

## Response to "Hypocrisy and homosexuality"

Ryan Price

Between disciplines and throughout history, much confusion has arisen from equating a property of the part to a property of the whole. A small subgroup of people is never representative of the larger whole; as one increases population, one necessarily increases in diversity of beliefs and opinions. I fear this truth was not fully understood in the recent Perspectives article, "Hypocrisy and homosexuality."

In said article, incredibly broad statements about "Christians" were bandied about with no real consideration for the incredible diversity that group contains. Christians as a whole are not in agreement on many issues. All the epithet "Christian" entails is some form of belief in the divinity of Jesus, his resurrection, and the associated redemption of mankind. This shared belief is a plank in many different belief systems. Why else would so many denominations exist, would so much infighting about the "true" Christian way occur?

While certain vocal segments of American Christians clamor for more strict biblical literalism and a reaffirmation of "family values" (a euphemism for the denial gay marriage, among other things), American Christians as a whole have mixed feelings on the issue. Building a strawman of the biblical literalist who thinks that the Bible justifies slavery, killing neighbors if they work on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:2), and other blatantly obvious atrocities serves only to marginalize those more moderate voices while producing more heat than light in the discussion at large. Whatever modern Christians say, it is obvious that biblical literalism applies to notions that people pick and choose. The opinion on homosexuality seems to have more to do with personal thoughts and upbringing than the fact of being a Christian.

Davidson has ceased affiliation with Chik-Fil-A because of their explicit and extensive support of "pro-family" (read: anti-gay) organizations. The recent article suggests that Davidson should extend its shedding of anti-gay affiliation to the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), an institution with which Davidson shares an extensive historic

bond. While I might support the further secularization of the school, it would not be for those reasons.

PC(USA) is on the more "liberal" side of the Christian milieu. They allow openly gay members and local presbyteries are currently examining a change to their bylaws, which would allow nonchaste gay clergy. This proposed change has already been accepted by the General Assembly, a collection of elected representatives from presbyteries around the country. A decision will be made by July of this year. Furthermore, our own Rob Spach, a member of the PC(USA), wrote in defense of homosexuality from quoted biblical literature (a fact which was noted in this recent article). I cite this history to demonstrate that it is unclear that the PC(USA) as a whole is explicitly antigay. Certainly certain members of the group are, but we cannot judge the entire group by a small part of it. Taking a survey of a random sample of PC(USA) members might actually include gay members, who naturally would have very different opinions about homosexual people in the church.

Although I take umbrage with the infrastructural influence of PC(USA) (80% of the trustees must be Christian, the president must be a member of good standing), it is more for the fact of explicit religious preference-in-a school in which the student body is so extensively secular. Such an arrangement diminishes diversity of composition (a commodity which Davidson holds dearly). Furthermore, it makes plausible ludicrous lawsuits, which threaten to dismantle our police force over a minor traffic violation. While I appreciate the historic nature of the PC(USA)/Davidson partnership, I feel the time has come to recognize the needs of the school have changed since 1837. Our faculty and students are not overwhelmingly Christian, and Davidson is focusing a large amount of energy and money on enhancing campus diversity; I do not see why our school infrastructure does not reflect these facts.

Ryan Price '12 is a philosophy major from Marietta, GA. He can be reached at ryprice@davidson.edu.

## On being religious and homosexual

Rachel Richardson

On Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, many Davidson students will join GSA in a Day of Silence to protest how bullying and harassment has silenced LGBTQ students across the country. It seems like a fitting day for me to also break my own silence a little by offering my response to recent articles in the Davidsonian about religion and sexuality.

I might as well start with this: I am a Christian... and I am not straight.

This isn't my usual introduction. Far from it—I'm usually hiding or apologizing for at least one of these two identities. But I've decided to speak up because of all of the other students on campus who have spoken up in recent weeks and months—students who have dared to share a little about how they've felt hurt or excluded, probably knowing they would be accused of being overly-sensitive or too easily offended. I can't tell you how much I wish that we could at least acknowledge the hurt people have felt on our campus, even if, for whatever reason, we can't understand where they are coming from.

When we get wrapped up in debating about issues, like race or homosexuality or religion, we too often forget that we are actually talking about people. We are talking about you and me, our identities, and often, the beliefs, dreams and desires we hold closest to us.

Like you, I am constantly negotiating multiple identities, because, like you, I don't have just one dream. I dream of living my life in a loving partnership with a woman, and I dream of working for social justice in ways that are inspired by my faith. I want to work towards a new world order that is bound up in the liberation of the poor and oppressed: a vision of the world that my faith tradition calls the Kingdom of God.

For me, these dreams are complementary, not contradictory, but I am constantly being told (subtly and overtly) that my dreams can't be in the same room with each other. Last year, Michael Spangler wrote, "scriptures plainly attest that homosexuality is a rebellion against our perfect Creator." Two weeks ago, Eli Caldwell called the Bible "clearly antigay" in his article, "Hypocrisy and Homosexuality." Michael Spangler and Eli Caldwell presented very different perspectives, but they both made it abundantly apparent that they consider Christianity and homosexuality to be inherently, inevitably and intractably incompatible.

