

TRANS FORMATION

A FORMER TRANSGENDER **RESPONDS TO LGBTQ**

Linda A. Seiler, PhD



Trans-Formation

Copyright © 2023 by Linda A. Seiler

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States of America by Credo House Publishers,
a division of Credo Communications, LLC, Grand Rapids, Michigan
credohousepublishers.com

ISBN: 978-1-62586-260-0

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (AMP) are from the Amplified® Bible, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Cover and interior design by Frank Gutbrod

Editing by Andrew Sloan and Emily Irish

Printed in the United States of America

First edition

CONTENTS

.....

Foreword by Rev. James T. Bradford, PhD 1

Introduction 5

1. Trans-Formed: My Story 9
2. How Our Sexuality Images the Gospel 27
3. What About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity? 43
4. The Bible and Homosexuality: “Did God Really Say . . . ?” 57
5. What Science Says: Are People Born Gay/Trans? 83
6. How Same-Sex Attractions Develop 95
7. How Transgender Desires Develop 111
8. How Transformation Happens: Theologically Speaking 125
9. How Transformation Happens: Practical Application 139
10. Redemptive Relationships: Addressing the Fruit 159
11. Inner Healing: Resolving the Root 167
12. The Five Streams: Differing Responses to LGBTQ 191
13. Spiritual Warfare: What’s Fueling the Cultural Shift? 225
14. How to Engage LGBTQ-Identified Friends
and Loved Ones 237

15. Cultural Conundrums: Church Involvement, Weddings, and Pronouns	251
Conclusion: Reclaiming the Rainbow	269
Appendix A: Quick Guides for Ministry Leaders	271
Appendix B: When Someone Says, “I Experience Same-Sex Attractions”	273
Appendix C: When Someone Says, “I Struggle with My Gender Identity”	277
Appendix D: Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria (ROGD): Why Teen Girls Transition	281
Glossary	285
Acknowledgments	291
About the Author	295
Endnotes	297

THE FIVE STREAMS: DIFFERING RESPONSES TO LGBTQ

.....

Many pastoral leaders seeking guidance on LGBTQ matters turn to the internet to find the most popular books, podcasts, videos, etc., on the subject. They may come across a resource that seems biblically orthodox because it prohibits homoerotic behavior. However, not every resource that holds to a biblical sexual ethic contends for transformation. In fact, some subtly teach against it. Due to today's rapidly shifting culture, the deception can be difficult to discern.

Thirty years ago, there were basically two Christian responses to LGBTQ: those who held to a biblical sexual ethic and those who held to pro-gay revisionist theology to justify homoerotic behavior. (I'm using the term *Christian* loosely in this chapter. Some who claim to be Christians adhere to teaching contrary to Scripture.) As secular culture shifted over the past three decades to normalize all things LGBTQ,

Christian culture shifted as well, resulting in five differing responses to LGBTQ.

I call the five responses “streams” (rather than “categories” or “lanes”) because there can be some overlap between one response and another, just as in nature streams sometimes run into each other. The five streams are not original to me; they are an expansion of a four-part paradigm that emerged in the 1990s using the terms *Side A*, *Side B*, *Side Y*, and *Side X* to compare differing approaches to LGBTQ.¹⁵⁴ In 2017, Portland Fellowship reworked the original paradigm into the categories of *revel*, *resist*, *renounce*, and *rebuild*.¹⁵⁵

I’ve added a fifth stream to include a worldview absent from the original paradigm. Rather than using the letters A, B, Y, or X, I name the five streams according to their predominant response to LGBTQ: *condemnation*, *affirmation*, *accommodation*, *mortification*, and *transformation*. Each stream arrives at a different conclusion based on its premise in two areas: 1) theological beliefs regarding homoerotic behavior, and 2) beliefs regarding the origin of same-sex attractions (SSA) and transgender feelings (i.e., do such desires originate out of the spirit, soul, or body?). In short, the approach a leader takes toward Scripture and their beliefs about the origins of LGBTQ feelings will determine their pastoral response.¹⁵⁶ This is one of the most important chapters of this book, integrating concepts from previous chapters and equipping pastoral leaders to vet resources through the lens of transformation.

In this chapter, I will outline each of the five streams, beginning with *condemnation* and moving toward *transformation*, describing how each approach arrives at its pastoral response. I will explain the impact each stream has on the overcomer, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and give examples of its most popular proponents. I conclude with a chart outlining all five streams in a side-by-side comparison.

Condemnation

The condemnation stream believes that God hates all LGBTQ-identified people, considering them beyond redemption.

Theological premise: Condemnation proponents misapply the concept of *abomination* (see chapter 4), which leads to their belief that God literally hates LGBTQ-identified people. They make no distinction between those who experience unwanted SSA and transgender feelings versus those who act on their desires. They take verses like Psalm 11:5 out of context, categorizing LGBTQ-identified people as spiritual rebels who deserve God's wrath. In addition, they are in favor of enforcing the Levitical law of capital punishment for homosexual acts (Leviticus 20:13).

Origin: (Spirit) Those who adopt an LGBTQ identity are seen as spiritual rebels whom God condemns. It is entirely a spiritual issue with no consideration of soul/body (i.e., how wounds in the soul may affect one's psychosexual development or bodily desires).

Pastoral care: No pastoral care is available for people whom God considers beyond redemption and deserving of death.

Impact on the overcomer: Guilt, shame, condemnation, and alienation from God.

Strengths and weaknesses: The only potential strength of this perspective is that its adherents desire to stay true to God's Word. Their misapplication of Scripture, however, skews God's character and distorts the gospel, causing irreparable harm.

Proponents: The most infamous condemnation proponents are members of a group who call themselves Westboro Baptist Church. You may have seen pictures of them holding atrocious picket signs saying, for example, "God hates fags" or "Fags die, God laughs."¹⁵⁷ Their website address is literally godhatesfags.com, and their home page once touted: "'God hates fags' . . . is a profound theological statement, which the world needs to hear more than it needs oxygen, water and bread."¹⁵⁸ Westboro changed its web design in 2019, but their messaging remains the same. Other condemnation proponents are listed in this endnote¹⁵⁹ and in the chart at the end of this chapter.

Sadly, condemnation proponents have gained widespread media coverage, leading people to believe that their views represent most Christians. When I interviewed LGBTQ-identified college students for my research and told them I was a Christian, most of them assumed I aligned with the condemnation stream. When I realized that, I apologized for

how Jesus and the gospel had been grossly misrepresented to them, and I let them know I was not coming from that perspective.

Affirmation

The affirmation stream believes that God affirms gay partnerships and marriage. This position was originally called “Side A” (A = Affirming).

Theological premise: In direct contrast to condemnation, affirmation proponents contend that God affirms gay partnerships/marriage. They follow pro-gay revisionist theology, including the popular argument that scholars mistranslated the Greek word in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as “homosexual” (see chapter 4). In short, the affirmation approach attempts to syncretize¹⁶⁰ (or sync) contemporary culture with the gospel, suggesting that we need to update the Bible to align with the modern concepts of sexual orientation and gender dysphoria.

Origin: (Body) Same-sex attractions and transgender desires are inborn and immutable. God created people that way, making it entirely a biological (body) issue.

Pastoral care: Affirmation proponents endorse the modern constructs of gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation (see chapter 3), insisting that a person can fall anywhere on each of those spectrums based

on inborn determinants. Because they believe people are born gay/trans and cannot change, affirmation proponents consider it cruel to suggest that transformation is possible. They malign the message of transformation as “conversion therapy,” a pejorative term created by pro-gay activists to dismiss those who contend for transformation as religious extremists or cruel therapists, as described in chapter 8.

