"Love the Sinner but Hate the Sin? Homosexuality and Christian Love" by Dr. Eric Reitan

Conservative Christians often insist that condemning same-sex relationships is wholly consistent with loving their gay and lesbian neighbors. After all, can’t you “love the sinner but hate the sin”? Many gays and lesbians, by contrast, experience the “love the sinner but hate the sin” mantra as disingenuous double-speak that wraps up hateful practices in the language of love. In this talk, Eric Reitan argues that it is indeed possible to love sinners while hating what really is a sin. In fact, it’s an essential part of the Christian moral life. But it may not always be possible to take something to be a sin in the first place while loving our neighbors as we should. And this means that the “love the sinner, hate the sin” dictum offers a way to test whether or not something qualifies as a sin: if condemning some practice gets in the way of love, then the practice can’t be a sin. And when it comes to same-sex relationships, there is extensive evidence that condemning those relationships does interfere with loving our gay and lesbian neighbors. Hence, because it is always possible to love sinners while hating sin, same-sex relationships can’t be sinful after all.

Eric Reitan, a Professor of Philosophy at Oklahoma State University, specializes in philosophy of religion and ethics. His first book, Is God a Delusion? A Reply to Religion’s Cultured Despisers, was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title of 2009. His most recent book is The Triumph of Love: Same-Sex Marriage and the Christian Love Ethic.

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