Both articles also made it sound like LGBTQ Christians could not possibly exist. But where

does that leave me? Where does that leave gay people of faith all around the world? Neither Michael Spangler nor Eli Caldwell acknowledged the nuances of negotiating faith and sexuality.

One of the few things I can say with certainty is that truth does not tend to be plain or obvious. As last week's Perspectives articles made clear, people interpret the Bible in different ways, and almost every Christian denomination encompasses a variety of stances on homosexuality. Like a growing number of Christians, I do not believe that the Bible condemns homosexuality... such a condemnation does not fit at all with my understanding of the Bible's incredible affirmation of love and liberation. I am thankful that I feel safe and accepted for who I am in communities of worship both on and off campus.

Even so, I am often deeply frustrated and saddened by the ways the Church has reinforced prejudices and upheld oppression, especially because I believe that is the very opposite of what Christianity is about. Because of this, there have been times when I wished I were not a Christian. Unsurprisingly, given the pressures of our society, there have also been times when I wished I were not gay. But ultimately, I have come to understand that both are central to my identity. And neither the stereotypes about Christianity or homosexuality can capture the complexities of who I am in relationship to God or other people.

I obviously appreciate Eli Caldwell's denouncement of homophobia, but I don't appreciate his vilification of religion. I don't appreciate having two very important dimensions of my identity pit against each other...again. I would not try to convince anyone to be Christian, anymore than I would try to convince anyone to be gay (yeah, it doesn't work like that)...but I will be bold enough to ask for a space for me to be both. Because when people use absolutes and belittling language to create more walls, it just makes that space feel smaller and smaller.

So let's try to stop creating that us/them divide between ourselves and the "other"—whether the "other" is gay, straight, religious, Christian, Muslim, atheist, liberal, conservative, transgender, sub-free, PCC or some unexpected combination of these identities. Let's start creating more space for us, with all our dreams and complexities.

Rachel Richardson '11 is a religion major from Tucson, AZ. She can be reached at rarichardson@davidson.edu.

## Meanwhile, in China...

Michael Romano

While all eyes remain on Libya, Egypt, and uprisings in other Arab nations, things have been particularly quiet in China; or, at least, as per the media. This is intentional on China's part. Arab leaders and others should take good note of the tools China's leadership employs to quell protests, suppress free speech, and create a "business as usual" image in case of future threats to sovereignty. Here, I will propose a guide for future tyrannical leaders based on the CPC's example.

1. First, as a leader, you should employ a team of highly skilled computer technicians capable of constructing highly selective firewalls, akin to the "Great Firewall of China". By restricting the use of social networking sites to those individuals skilled enough to breach such a firewall, a supreme leader can control communication and organization. Domestic hackers, by the way, make for outstanding government "computer technicians". Further, these technicians serve the dual purpose of intercepting Twitter and Facebook messages that could possibly incite protest. This brings me to my second point.

2. Have a loyal police force. However, this police force should avoid violence at all costs, as violence attracts international attention (a la that of Mubarak). Instead, these government employees should simply "suggest" to protesters that they disband, threatening

"By restricting the use of social networking sites to those individuals skilled enough to breach such a firewall, a supreme leader can control communication and organization."

"work-camps" as punishment for those who continue to disparage national leadership. This serves two purposes. First, when word gets out that so-and-so went to labor camp for four years without a trial because he was protesting, it will dissuade others from doing so. Importantly, too, it dissuades without attracting international attention. Second, forced labor is a great way to continue to manufacture products at low cost despite skyrocketing commodity prices. Prosperity, of course, is the best way to keep a population subdued.

3. You should continue to raise morale with words such as "economic growth" and "spreading wealth" when addressing your citizens. However, you should only let a few entrepreneurs freely make money and create businesses. These entrepreneurs should not be restricted by the same firewalls as the general population; as long as they are happy, they will resist organizing protests. Further, they create a positive international impression by attracting foreign investment. As we all know, investors and businesses are very successful at convincing their respective governments to look past issues such as human rights violations and copyright infringement if it means "job creation". Under no circumstances, however, should foreigners or the domestic upper class become aware of the general poverty rampant in your nation. It would make them sad, and good investor morale is good for "economic growth". For instance, China did an outstanding job when it erected barriers prior to the 2008 Olympics to shield spectators from slums. This gave passersby the impression that, instead of being impoverished and very polluted, Beijing was simply very polluted.

There you have it. While I did miss some points and gloss over others, I feel that this is a fairly comprehensive guide to sustaining sovereign rule in your respective nation. I wish you the best of luck during these difficult times.

Michael Romano '12 is a Chemistry major from Fairfield, CT. Contact him at miro@davidson.edu.