Impact on the overcomer: The individual may feel affirmed by affirmation proponents, but those who persist in unrepentant homoerotic behavior will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Strengths and weaknesses: In contrast to the condemnation stream, a strength of the affirmation approach is its emphasis on God’s love. As Christ followers, we ought to love LGBTQ-identified people as fellow human beings made in the image of God. However, the Bible never affirms homoerotic behavior, much less gay “marriage.” To insist otherwise, one must revise the Scriptures, resulting in syncretism (i.e., merging fallen human desires and culture with Christian beliefs). Affirmation proponents elevate the second-greatest commandment (to love our neighbor) over the first and greatest commandment (to love God, including His Word).

Proponents: One of the most prominent affirmation proponents is Matthew Vines, author of *God and the Gay Christian* and founder of The Reformation Project, which

promotes LGBTQ inclusion in the church.¹⁶¹ Other well-known proponents are author and HGTV star Jen Hatmaker, musicians Ray Bolz, Jennifer Knapp, and Vicki Beeching, sociologist and pastor Tony Campolo, and academics James Brownson and David Gushee.

A common characteristic among affirmation proponents is that either they or a loved one came out as gay and tried to change their attractions but couldn't. Consequently, it seems callous to insist that they or their loved one is in the wrong. Therefore, they change their theology to match their subjective experience in an attempt to reconcile Scripture with full affirmation of their LGBTQ-identified loved one.

Accommodation

The accommodation stream is so named because its proponents accommodate a “gay Christian” identity yet abstain from homoerotic behavior. They consider their attractions a unique cross they must bear. Singles identify as “celibate gay Christians,” while those who marry the opposite sex yet still experience same-sex attractions refer to themselves as gay Christians in a “mixed-orientation marriage.” This stream is known as “Side B” (in contrast to “Side A”).

Theological premise: Accommodation proponents reject the condemnation and affirmation streams, seeking to find a middle ground where Christians can be honest about their ongoing same-sex attractions while still following a

biblical sexual ethic. To that end, they embrace a “celibate gay Christian” identity, which is a more subtle form of syncretism that seeks to integrate Christianity with LGBTQ culture and the idea that our sexual desires determine our identity.

Instead of relying solely on Scripture, accommodation proponents tend to bolster their position by referring to their subjective experience or quotes from noted Christian authors.¹⁶² Additionally, they embrace a view of God’s sovereignty in which healing (whether physical or emotional) only happens if God wills it. Therefore, the individual cannot contend for nor expect a change in their sexual desires in this life. As one proponent says,

Since God has providentially refrained from changing people’s sexual orientations, then He is the one who has chosen not to change their identity. That’s why gay Christians (properly understood) still call themselves gay. Why are we taking issue with them, when all they have done is read the hand of Providence and bend the knee—sometimes bitterly, sometimes tearfully—to God’s sovereign will over their lives?¹⁶³

In that sense, the “celibate gay Christian” is considered a noble martyr who bears the unique cross of dying daily to their attractions in order to submit to the sovereign will of God not to heal them.

Origin: (Body/disability) Accommodation proponents consider SSA to be inborn and immutable, not because God created people gay but because we live in a fallen world. In that sense, SSA is akin to a physical disability that's beyond healing unless God does a creative miracle. It's not a temptation to overcome, or a developmental issue to work through, but rather an inborn "orientation" that's resistant to change.

Pastoral care: Accommodation proponents reframe SSA as an inherent identity that can be redeemed as a gift from God. One proponent reframes SSA as the unique ability to appreciate beauty in the same sex.¹⁶⁴ Another reframes SSA as a calling: "How might my being gay itself constitute a call, and how might it be the very means by which I discover new ways to love God and others?"¹⁶⁵ Another proponent reframes his gay orientation as a redemptive fulfillment of God's plan for his life:

But what if there's goodness hiding within the ruins? What if the calling to gay Christian celibacy is more than just a failure of straightness? What if God dreamed it for me, wove it into the fabric of my being as he knit me together and sang life into me? Is it possible for me to continue pursuing wholeness in Christ even if I stop praying to be straight?¹⁶⁶

Like the affirmation stream, accommodation proponents refer to transformation as "conversion therapy," since the presumed "disability" of "sexual orientation" cannot change. If

SSA is an inborn disability beyond healing, there's no need for inner-healing prayer or the gifts of the Spirit to reveal potential developmental influences that may have affected their psychosexual development. Thus, pastoral care for this stream consists of helping "gay Christians" cope this side of heaven. They champion abstinence while also encouraging "spiritual friendships," a formal commitment between members of the same sex to ease the loneliness of lifelong singleness.¹⁶⁷

Many of the leaders in the accommodation stream grew up in the church and recount stories of having been hurt by church leaders who didn't know how to respond when they confided in them about their SSA. To that end, accommodation proponents are on a mission to train the church how to welcome LGBTQ-identified people in the same way they wish they had been accepted growing up.

Impact on the overcomer: A "celibate gay Christian" identity fixates on fallen desires, keeping the believer enslaved to sinful impulses with no hope for change. It is essentially a mindset of unbelief that cuts against any expectation for transformation. Because the accommodation approach disregards developmental influences that may contribute to SSA, the struggler¹⁶⁸ may be left with unhealed wounds in the soul that intensify their longings to bond sexually with members of the same sex.

For example, one proponent explains his devastation when his roommate got engaged, which felt like a deep betrayal:

I started to cry. I clenched my fists and swallowed and gritted my teeth, imploring myself to stop. I didn't want him to see how difficult this was, how I felt as though I'd lost all equilibrium, how I'd never felt so unsteady and sad and bereft. But I couldn't stop, and I hid my face in my hands and kept crying. My body was heaving, and I thought, *I've heard people talking about "heaving sobs" and this is what they feel like. This is what it's like when the floodgates inside are opened up and your body is kind of swept along in the tide of it . . .* At some point, we both stood up, and my friend gave me a long hug, cradling my still-shaking upper body in his arms, and I put my wet face on his shoulder, and he said, "I'm not walking away from you. I'm not leaving. You're not losing me." The next day I stayed in bed, unable to summon the energy to leave the apartment.¹⁶⁹

This response indicates an unhealthy degree of emotional dependency that prevents the proponent from entering into the joy of his friend's engagement. The accommodation approach does not explore unresolved wounds in the soul that may be at the root of such dependency since it stems from the unfortunate "disability" of a "gay orientation." This results in continued anguish with no hope of reprieve, reinforcing the idea that change remains impossible.

Strengths and weaknesses: Accommodation proponents' compassion for those who experience unwanted SSA and their unwavering commitment to celibacy are commendable. However, their approach results in a form of godliness that denies the power of God to transform (2 Timothy 3:5). They hold fast to the scriptural prohibition of homoerotic behavior, yet they accommodate their fallen sexual desires as their identity.

Identifying as a “gay Christian” conflicts with Scripture and introduces unnecessary confusion. The term *gay* has political and moral implications, reframing sinful impulses in a positive way. It enshrines the old self as an idol that must not be crucified but rather justified. Further, the accommodation stream aligns with pro-gay political ideology, introducing terms such as *sexual minorities*, *heteronormativity*, *straight privilege*, and *mixed-orientation marriage*.

Identifying ourselves by our temptations conflicts with Scripture. We are no longer slaves to sin, much less identified by it (Romans 6:14). To that end, a “gay Christian” identity acts as a barrier to further transformation, as it communicates, “This is who I am; I cannot change”—which unwittingly reinforces the LGBTQ born-gay-can’t-change narrative instead of the new-creation-in-Christ reality. The accommodation stream is quite popular among Millennials and Gen Z, as they are prone to elevate subjective feelings over the objective truth of God’s Word.

