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## Homosexuality And the Jews

"Homosexuality, the Bible, and Us—A Jewish Perspective" by Dennis Prager, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1993), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination" declares the Bible (Leviticus 18.22). The language is so clear and direct, in the view of Prager, the author and publisher of his own quarterly journal, *Ultimate Issues*, that one need only be a serious Jew or Christian to be influenced by it. Nevertheless, he says, in the larger scheme of things, biblical sexual values are more "deviant" than homosexuality.

Homosexuality was, in a sense, an invention of Judaism and the Bible, Prager writes. "Before the Bible, the world divided sexuality between penetrator (active partner) and penetrated (passive partner)," and the partner's gender was not considered morally significant. Homosexuality was an accepted practice in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and throughout the ancient world. "When Judaism first demanded that all sexual activity be channeled into marriage, it changed the world," Prager writes.

The sexual revolution that Judaism initiated and Christianity later carried forward, Prager argues, forced "the sexual genie into the marital

bottle. It ensured that sex no longer dominated society, it heightened male-female love and sexuality (and thereby almost alone created the possibility of love and eroticism within marriage), and it began the arduous task of elevating the status of women." The sublimation of the sex drive made it possible for Western civilization to advance beyond the level set by ancient Greece and Rome.

Marital sex remains the Jewish sexual ideal, Prager says. "There is . . . a continuum of wrong which goes from premarital sex, to adultery, and on to homosexuality, incest, and bestiality." Opening the Jewish door to homosexuality, he says, would mean opening the door to all other forms of sexual expression: "Once non-marital sex is validated, how can we draw any line?"

The Judeo-Christian development of Western civilization required deferral of gratification and a rechanneling of natural instincts. The family has served as the basic unit. "But the family is not a natural unit so much as it is a *value* that must be cultivated and protected. The Greeks assaulted the family in the name of beauty and Eros. The Marxists assaulted the family in the name of progress. And, today, gay liberation assaults it in the name of compassion and equality." Well-meaning Jews and Christians who have joined in this assault, Prager believes, do not realize what is at stake.

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## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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### Hubble's Universe

"Edwin Hubble and the Expanding Universe" by Donald E. Osterbrock, Joel A. Gwinn, and Ronald S. Brashear, in *Scientific American* (July 1993), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017-1111.

For centuries, astronomers used the term *nebulae* to designate faint, cloudy objects in the heavens that seemed not to change in position or appearance. In 1755, Immanuel Kant suggested that some nebulae might be "island universes"—self-contained systems of stars like our own Milky Way. Nearly two centuries later, an American named Edwin Hubble proved the philosopher correct.

During the 1920s and '30s, the Missouri-born Hubble (1889-1953) "changed the scientific understanding of the universe more profoundly than had any astronomer since Galileo," write Osterbrock, of the Lick Observatory at Mount Hamilton, California, and his two colleagues. Hubble not only proved that the Milky Way is just one of millions of "island universes" (or galaxies), but also played a crucial role in establishing "the startling view that the entire universe is expanding."

Improved telescopic observations during the 19th century showed that while many nebulae were only clouds of luminous gas, there were