the Bible and its view of homosexuality in a New York Times op-ed piece.

In his article titled "God Is Not a Homophobe," Mr. Michener quotes Leviticus 20:13: "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." Mr. Michener notes that the death penalty was also meted out for other forms of behavior, including adultery and a father who had sex with his daughter-in-law. He contends that these laws were invoked

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# Michener's view of homosexuality and history

because "the Jewish community was in deplorable disarray," therefore, "harsh measures were required." He calls the people of Israel in those days "primitive" and says that, as society advanced, these penalties were "relaxed."

Well, the penalties may have changed, but that does not repeal the law. When the Supreme Court once said that the death penalty was "cruel and unusual punishment" it did not diminish the immorality or illegality of murder.

Here are my observations about Mr. Michener's view of history.

First, Israel may not have been "modern" as we now define the word, but the people were not primitive. Theirs was a well-structured society. They had a highly developed system for worship, sacrifice, cleanliness, a legal system and a priesthood. Mr. Michener displays the arrogance of the modernists who believe the only ideas with merit are

those formulated by people currently alive. Their view of biblical history seems to have been shaped more by Hollywood films than by the research for which Mr. Michener's novels are famous.

Second, the collection of laws found in Leviticus, Chapters 17-26, is called by theologians the Holiness Code. It applies the law Moses received on Mount Sinai (The Ten Commandments) to everyday life — and more. Leviticus provides a detailed explanation of how Israel is to fulfill its calling as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The word "holy" appears 87 times in the book, and the purpose of these laws and applications was to keep Israel holy and pure, which would also continuously remind the Jews of God's nature.

God was revealing His unchanging character and His law to Man. He was not creating a Book that would need constant updating as times

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changed. A few verses down from where Mr. Michener stops, Moses provides the reason for the laws and the penalties for breaking them: "And ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine."

Does Mr. Michener believe that

modern society's waves of crime, millions of abortions, incurable sexually transmitted diseases, broken families, overflowing prisons and corruption in high places are the marks of an "advanced" people? Surely these are the signposts of a culture headed for the fate of ancient Rome, which also cast aside the principles of the Mosaic Law, not to mention crucifying the One who fulfilled that law.

Still, if the New York Times is printing Bible verses on its op-ed page, this can only be a sign that one of two events is about to happen: revival or judgment.

James Michener once told Parade Magazine that he is an agnostic. It seems an agnostic would be ill-equipped for the task of interpreting Scripture in which he does not believe. The Bible has been ignored in modern public discourse and viewed by public schools as contraband that is less welcome than condoms and

metal detectors. Its return to the public marketplace of ideas would meet a great need. If its "unmodern" precepts were followed, America might be returned to the condition Israel once enjoyed when it was obedient to laws crafted by a loving Father for the benefit of those He has made.

Mr. Michener and others who wish to misinterpret the Bible to serve their own political and social ends are further weakening what remains of public trust in what used to be known as "the Good Book" — before "good" became a relative term and biblical illiteracy became epidemic.

Before updating or disregarding verses quoted by Mr. Michener, some might wish to consider another verse that leaves very little room for interpretation. It is Isaiah 40:8: "The grass withers, the flowers fade: but the word of our God shall stand forever."