Further, accommodation proponents appropriate a victim mentality. They see themselves as noble martyrs who pay a

greater sacrifice than the average Christian because they must wage war on two fronts: dying daily to illicit sexual impulses while also being attacked by the church for embracing a gay identity. As one author says, “It’s hard to avoid the conclusion that Christianity expects more from gay people than it does from straight people.”¹⁷⁰

The “gay Christian” identity creates an “us vs. them” dichotomy among believers, which perpetuates a victim mindset. Rather than repenting of sinful impulses and an over-identification with the world, “celibate gay Christians” call upon the church at large to repent for oppressing “celibate gay Christians.” They accuse the church of idolizing the nuclear family because it makes them feel left out.¹⁷¹ As a single person, I can empathize with sometimes feeling left out, but it’s a step too far to say that esteeming marriage is idolatry. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all.” God himself designed earthly marriage to image the message of the gospel, ultimately fulfilled in the marriage of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:31–32). That’s a glorious mystery to behold, not an idol to be shunned.

Ironically, in decrying the idolization of the nuclear family, accommodation proponents fail to see how they’ve enshrined their own sexual impulses as an idol that dictates their identity and determines their destiny. They focus on the price they must pay to follow Jesus as “gay Christians” rather than the price Jesus paid to redeem His Bride from the old self. Even more ironic, their solution to ease the loneliness of celibacy is

to enter a lifelong “spiritual friendship” covenant with the same sex, which parallels a gay marriage—only without the sex.¹⁷² Such partnerships feed emotional codependency, which can fuel sexual attractions and distract the overcomer from facing the pain in their soul at the root of their sexual confusion.

Proponents: Some of the leading proponents of the accommodation stream are authors Preston Sprinkle (*A People to Be Loved* and *Embodied*, and president of The Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender), Greg Coles (*Single, Gay, Christian*), Wesley Hill (*Washed and Waiting* and *Spiritual Friendship*), Christian psychologist Mark Yarhouse (*Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community* and *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*), and Nate Collins (*All But Invisible* and founder of the Revoice movement).

As of this writing, Preston Sprinkle is the most popular accommodation proponent. While he adheres to the prohibition of homoerotic behavior, Sprinkle endorses a “gay Christian” identity and is an outspoken critic of those who contend for transformation. He doesn’t believe real change is possible,¹⁷³ and he’s against all forms of “conversion therapy.”¹⁷⁴ Sprinkle discounts environmental influences that may affect one’s psychosexual development and ridicules those who contend for transformation as those who attempt to (unsuccessfully) “pray away the gay.”¹⁷⁵ His message echoes that of pro-gay activists who dismiss transformation. Ironically, Sprinkle gives credence to the potential role of developmental influences contributing

to gender dysphoria,¹⁷⁶ yet he refuses to give credence to developmental influences contributing to same-sex attractions and the potential for change. The video in this endnote best summarizes Sprinkles views in his own words.¹⁷⁷

Sprinkle is a strong supporter of Revoice, a movement pioneered in 2018 with the mission of “supporting, encouraging, and empowering gay, lesbian, same-sex attracted, and other LGBT Christians so they can flourish while observing the historic, Christian doctrine of marriage and sexuality.”¹⁷⁸ Interestingly, Revoice removed the “T” and any reference to “transgender Christians,” presumably because it’s more difficult to defend biblically a transgender identity which defies obvious biology. Still, their annual conference syncretizes Christianity with LGBTQ culture, as illustrated by the 2018 elective entitled “Redeeming Queer Culture: An Adventure,” answering the questions, “What does queer culture (and specifically, queer literature and theory) have to offer us who follow Christ? What queer treasure, honor, and glory will be brought into the New Jerusalem at the end of time (Revelation 21:24–26)?”¹⁷⁹ Christian psychologist Mark Yarhouse also has ties to Revoice, having spoken at their 2019 conference on his book, *Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Christian Community*, and writing favorably about the Revoice movement in his blog.¹⁸⁰

The 2022 Revoice conference pushed the transgender envelope, using *they/them* pronouns to introduce Lesli Hudson-Reynolds,¹⁸¹ a female speaker who wore a t-shirt with

the words *Imago Dei* in transgender flag colors.¹⁸² Sprinkle dedicated his book *Embodied* to Lesli and describes “them” as a mentor, someone he turns to for prayer and encouragement.¹⁸³

Additionally, the 2022 Revoice conference featured affinity groups based on identities such as bisexuals/pansexuals, asexuals/aromantics, women “assigned female at birth,” mixed-orientation marriages, and celibate partnerships.¹⁸⁴ It’s not difficult to see why the Revoice movement finds greater affinity with the LGBTQ community than with Christians who contend for mortification or transformation.

All in all, accommodation proponents do well to exercise compassion for those who experience SSA while holding to a biblical sexual ethic, but they fall into syncretism by integrating a gay identity, embracing LGBTQ culture, and discounting the potential influence of wounds in the soul that may contribute to disordered sexual desires.¹⁸⁵

Mortification

The mortification stream renounces a gay identity and urges believers to mortify (or kill) sin, including homoerotic desires and behavior. This approach is traditionally known as “Side Y.”

Theological premise: Mortification proponents believe SSA results from the fall and that sinful desires must be mortified, as Paul talks about in Romans 8:13 and Colossians 3:5: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed,

which is idolatry.” Mortification proponents often come from a Reformed/Calvinist perspective that discounts healing and the gifts of the Spirit and emphasizes God’s sovereignty and His ability to use our struggles for our good and His glory.

Origin: (Spirit) Same-sex attractions are part of humanity’s sin nature, resulting from the fall.

Pastoral care: Mortification proponents emphasize repentance, which includes renouncing a gay identity and dying to sinful impulses by replacing those desires with spiritual disciplines (Bible reading, prayer, Scripture memory, devotional reading, etc.). They don’t anticipate a change in their attractions, but rather a change in behavior and identity that may or may not result in a change of attractions. Their main emphasis is faithfulness to the Lord despite one’s attractions.

Because mortification proponents view SSA as a spiritual effect of the fall, they oppose the idea of investigating developmental influences in the soul, dismissing it as Freudian psychology that removes responsibility from the sinner to repent.¹⁸⁶ As a result, mortification proponents typically don’t engage in inner healing to address soul wounds, but instead offer *nouthetic* counseling (now called *biblical* counseling), which relies entirely on scriptural exhortation to effect change.¹⁸⁷ They label the transformation approach “conversion therapy,” and distinguish themselves from that approach by noting that they follow the Bible, not secular psychology, and that the goal is not heterosexuality but “holy sexuality.”¹⁸⁸

Impact on the overcomer: The mortification approach encourages change in behavior and identity without expectation of change in desires. Disregarding potential developmental influences may result in unresolved wounds in the soul that contribute to ongoing SSA and the belief that their desires can never change; they can only be resisted.

For example, one proponent acknowledges the draw he sometimes feels toward a same-sex friend:

One of the features of my own experience has been a tendency towards emotional over-dependency on particular friends. Over the years it has happened a number of times. Things with a good friend can be chugging along quite normally and quite happily, and then—almost out of the blue—I can feel a deep tug towards them; a profound need to be around them, to know their approval and affection. Left unchecked, this would quickly grow and grow. And before I know it, this person has become very close to being the centre of my life. It's what the Bible calls idolatry, and it is unbearable. It creates deep yearnings that cannot be fulfilled, and it can put a terrible burden on the friendship.¹⁸⁹

The mortification approach recommends keeping such desires in check, so they don't grow into idolatry. This contrasts with the accommodation stream that encourages "spiritual friendships" without consideration of the idolatry involved.

