

The parts fit: Christians must re-examine theology, revise attitudes

With all due respect to Katharine Miller's thoughtful and largely conciliatory response to Chaplain Rob Spach's article on homosexuality, I disagree. And I refuse to agree to disagree.

Agreeing to disagree is the privilege (and cop-out?) of those who do not have much at stake in the outcome. One can imagine, for example, that American slaves benefited little by the parlor room talk of elite whites agreeing to disagree on slavery. I disagree with Miller's claim that homosexuality is a sin, and while I respect contrasting views, I want to change them. Views aren't held in the abstract; they have power to build up or destroy lives.

The next time you hear someone say, "Homosexuality is a sin," ask her, "Why?" And don't settle for "The Bible says so." Ask why again, and suddenly things start getting very interesting. Especially if we heed Miller's advice to "look hard at the actions of Jesus Christ."

Those who claim homosexuality is a sin often group it, magnanimously, with other sins—adultery, greed, lust, etc. And true enough, when you read the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection it is easy to see how, for example, adultery is a sin: you are violating a holy covenant that you made in the name of Christ. Or lust: you are objectifying

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In each case, the Bible says that it is a sin, and it is easy to see why it is a sin.

Yet that is not the case with homosexuality. Just what about being sexually active (within the context of a monogamous, trusting relationship) with someone of your own

gender runs contrary to being a disciple of Christ?

Exactly which of Jesus' teachings can a practicing homosexual not follow by virtue of being a practicing homosexual? Exactly which part of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection remains inaccessible to someone who has sex with someone of the same gender?

When pressed, opponents of homosexuality will usually respond with varyingly sophisticated permutations of the maxim: God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. It makes for a

great bumper sticker (note the subtle rhyme scheme), but lousy theology.

It is a theology called, "The Parts Fit" theology. It goes like this: "Hey, God gave some of us penises, and others vaginas, and look, they fit together!" True enough. But what kind of conclusion can you draw from that?

Proponents of "The Parts Fit Theology" want you to conclude that therefore any sexuality that doesn't involve the fitting together of these parts is *unnatural*. Any coupling other than a man and woman goes against the very nature of who we, as men and women, were created to be. But here's another maxim: whenever anyone tells you something is "unnatural," probe a bit deeper.

If you think about it, words like "unnatural" presuppose that the world is ordered in a certain way for a certain purpose. Parts Fit theologians believe that the purpose of human sexuality is to propagate using the parts that fit. Any other use of these parts in any other combination is, therefore, out of line with their purpose and, thus, unnatural. (Thus, when my dog begins to hump my leg, I know

that it is not natural, but he could care less.)

Two problems emerge. First, like my dog, very few of us, including Parts Fit theologians, actually believe this; fewer still practice it. As I understand it, every weekend on campus, a number of clinical trials are conducted about which parts can actually fit where. The Parts Fit theology would preclude fellatio, cunnilingus, and masturbation for heterosexuals, not just homosexuals.

Now it is certainly within the bounds of Christianity to make such a mandate—a rabbi once said that any religion that doesn't tell you what to do with your pots, pans, and genitals isn't worth its salt—but Christianity does not make this particular mandate. Knowing why points us to the second problem of Parts Fit theology.

A consistent theme throughout the New Testament is that Christians have been recreated through Christ in the image of God. Christ is the new Adam (human) in whose body we are all united through our baptism. And in that body there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Gal. 3.27). Thus, in light of our baptism into Christ's body, there is no longer anything natural for us other than entering his life so that we might love God and our neighbor with all that we are and have and do.

Does that mean you can go put your part anywhere with anyone at anytime? No. Does it involve restraint and discipline? Yes. But does it preclude and discipline of the same gender being sexually active in the context of a monogamous relationship characterized by the same faith and virtue that mark the heterosexual relationships we sanction? Definitely not. In fact, it's perfectly fitting.

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Homosexuality demands Christians' attention

In the last issue of *The Davidsonian*, Katherine Rice Miller took issue with Chaplain Rob Spach's support of ordination for homosexuals.

Ms. Miller suggests that homosexuality is not an issue of highest importance for Christian faith. Nor is Rev. Spach's broader concern for social justice.

What is important, she suggests, is radically loving people, as Christ did, and forging communities of grace. For Ms. Miller, this includes loving homosexuals as well as straight people.

Following Paul's argument in Romans, Ms. Miller suggests that all, gay and straight, are sinners. What confuses me about her argument is what she understands

the sins of homosexuals to be. Are homosexuals sinners for the same reasons that straight people are, namely, because they are greedy, proud, arrogant, hypocritical, and God-hating? Or are they also sinners because they are beset by additional sin from which straights are free?

If the former, then I only wish she had stated her position more clearly. If the latter, I disagree with her in a more fundamental way. Indeed, I suspect that she adopts the latter position since she believes that the Bible univocally condemns homosexuality as sin and also seems eager to take biblical decrees seriously.