While mortification proponents do well to avoid emotional dependency, there's no exploration as to why the pattern of such dependency occurs; it's considered part of the fall and nothing more. Therefore, the only option is to repent and avoid such relationships without considering how unresolved wounds in the soul may contribute to repeated patterns of emotional dependency.

Strengths and weaknesses: The strength of the mortification approach is that it holds firmly to a biblical sexual ethic, emphasizing repentance for homoerotic behavior and renouncing a gay identity. It also promotes a high view of Scripture and encourages spiritual disciplines that aid in spiritual growth and behavioral change.¹⁹⁰

The weakness of the mortification approach is that while it emphasizes repentance, it does not consider how developmental influences and wounds in the soul may play a crucial role in repentance and healing. The purpose of investigating developmental influences is not merely to understand *how* SSA came about, but also to reveal *sinful reactions* to past pain (bitterness, unforgiveness, inner vows). The overcomer needs to repent not just for outward behavior but for attitudes of the heart that fuel sin and keep the overcomer in bondage. As prayer counselor Mark Sanford says,

The reason we look at developmental influences is *in order to repent* of our reactions to developmental influences—reactions that became permanent

motivating factors that incline us toward sinning. In inner healing, we do not blame developmental factors, as some contend, nor do we just understand them. We *repent* of our sinful reactions to developmental influences, just as we repent of sinful homosexual actions that are motivated by such roots.¹⁹¹

Proponents: The most popular proponents of the mortification stream are Christopher Yuan (*Holy Sexuality*), Rosaria Butterfield (*The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*), Jackie Hill Perry (*Gay Girl, Good God*), Rachel Gilson (*Born Again This Way*), Sam Allberry (*Is God Anti-Gay?*), and Denny Burk and Health Lambert (*Transforming Homosexuality*)—all of whom have written for The Gospel Coalition.

(Note: Gilson’s messaging fits into the mortification stream, yet she associates with the accommodation stream, having spoken at Revoice conferences.¹⁹² Similarly, Jackie Hill Perry associates with the accommodation stream, speaking at Preston Sprinkle’s conferences, and appearing on his podcast and video series.¹⁹³ These are examples of how streams sometimes overlap.)

Mortification proponents emphasize repentance for sin yet oppose the exploration of developmental influences that may contribute to SSA. For example, Yuan contends that “homosexuality isn’t a psychological disorder or a developmental problem. To think that way is a futile, human-centered attempt to erase the reality of original sin.”¹⁹⁴

Butterfield criticizes those who consider developmental influences as having a low view of sin, stating, “Often they look at homosexuality as a behavior to be modified rather than a sin to be mortified.”¹⁹⁵ Butterfield has been especially outspoken against reparative therapy (a psychological method of investigating developmental influences that may contribute to same-sex attractions or gender insecurity), characterizing it as “a modern version of the prosperity gospel. Name it. Claim it. Pray the gay away.”¹⁹⁶ (Note: In 2022, Butterfield recanted her statement, saying, “This ranks among the most misguided words I have written as a Christian.”¹⁹⁷ Though she still holds fast to the mortification perspective, Butterfield is now open to counseling and change-allowing therapy.)

Gilson calls reparative therapy a false gospel that aims to “create” heterosexuality and

makes promises God does not and is not even scientifically valid, let alone biblically valid. It blames same-sex attraction on various environmental factors—even on the person who doesn’t want those attractions—leading to an endless search for *why* instead of equipping to fight the *what*.¹⁹⁸

That leads to an inordinate waste of time, says Gilson, “trying to figure out what causes same-sex attraction, as if we could reverse the effects of the fall through human tactics.”¹⁹⁹

Jackie Hill Perry concurs:

In a spiritual sense, [reparative therapy] doesn't work because it's a human attempt to fix a spiritual problem. We experience sinful temptation because of our sin nature that we have inherited from Adam. Reparative therapy doesn't even think of homosexuality in those terms.²⁰⁰

Living Out, founded by Sam Allberry, at one point stated that sexual orientation is an immutable characteristic of the fall that cannot be transformed, only subdued:

We believe it is essential to help people accept themselves as they are, just as God accepts us as we are. This will include accepting our sexual orientation. . . . We believe that attempting to change someone's sexual orientation sends a number of potentially damaging messages.²⁰¹

Some mortification proponents like Burk and Lambert contend that the very temptation of same-sex attractions is in and of itself sin.²⁰² Consequently, the struggler must repent for even having same-sex attractions.²⁰³ Those who hold this view tend to come from a strict Calvinist perspective that emphasizes humanity's total depravity and discounts the potential role of developmental influences that can shape one's sexual desires.

Mortification proponents emphasize the gospel and dying to self with no anticipation of a change in sexual attractions. As Yuan says, the opposite of homosexuality is not

heterosexuality but rather “holy sexuality,” which he defines as “chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage.”²⁰⁴ Jackie Hill Perry says, likewise, that “heterosexuality isn’t a fruit of the Spirit.”²⁰⁵ While Perry’s statement is technically true, it’s misleading because it conflates the unscriptural concept of “sexual orientation” with the fruit of the Spirit and presupposes that God does not delight to restore our disordered desires to His original design for our sexuality.

Overall, the mortification approach is biblically sound, encouraging believers to renounce a gay identity and repent from homoerotic behavior. However, it stops short of the transformation approach in that it does not take into consideration sinful reactions to developmental influences that may underlie SSA compulsions. It’s unfortunate that some mortification proponents publicly disparage the transformation approach, as both streams share similar theological and moral convictions.

Transformation

Similar to mortification, the transformation approach prohibits homoerotic behavior and renounces a gay identity. It differs from mortification in that it traces the origin of SSA to both the sin nature *and* developmental influences that result from living in a fallen world. In that sense, transformation is holistic, affecting the spirit and the soul (mind, emotions, will), which, in turn, affects the body—including one’s sexual desires. This approach is known as “Side X” (as in ex-gay).²⁰⁶

Theological premise: In addition to repentance, the transformation approach emphasizes holistic sanctification involving spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23) that progresses over the lifetime of the believer. It considers how potential environmental influences (i.e., childhood sexual abuse, teasing because of gender nonconformity, adverse family dynamics, or other childhood experiences) may have contributed to wounds in the soul that manifest as disordered sexual desires. In contrast to accommodation and mortification, transformation proponents often come from denominational perspectives that emphasize individual free will and remain open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁷

Origin: (Spirit, Soul, Body) SSA results from the fall (spirit) and wounds in the soul (mind, emotions, will) which can impact sexual desires (body). Like those of the mortification stream, transformation proponents reject the notion of sexual orientation because it implies an inborn, immutable state of being resistant to change. Instead, they view SSA as deceitful desires that remain subject to change as the believer puts off the old self, renews the mind, and puts on the new self.

Pastoral care: The transformation process is twofold: 1) redemptive relationships to meet same-sex emotional/relational deficits in legitimate ways, and 2) counseling or inner-healing prayer to address sinful reactions to wounds in the soul that contribute to disordered sexual desires. In some cases, the roots of disordered desires are not readily obvious,

and the gifts of the Spirit are needed to reveal where lies became lodged in the soul during painful childhood experiences. This holistic approach incorporates the spirit (releasing forgiveness, renouncing lies), the soul (renewing the mind with truth), and the body (disordered sexual desires can change when the roots to those desires are dissolved).

Impact on the overcomer: The overcomer finds hope, knowing that if there's a *reason* for their disordered desires, there's a *resolution*. They were not born gay; their God-given sexuality became derailed through painful life experiences, and Jesus can bring healing and restoration through the process of progressive sanctification. Transformation is not a one-time event but rather a lifetime trajectory of being continually conformed to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Strengths and weaknesses: The strength of the transformation approach is that it is biblically sound and holistic (ministering to spirit, soul, and body), and it also aligns with truths revealed through scientific research like sexual fluidity and neuroplasticity (see chapter 5). Additionally, for those who come from a Pentecostal perspective, as I do, it integrates the distinctives of Holy Spirit baptism and the gifts of the Spirit (word of knowledge, discernment of spirits, divine healing, etc.) and aligns with the Assemblies of God position paper on homosexuality.²⁰⁸

The greatest weakness of the transformation approach is the tendency for overcomers to make attractions to the opposite sex their primary goal. As mentioned in chapter 9,

knowing Jesus and becoming increasingly surrendered to Him is the goal. Change happens as a byproduct of surrender and progressive sanctification, which means it doesn't necessarily happen all at once. It's not like flipping a light switch and going from gay to straight; it's more like a dial that turns slowly over time. In my case, it was eleven years before I saw significant change in my desires; and it was several years after that, as I continued to repent, renew my mind, and experience deeper healing for wounds in my soul, that attractions to the opposite sex began to emerge. Some may fail to persevere and conclude that change isn't really possible and then accuse transformation proponents of offering them a false hope.

Another weakness of the transformation approach is the potential for creating a pecking order based on the degree of change one has experienced, implying that those who still experience same-sex attractions are somehow inferior. The goal is not the degree of change in comparison to another, but rather pursuing Jesus, becoming increasingly surrendered to Him and remaining open to continued growth and healing. There is always more in Jesus. In the words of one of my case-study participants, "My goal wasn't to become straight; it was to become whole."

Some think transformation means a person reaches the point where all temptation disappears. While temptation may decrease over time as the overcomer builds new neural pathways, there is no guarantee that the overcomer will never be tempted again. The Bible doesn't promise that for any sin

struggle. In fact, temptation can play a crucial role in the healing process, as discussed in chapter 9. The more healed we become, the less appealing our fleshly ways of coping become. There are some for whom temptation becomes a nonissue, while others may continue to experience temptation on occasion. In short, temptation may not disappear, but there's a difference between being *tempted to sin* and being *dominated by sin*.

Another downside associated with the transformation approach is that pro-gay advocates use relapse examples to argue that change never truly happens. While it's true that some do relapse, that's not because change is impossible, but because the process of transformation is messy, involving a person's free will and associated vulnerabilities. Overcomers may experience a measure of freedom and then relapse during times of stress. Some may not only relapse but give up entirely and return to their old ways.

Does that mean change is impossible? Imagine if we applied the same reasoning to the possibility of finding freedom from drugs, alcohol, gluttony, greed, or any other life-controlling behavior. Change is a process of growth that involves failures along the way to overcoming. "The godly may trip seven times, but they will get up again. But one disaster is enough to overthrow the wicked" (Proverbs 24:16, NLT). I stumbled many times in my own journey, but by God's grace I got up again each time, and I continue in progressive sanctification and ongoing transformation. Just because some give up doesn't mean change is impossible.

Still, pro-gay advocates work diligently to perpetuate the lie that transformation ministries fail more than they succeed. They often quote Alan Chambers, the former president of Exodus International, who said, “The majority of people that I have met—and I would say the majority, meaning 99.9% of them—have not experienced a change in their orientation.”²⁰⁹ Chambers had no empirical data to back up his statement. He simply made up the statistic, and yet pro-gay advocates repeat it so often that even well-meaning Christians think it’s true. Few are aware that Chambers drove Exodus International into the ground by promoting a hyper-grace heresy that requires no repentance for sin nor expectation of a transformed life in Christ.²¹⁰

The greatest liability of the transformation approach is that pro-gay advocates mischaracterize it as “conversion therapy,” eliciting images of shock therapy, aversion techniques, and other forms of coercion. Unfortunately, some have used strange practices, including “holding therapy,”²¹¹ promoting the use of straight porn,²¹² or stripping naked with members of the same sex.²¹³ Aside from being outright wacky and immoral, none of those techniques work, as physical stimulation arouses the struggler sexually but does not address unmet emotional/relational needs in the soul. Sadly, strange practices like those gain media attention, leading the general public to believe that’s what transformation proponents do.

Making matters worse, pro-gay advocates proliferate fabricated stories of “conversion therapy torture” to bolster public outrage. Most people accept such heart-wrenching

stories at face value, but further investigation reveals the hoax behind it all.²¹⁴ The most notable liar is Sam Brinton, who testified of his own “conversion therapy” abuse before the United Nations Committee Against Torture, urging them to ban “conversion therapy” worldwide. Despite the publicity Brinton receives, he’s such a prolific liar that even the most anti-ex-gay activist won’t use his testimony to advance the cause because Brinton can’t provide facts to verify his story.²¹⁵ In fact, there’s an entire website (SamBrintonHoax.com) dedicated to exposing Brinton’s deception. In 2022, Brinton made national headlines when he was fired from the US Department of Energy for stealing baggage claim luggage full of women’s apparel.²¹⁶

In response to pro-gay activists’ outrage against so-called “conversion therapy,” companies are now banning transformational resources. For example, Amazon has banned certain books that contend for transformation,²¹⁷ Facebook deleted the Restored Hope Network’s ministry page,²¹⁸ and the Living Hope app was deleted from the Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Amazon platforms.²¹⁹ There is a concerted effort to cancel transformational resources, making them difficult to find in online searches.

Last, some Christians are skeptical of transformation due to negative experiences with flaky deliverance ministries. While there are often demonic influences involved, it’s not as simple as casting out a demon of homosexuality. Demonic spirits gain influence through wounds in the soul, so if we

don't deal with associated bitterness, unforgiveness, and lies embedded in the mind, the demonic influence will remain. In other words, you can't cast out disordered sexual desires. Those are merely fruit of deeper roots in the soul that God wants to resolve through redemptive relationships and inner healing.

Proponents: Transformation proponents include authors such as Joe Dallas (*Desires in Conflict*),²²⁰ Andrew Comiskey (*Pursuing Sexual Wholeness*), Leanne Payne (*The Broken Image*), and Anne Paulk (*Restoring Sexual Identity*)²²¹; Pure Passion Media,²²² which produces training videos, testimonies, and documentaries on transformation; and organizations such as ReStory Ministries,²²³ Restored Hope Network,²²⁴ Portland Fellowship,²²⁵ and the Changed Movement.²²⁶

Why Transformation?

Transformation encompasses positives from each stream: it holds uncompromisingly to a biblical sexual ethic, it affirms God's love for those who experience disordered sexual desires, and it offers compassion for overcomers while also encouraging them to repent from homoerotic behavior and renounce a gay identity. Additionally, it involves holistic, progressive sanctification, aligning with Romans 12:1–2, not being conformed to the pattern of this world (born-gay-can't-change) but rather being transformed by the renewing of the mind (dying to deceitful desires, forgiving those who have

hurt us, resolving childhood trauma, etc.) so that we will be able to test and approve what God's will is (conformed to the image of Christ and restored to God's original design for our sexuality).