If homosexuals are sinners not only because they are human, but also because they are homosexuals, then one wonders how to love the homosexual as Christ did. Ms. Miller states that Christ loved the sinner, but condemned sinful behavior. Does loving as Christ loves thus require us to condemn the sinful behavior and desire of homosexuals? Does it require us to invite them to repent of the sin of homosexuality? To my mind, issuing such an invitation would be tantamount to asking the blue-eyed to repent of their blue eyes, or heterosexuals to repent of their heterosexuality.

More than that, I do not see how such witnessing can be experienced by homosexuals as anything other than cruel torment. Opposing the full equality of homosexuals within the body of Christ seems to hinder those about whom Christ speaks when he says, "Hinder them not." Such a view seems akin to those in the early church who wanted to grant fellowship to Jews, but not Gentiles; men, but not women; free people, but not slaves.

Of course, some may think that my position bears false witness to Christ by broadening the strait gate and narrow way of Christian

righteousness; that it hopes to escort everyone into the Kingdom of Heaven by getting rid of the Kingdom of sin and repentance altogether. I certainly recognize this danger, and heed the warning.

There may be no hope of determining, until the Last Judgment, whether liberal or conservative Christians come closer to God's will in this matter. But anyone who ponders this issue in light of a Judgment to come cannot agree when Ms. Miller asserts that Rev. Spach has addressed an issue of only minor importance for Christian faith.

It is certainly not a minor matter for Christian homosexuals seeking ordination and full acceptance at the table of fellowship, nor is it a minor matter for Christian heterosexuals—be they liberal or conservative—who believe that they will one day be called to account for the manner in which they bore witness to their gay as well as their straight neighbors.

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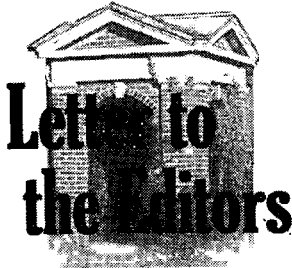
Dear Davidsonian Editors:

This is an unsolicited response to Ms. Miller's response to Chaplain Spach's article. I usually stay out of these types of discussions (i.e. homosexual ordination) because I feel that they profit little to the big picture. Ms. Miller points out that Christians often "major on minors," and I would agree with her on that statement based on its merits. However, Ms. Miller may need to look at the Gospels again, for in them I think she will find that Christ was urging his disciples (followers) to the claims of social justice.

We who feel that the church should indeed be involved in "social issues" often take heat from our more conservative brethren who feel that the church should focus solely on evangelism. Indeed, I would agree that redemptive love should be present in all that we do. But we would be remiss if we didn't feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

I see Matthew 25 and other passages as not just mere suggestions of social justice but as commandments to love and affirm the personhood of the individual. It is mighty hard to sing "Jesus loves me" when you have a hungry belly and haven't slept in a while. Just a few points to ponder as we walk in this journey called life.

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Bad Journalism 101

As many of you may know, *The Charlotte Observer*, not to be confused with *The Toilet Paper*, recently printed two articles that insulted Davidson, its students, and the journalistic profession.

As a sensationalist and untrained writer, I take offense that *The Observer* has stolen my show. I mean really, who the hell do they think they are? The very least that the *Observer's* reporter could have done was to leave a note at the end of the first salacious article (as I often do) to apologize for the hatchet job performed under the guise of serious journalism.

As I was perusing the local section of *The Observer* yesterday (local is in italics because the entire paper is really just one big local section), I came upon another article that dealt with the bathroom issue.

The fact that the paper had printed another story about the already beaten-to-death topic did not bother me all that much. What bothered me was that a second grader could have written a better column. The writer attempted to "educate" Davidson students about life using the bathroom issue as a metaphor.

The first thing that the inept author of this column (who shall remain nameless because I do not want to acknowledge that said person is capable of using a writing implement) should have done before writing was to look up the word metaphor.

What she would have learned is that a metaphor is a "figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another." In other words, not "generosity is a toilet which is hard work." What does this statement mean?

The famous philosopher Aristotle had a name for people who communicate like this; he called them "morons."

While scanning the paper for other journalistic atrocities, I came to another stunning conclusion: the *Observer* employs no writers. Every frickin' article was sourced from The Associated Press, *The New York Times*, or *The Washington Post*. The *Observer* is a ghost paper with ghostwriters and ghost editors. (I know that there are no editors because anyone with a modicum of intelligence would have prevented these articles from going to press!)

How is it that they can get away with such carelessness? Isn't there someone to put them out of business?

Oh, wait... There isn't anyone to put them out of business. They are a monopoly. Not the game with the top hat

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guy. I am referring to the economic entity that controls a market and provides only expensive or inferior products. Do Standard Oil, AT&T, or Microsoft ring a bell? If another newspaper existed in Charlotte, the threat of that newspaper publishing the Truth (with a capital T) might have prevented this whole fiasco in the first place.

Journalistic integrity is not my strong suit; I write to entertain. But it is something that the one, monopolistic newspaper of the "World Class City" that isn't Charlotte should at least strive for. So allowing for the glass houses proverb, I shall end now.

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Andrew MacDonald '03