Not surprisingly, the transformation stream has come under the most scrutiny, while the accommodation stream is gaining in popularity. As a result, droves of young believers have become defiled against the message of transformation. When I first heard testimonies of transformation, it resonated with my spirit that freedom is possible, and I thought to myself, "How did you get there, and what can I learn from your experience?" Today's LGBTQ-affirming culture elicits the opposite response: "Change is impossible, and anyone who says they've experienced change is lying." Starting from that position of unbelief makes transformation unlikely.

Streams Can Merge

I mentioned that I call the five perspectives "streams" because, just as in nature, one stream can run into another. Some people move through a progression in the streams as they grow in Christ: starting in affirmation, moving to accommodation, then to mortification, and on to transformation. In my own experience, I started in the mortification stream, as I was adamantly opposed to Holy Spirit baptism and anything associated with spiritual gifts. After I got baptized in the Holy Spirit, I became open to further transformation through inner healing.

My purpose in outlining the five streams and sharing my Pentecostal experience is not to cause division but to explain why believers approach LGBTQ from different perspectives. Despite our differences in approach, the streams that hold to a biblical sexual ethic will likely need to pull together in the days to come to oppose “conversion therapy” bans that seek to silence believers who contend for God’s design for sexuality.²²⁷

The following chart summarizes the five streams.

The 5 Streams: Differing Responses to LGBTQ

Stream	Condemnation	Affirmation	Accommodation	Mortification	Transformation
Approach to Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)	God condemns all gay people as beyond redemption	God affirms gay partnerships/marriage	Accommodates a “celibate gay Christian” identity as a unique cross to bear	Mortify (kill) sin by renouncing gay identity and repenting of homoerotic behavior	Mortification + address wounds in the soul that may contribute to sexual brokenness
Original Side	(N/A)	Side A	Side B	Side Y	Side X
Theological Premise	God hates sinners (Ps. 11:5); gay people deserve the death penalty (misapply Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Prov. 6:16-19)	Revisionist pro-gay theology justifies homoerotic behavior; a good tree cannot bear bad fruit (Mt. 7:18)	Follows a biblical sexual ethic, but desires & identity do not change; fallen desires determine identity	Follows a biblical sexual ethic; God gives us power to mortify sinful impulses (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5)	Follows a biblical sexual ethic; God heals and transforms spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24)
Origin of SSA (spirit, soul, body)	Spirit: People choose to be gay out of sheer spiritual rebellion against God	Body: God created people gay (so the Scriptures need to be updated)	Body: SSA is inborn & immutable because of the Fall (similar to an inborn physical disability)	Spirit: Primarily a sin nature issue; result of the Fall	Spirit, Soul, & Body: Both a sin nature (spirit) and developmental issue (soul) that can affect sexual desires (body)
Pastoral Care	No redemption possible for people God hates	No need to repent for inborn, God-given sexual orientation; malign transformation as “conversion therapy”	SSA reframed as a gift from God; promote “spiritual friendships” to ease loneliness; malign transformation as “conversion therapy”	Emphasize repentance & spiritual disciplines; some malign transformation as “conversion therapy” and/or “secular psychology”	Healing and restoration through the body of Christ, counseling/talk therapy, and inner healing prayer; open to gifts of the Spirit
Outcome for Overcomer	Guilt, shame, condemnation, and alienation from God	Those who persist in unrepentant homoerotic behavior will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11)	Fixating on fallen desires, instead of putting off the old self (Eph. 4:22), results in continued enslavement to sin (Rom. 6:14)	Ongoing battle to kill sinful impulses while discounting wounds in the soul that may contribute to gender insecurity and desires to bond with the same sex	Progressive sanctification that remains open to the Holy Spirit healing wounds in the soul that may contribute to gender insecurity and desires to bond with the same sex
Proponents	WESTBORO BAPTIST CHURCH Pastor Steven Anderson - Faithful Word Baptist, AZ Pastor Patrick Boyle – Revival Baptist Church, FL Pastor Roger Jimenez - Verity Baptist Church, CA Pastor Kevin Swanson - Reformation Church, CO	REFORMATION PROJECT Q CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP James Brownson <i>Bible, Gender, Sexuality</i> David Gushee <i>Changing Our Mind</i> Justin Lee <i>Torn</i> Matthew Vines <i>God and the Gay Christian</i>	REVOICE.ORG POSTURE SHIFT Greg Coles <i>Single Gay and Christian</i> Nate Collins <i>All But Invisible</i> Wesley Hill <i>Washed and Waiting</i> Preston Sprinkle <i>Embodied; People to Be Loved</i> Mark Yarhouse <i>Costly Obedience</i>	THE GOSPEL COALITION Sam Allberry <i>Is God Anti-Gay?</i> Rosaria Butterfield <i>The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert</i> Becket Cook <i>A Change of Affections</i> Jackie Hill Perry <i>Gay Girl, Good God</i> Christopher Yuan <i>Holy Sexuality</i>	RESTORY MINISTRIES RESTORED HOPE NETWORK HELP4FAMILIES.ORG PORTLANDFELLOWSHIP.COM MASTERINGLIFE.ORG CHANGED MOVEMENT Anne Paulk <i>Restoring Sexual Identity</i> Joe Dallas <i>Desires in Conflict</i> Linda Seiler <i>TRANS-Formation</i>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the five streams resonates with you the most and why?
2. What value do you see in identifying different streams of Christian thought?
3. Have you read any of the authors listed in the five-streams chart at the end of the chapter? If so, what did you glean from their book that aligns with their stream? Did you notice anything that does not align with the stream in which the book is listed? (Remember, some streams overlap.)
4. Which stream do you think gives the overcomer the most hope? Why?

- 30 I use quotes when referring to gay “marriage” because the Bible defines marriage exclusively as between a man and a woman.
- 31 For more information, see Larry Crabb’s book *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes*.
- 32 See “bottom surgery” in glossary, describing vaginoplasty and phalloplasty.
- 33 Leonard Sax, “How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling,” *Journal of Sex Research* 39, no. 3 (2002), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224490209552139>.
- 34 LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and is a common acronym for the gay community. Some include the “plus” sign (LGBTQ+) to allow for ever-expanding descriptors of alternative sexual identities.

Chapter 12: The Five Streams

- 154 For example, see <https://web.archive.org/web/19981205192027/http://www.bridges-across.org/ba/divide.htm> and https://strengthofhismight.wordpress.com/2018/01/06/side-b-vs-side-y/#_ftn3.
- 155 Jason Thompson, “Differing Views on Christians Doctrine, Identity, and Homosexuality,” Portland Fellowship, 2023, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.portlandfellowship.com/clarity.php>; Andrew Rodriguez, “4 Different Views on Homosexuality & Gender Identity in the Church,” YouTube, 2021, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDGkLPWBKbo&t=81s>.
- 156 From an academic perspective, this chapter addresses the missiological concept of contextualization. Think of a Venn diagram in which theology, human culture, and missiology intersect. Our mission to the lost and resulting pastoral care must be based on the truth of God’s Word and the truths revealed in God’s world. My thesis in this chapter is that the transformation approach demonstrates sound contextualization based on the truth of God’s Word and truths revealed in biology, psychology, and anthropology. The other approaches either under-contextualize (often leading to legalism) or over-contextualize (known as syncretism).

- 157 Joshua Kors, “God Hates Fags’: Q&A with Pastor Fred Phelps,” *Huffington Post* (August 20, 2010), accessed April 15, 2023, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/god-hates-fags-qa-with-pa_b_689430.
- 158 <https://web.archive.org/web/20190301060707/http://godhatesfags.com/>
- 159 Brian Tashman, “Swanson Defends Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill, Lauds Country as Model,” Right Wing Watch, last modified November 30, 2012, accessed April 12, 2019, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/swanson-defends-ugandas-anti-homosexuality-bill-lauds-country-as-model/>; Miranda Blue, “Kevin Swanson Aghast That Christians Support ‘Death Penalty Crime’ of Gay Marriage,” Right Wing Watch, last modified December 6, 2017, accessed April 12, 2019, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/kevin-swanson-aghast-that-christians-support-death-penalty-crime-of-gay-marriage/>; Curtis M. Wong, “Pastor Blames California Wildfires on State’s Embrace of LGBTQ Rights,” *Huffington Post* (August 6, 2018), accessed April 12, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kevin-swanson-california-wildfires_n_5b68552ae4b0de86f4a391ae; Lindsey Bever, “Pastor Refuses to Mourn Orlando Victims: ‘The Tragedy Is That More of Them Didn’t Die,’” *The Washington Post* (June 15, 2016), accessed April 12, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/06/14/pastor-refuses-to-mourn-orlando-victims-the-tragedy-is-that-more-of-them-didnt-die/>; Martin E. Comas, “Lake County Church Hosting 3-Day ‘Make America Straight Again’ Event,” *Orlando Sentinel* (June 13, 2019), accessed January 29, 2020, https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-ne-lake-county-pastor-make-america-straight-again-20190613-q55c22mqxf3djdmg6orqdwjr-story.html?fbclid=IwAR344UhZx2gV_vorzw7MAAn0SHha5qFYScYFy8EFiHr9Xi2Hh0vfpPeOS2HE.
- 160 Syncretize = attempt to “sync,” or reconcile, two opposing concepts or ideas. This is a missiological concept referring to improper contextualization of the gospel.
- 161 <https://reformationproject.org>
- 162 Greg Johnson, *Still Time to Care: What We Can Learn from the Church’s Failed Attempt to Cure Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), chapters 1–4; Wesley Hill, *Spiritual Friendship*:

- Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015), chapter 2.
- 163 Misty Irons, “New Testament Gentiles and Gay Christians,” The Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender (April 22, 2022), accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.centerforfaith.com/blog/new-testament-gentiles-and-gay-christians>.
- 164 Mark Galli, “Revoice’s Founder Answers the LGBT Conference’s Critics: Orientation Is Not Necessarily Sexual, Nate Collins Says,” *Christianity Today* (July 25, 2018), accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/july-web-only/revoices-founder-answers-lgbt-conferences-critics.html>.
- 165 Hill, *Spiritual Friendship*, 75.
- 166 Gregory Coles, *Single, Gay, Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 47, italics mine.
- 167 Hill, *Spiritual Friendship*; “Discern Your Call,” Family of Brothers Monastery website, Nashville. <http://familyofbrothers.org/discern-your-call/>; Wesley Hill, “Spiritual Friendship,” Biola University Chapel, 2014, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=glkykQYEy0w&t=808>.
- 168 I use the word “struggler” versus “overcomer” in this context because they are not on a path toward overcoming.
- 169 Hill, *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*, 87–88.
- 170 Nate Collins, *All but Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender & Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 86.
- 171 Anne Kennedy, “Identity and Obedience in Revoice 2021,” *Christian Research Journal*, Last modified March 9, 2023 (February 1, 2022), accessed Feb 12, 2022, https://www.equip.org/article/identity-and-obedience-in-revoice-2021/?fbclid=IwAR3DUM0sANG3bu-EYgWv_I_7BuUKtVXXVuzU6xFBBKOl42EmsJrRneupXaTI.
- 172 This video demonstrates the disturbing dynamics of a “spiritual friendship”: Evangelical Dark Web, “Revoice Conference Exposed 1,” recorded April 8, 2021, YouTube, accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phus7d4ewDM&t=272s>. See also

- Eve Tushnet, "Hope Is the Thing with Feather Boas: Two Small Gay Catholic Thoughts," @evetushnet, last modified January 30, 2023, accessed April 1, 2023, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/evetushnet/2023/01/hope-is-the-thing-with-feather-boas-two-small-gay-catholic-thoughts.html>.
- 173 Preston Sprinkle, "Faith, Sexuality, and Gender," (March 6, 2020), accessed Oct 13, 2021. YouTube time code 3:00-4:43, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5_xtBwF0oU; Preston Sprinkle, "Same-Sex Attraction, Deconstruction, and the Problem of Evil: Tony Scarcello," (July 26, 2020), accessed Oct 13, 2021. YouTube time code 37:38-38:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILqXI6Rx0dw>.
- 174 Justin Brierly, "Transgender People and the Church: Preston Sprinkle & Christina Beardsley," (Feb 5, 2021), accessed Oct 13, 2021. YouTube time code 46:39-46:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aNz4-y7lwE>.
- 175 Sprinkle, "Faith, Sexuality, and Gender," time code 3:18-4:43.
- 176 Brierly, "Transgender People and the Church: Preston Sprinkle & Christina Beardsley," time code 42:50-44:52.
- 177 "Differing Views: "Preston Sprinkle and Jason Thompson," <https://vimeo.com/521622676/05b848ba84>.
- 178 Revoice Conference, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180828014500/http://revoice.us/>.
- 179 Tim Challies, "The Controversy Behind the Revoice Conference," www.challies.com, last modified June 15, 2018, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://www.challies.com/articles/the-controversy-behind-the-revoice-conference/>.
- 180 Mark Yarhouse, "Reflections on Revoice 2019," June 9, 2019, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://psychologyandchristianity.wordpress.com/2019/06/09/reflections-on-revoice-2019/>.
- 181 Leslie serves as the gender identity expert for the Posture Shift ministry team: <https://postureshift.com/team/>.
- 182 Mary Jackson and Todd Vician, "Identity Crisis: Ascendant Gender Ideology Undermines Group Trying to Balance Homosexuality and Biblical Orthodoxy," *World News Group* (October 21, 2021), accessed March 6, 2023, <https://wng.org/articles/identity-crisis-1666367393>.

- 183 Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2021), 9, 16, 26–27. Kindle edition.
- 184 Jackson, and Vician, “Identity Crisis: Ascendant Gender Ideology Undermines Group Trying to Balance Homosexuality and Biblical Orthodoxy.”
- 185 For a thorough critique of Revoice, see M.D. Perkins, “A Little Leaven: Confronting the Ideology of the Revoice Movement,” American Family Association (2021), accessed April 15, 2023, https://afa.net/media/595378/afa_littleleaven_perkins_2021.pdf.
- 186 Rosaria Butterfield, “You Are What—and How—you Read,” The Gospel Coalition (Feb. 13, 2014), accessed Feb 16, 2022, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-are-whatand-howyou-read/>.
- 187 See Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC), known prior to 2013 as the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC). Nouthetic counseling began in the 1970s with Jay Adams’ book *Competent to Counsel* (<https://biblicalcounseling.com/about/history/>).
- 188 Christopher Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2018), 46.
- 189 Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?* (N.p.: The Good Book Company, 2013), Kindle location 874.
- 190 Butterfield, “You Are What—and How—you Read.”
- 191 Personal communication, January 14, 2002.
- 192 <https://watch.revoice.org/revoice19-talks-1/season:5/videos/friday-workshop-mission-and-sexuality-rachel-gilson>; <https://watch.revoice.org/videos/greg-coles-rachel-gilson-terminology>.
- 193 Jesse T. Jackson, “Are All Sexual Orientations Created by God?’ Jackie Hill Perry Answers Preston Sprinkle at Exiles in Babylon Conference,” Church Leaders, last modified April 5, 2022, accessed April 22, 2023, <https://churchleaders.com/news/421288-are-all-sexual-orientations-created-by-god-jackie-hill-perry-answers-preston-sprinkle-at-exiles-in-babylon-conference.html>; Preston Sprinkle, “#706—a Conversation with Jackie Hill Perry,” November 12, 2018, in *Theology in the Raw*, <https://theologyintheraw.com/podcast/706-a-conversation-with-jackie-hill-perry/>; <https://christian-sexuality.com>.

- 194 Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*, 38.
- 195 Greg Koukl, "Sexuality and Gender: Rosaria Butterfield Interview with Greg Koukl," Stand to Reason (December 14, 2016), accessed April 29, 2019, <https://www.str.org/article/rosaria-butterfield-interview-greg-koukl#.XMeFSi-ZNAY>.
- 196 Butterfield, "You Are What—and How—you Read."
- 197 Rosaria Butterfield, "Retraction of My Position on Reparative Therapy and Ex-Gay Organizations," (2022), accessed March 6, 2022, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a81dca7d55b41d51ee756c3/t/62cdd566fd9ed703c736fdb7/1657656678694/Retraction+FINAL+EDIT+PDF.pdf>.
- 198 Rachel Gilson, *Born Again This Way: Coming out, Coming to Faith, and What Comes Next* (The Good Book Company, 2020), 137.
- 199 Gilson, *Born Again This Way*, 82.
- 200 Jackie Hill Perry, "Jackie Hill Perry," Cru at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Live Stream Recording (March 7, 2019), accessed June 7, 2021. YouTube timestamp 1:01:00–1:01:26, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R430L_oqH0.
- 201 Sean Doherty, "Does Living out Support Gay Cure or 'Conversion Therapy'?" Living Out, 2019, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190401071351/http://www.livingout.org/does-living-out-support-gay-cure-or-conversion-therapy>; This is another example of how streams can merge, as accommodation proponents embrace the idea of an immutable sexual orientation.
- 202 Denny Burk, and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says About Sexual Orientation and Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 39–59, Kindle edition.
- 203 In early 2023, much controversy erupted over the concept of concupiscence. See Douglas Wilson, "Concupiscence Is as Concupiscence Does," Blog & Mablog: Theology that Bites Back, last modified January 11, 2023, accessed April 22, 2023, <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/books/concupiscence-is-as-concupiscence-does.html>.
- 204 Yuan, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*, 46.
- 205 Trinity Broadcasting Network, "Jackie Hill Perry Testimony: Delivered from Sexual Sin," *Praise* (Sep 28, 2021), accessed Oct 13, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1420480101686895&ref=sharing>.

- 206 I'm not a fan of the term "ex-gay" because it presupposes that gay is an identity. Furthermore, the term is too simplistic, as if one flips a switch to go from gay to straight. I prefer to use terms like "disciple" or "overcomer" in the context of progressive sanctification.
- 207 Exodus International, a forerunner of the transformation stream, was birthed during the charismatic renewal.
- 208 The General Council of Assemblies of God, "Homosexuality, Marriage, and Sexual Identity," (2014), accessed Feb 18, 2022, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Homosexuality-Marriage-and-Sexual-Identity>.
- 209 Warren Throckmorton, "Alan Chambers: 99.9% Have Not Experienced a Change in Their Orientation," (January 9, 2012), accessed April 15, 2023, <https://wthrockmorton.com/2012/01/09/alan-chambers-99-9-have-not-experienced-a-change-in-their-orientation/>.
- 210 Exodus International provided decades of effective ministry until Chambers became president and began to steer the organization away from biblical truth. In 2012, a group of orthodox leaders within Exodus pulled out to form the Restored Hope Network. Former Exodus president Joe Dallas shares his insights about Exodus in Joe Dallas, "What I've Always Wanted to Say About Ex-Gay Ministry," YouTube (Feb 21, 2022), accessed Feb 22, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTOg5hbe8fo>.
- 211 In holding therapy, the therapist holds the client by hugging the client or having the client lie in the therapist's lap. Exodus publicly renounced the method—see David Roberts, "Confirmed: Exodus Met with Richard Cohen, Original Statement Pulled," July 3, 2008, accessed Feb 25, 2022, <https://exgaywatch.com/2008/07/confirmed-exodus-met-with-richard-cohen-original-statement-pulled/>.
- 212 Anna Silman, "8 People on Surviving Gay Conversion Therapy," The Cut (Aug 10, 2018), accessed Feb 25, 2022, <https://www.thecut.com/2018/08/8-gay-conversion-therapy-survivors-on-cameron-post.html>.
- 213 Nico Lang, "Conversion Therapy Provider Must Dissolve, Pay Millions, Judge Rules," *NBC News* (June 12, 2019), accessed Feb 25, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/>

- conversion-therapy-provider-must-dissolve-pay-millions-judge-rules-n1016856.
- 214 National Task Force for Therapy Equality, "In Their Own Words," <https://www.therapyequality.org>.
- 215 Peter Sprigg, "Truth Matters in Ex-Gay Debate," *LifeSite News* (Sep 2, 2014), accessed Feb 25, 2022, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/truth-matters-in-ex-gay-debate/>; David Pickup, "Sam Brinton Exposed!! Visit Wwww.Sambrintonhoax.Com for More!," (October 20, 2017), accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gx9A7L-bpZE>.
- 216 Geneva Sands, Maegan Vazquez, and Jeremy Diamond, "Top Energy Department Official No Longer Employed after Luggage Theft Accusations," *CNN* (Dec 13, 2022), accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/13/politics/sam-brinton-department-of-energy/index.html>.
- 217 Brandon Showalter, "Christian Authors Blast Amazon for Banning Their Books, Selling Pedophilia Titles," *The Christian Post*, August 30, 2019, accessed Apr 1, 2022, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-authors-blast-amazon-banning-their-books-selling-pedophilia-titles.html>; Doug Mainwaring, "Ex-Gays Petition Amazon to Stop Banning Books That Help with Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction," *LifeSite News*, July 8, 2019, accessed April 22, 2023, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/ex-gays-petition-amazon-to-stop-banning-books-that-help-with-unwanted-same-sex-attraction>.
- 218 Brandon Showalter, "Facebook Shuts Down Christian Ministry's Page with No Explanation," *Christian Post*, October 8, 2020, accessed Apr 1, 2022, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/facebook-shuts-down-christian-ministrys-page-with-no-explanation.html>.
- 219 Janko Roettgers, "Under Pressure, Google Removes Gay Conversion Therapy App," *Reuters*, March 29, 2019, accessed April 22, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/article/variety-idUSL3N21G5E5>.
- 220 Banned by Amazon.
- 221 Banned by Amazon.
- 222 <https://www.restoredhopenetwork.org/purepassion>; <https://www.youtube.com/c/DavidKyleFoster/playlists>.
- 223 <https://restoryministries.org>.

- 224 Restored Hope Network, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): How
Did Restored Hope Network Form?,” (2022), accessed Feb 18, 2022,
<https://www.restoredhopenetwork.org/frequently-asked-questions>;
Restored Hope Network, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): How
Did Restored Hope Network Form?”
- 225 <https://www.portlandfellowship.com>.
- 226 <https://changedmovement.com>.
- 227 Rosaria Butterfield’s recent recantation regarding her criticisms of
change-allowing therapy demonstrates the potential for solidarity
between the mortification and transformation streams. It’s less likely
that the accommodation stream would unite with the mortification
or transformation streams due to its progressive ideology.