

Homosexuality and the Church: Understanding the Continuum of Positions

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It is inaccurate to assume that, for every discussion, there are simply two arguments: pro and con. A scholarly discussion related to homosexuality should provide an overview of the various perspectives. This paper focuses upon profiling six perspectives on homosexuality from those who self-identify as Christ-followers. This paper is not exhaustive. Note that it does not include secular perspectives or perspectives from other religious systems.¹ It does not specifically address the validity of scientific arguments nor the validity of Scriptural interpretation arguments.² The goal of this paper is not to posit that all perspectives have equal validity, but to introduce participants to the complexities of various perspectives.

Identifying Perspectives

Many have benefited from the books in Zondervan Publishing House's *Counterpoints* series. My first exposure to this series was *Five Views on Sanctification* (1996) which was published while I was a student at Hobe Sound Bible College. Up through 2015, there were 32 volumes published in the series with perspectives shared on such controversial topics as biblical inerrancy, baptism, evolution, the rapture, women in ministry and many others. There have been more added to the series since then, including *Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church* published in 2016.

Long-before Zondervan commissioned Preston Sprinkle to edit that book and the authors to share their respective views, a screenplay writer who worked for Billy Graham's film production company *Worldwide Pictures* wrote a book that details six separate perspectives on

¹ While there is a strong relationship between religiosity and views on homosexuality (Pew, 2013), there is no consensus view held by secularists. However, given the audience of Aldersgate Forum, those perspectives are not the subject of this paper. Similarly, several other religious systems do not have a consensus view on homosexuality.

² For a more detailed (though not exhaustive) discussion on Scriptural interpretations, see Sprinkle (2016).

homosexuality held by people within the church.³ L.R. Holben's book, published in 1999, is titled *What Christians Think about Homosexuality: Six Representative Views*. Rather than soliciting representatives from each viewpoint, (which is certainly a valuable strategy and one since employed by Zondervan) Holben quite ably presents each perspective followed by short critiques from each of the other five views. While subsequent writings reveal Holben's personal views, this book does not. Similarly, if you've read other materials that I've written, you may know my personal view. I trust that this paper can remain objective, for like Holben, it is not my desire to inject my personal views here but to overview the various perspectives as fairly as possible.

What Christians Think about Homosexuality: Six Views

Despite being nearly 20 years old now, and despite some recent shifts in thinking from a number of the groups he discussed, the framework Holben conceptualized is helpful for our discussion. Holben proposed six perspectives on a continuum from what he described as the most conservative to the most liberal. He identified groups that he believed to be proponents of each perspective. In this paper, I reflect on some of the groups he named and provide contemporary information related to groups that he did not.

Condemnation

On one extreme, we have the viewpoint Holben called *Condemnation*. Proponents of this view hold that the only morally acceptable purpose for sexual expression is procreation between

³ According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Holben is credited as "writer" for *Like it Is* (1970), *The Hiding Place* (1975), the story of Corrie ten Boom, *No Longer Alone* (1976), and *Three Days* (1984), as well as several episodes of the television show *This is the Life* (1973-1985).

married, opposite-sex adults. Sexual expression outside that boundary is believed to violate both moral and natural law (p. 34).⁴

Condemnation advocates believe that, ontologically, everyone is heterosexual. They see homosexual orientation as “self-serving rationalization invented to justify deliberately chosen perversity” (p. 35). Those who disagree with them on this point are discounted as “promoting an un-Christian worldview” (p. 35).

Those who hold this viewpoint state that there is no moral difference between homosexual feelings and behavior. They posit that homosexual feelings are evidence of a perverted mind, “an indication of spiritual rebellion” (p. 38). While some may believe that homosexuality emerges because of mental illness or through poor parenting or childhood abuse, most believe that same-sex attraction is a conscious decision to sin. As a result, they advocate for the criminalization of same-sex behavior (p. 41) as society must be protected from predatory homosexuals (p. 37).

Those from the *Condemnation* perspective believe that orientation change is available through repentance, prayer, and discipleship. Pastoral care and counseling is primarily concerned with condemning homosexual behavior and urging those with same-sex attraction to seek orientation change (p. 41). Ex-gays, those who have renounced their previous homosexual lifestyle (and preferably have gone on to marry and have children), are celebrated as anecdotal evidence of orientation change.⁵

Holben listed a group of church organizations that espouse this view. Among them, he included the *American Family Association* and the *Moral Majority* as well as “many

⁴ Footnotes without an author (through page 10) are from Holben’s *What Christians Think about Homosexuality: Six Representative Viewpoints* (1999).

⁵ In the last few years, the ex-gays championed as evidence of orientation change include Rosaria Butterfield and Christopher Yuan. Their memoirs are listed on the Recommend Reading list.

fundamentalist and conservative evangelical congregations” (p. 45) including the *Southern Baptist Convention*. I would add the adherents to the teachings of Fred Phelps and *Westboro Baptist Church*, but I would contest that the *Southern Baptist Convention* (at least its leadership) no longer rightly falls into this category.⁶

Promise of Healing

The second perspective is termed *Promise of Healing*. Those who hold this view tend to believe that homosexuality is the product of a sinful world but remains the volitional choice of the individual. They believe that a cure for their brokenness (orientation change) is God’s plan, emphasizing the value of prayer and reparative therapy. While they share many of the convictions of the *Condemnation* view, they do so with a “more pastoral tone” (p. 53).

Sex has four fundamental purposes (contra *Condemnation*’s one purpose): biological, psychological, spiritual, and symbolic (p. 54) union, and these can only be rightly expressed “when they take place within heterosexual marriage” (p. 58). The *Promise of Healing* view also contends that there is such a thing as homosexual orientation. They view homosexuality as caused by a relational or attachment wound, often a “deficit in the relationship with the parent of the same sex” (p. 61). They maintain that homosexual desires are “always evidence of a profound spiritual need” (p. 67) and that one who identifies as gay is “effectively blocking God’s redemptive work” (p. 67).

Society should seek to preserve marriage as the union between one man and one woman. Pastoral care and counseling is primarily concerned with condemning homosexual behavior and

⁶ It should also be noted that there isn’t always consensus among the SBC. While the Ethics and Religious Liberty Coalition (and its president Russell Moore) do not hold to the *Condemnation* view, there has been a faction of the SBC critical of the ERLC as not fully presenting the variety of perspectives within the SBC.

educating those with same-sex attraction about God's promised deliverance.⁷ Those with homosexual desires are called to "repent and seek recovery" (p. 77).

Holben stated that the *Promise of Healing* viewpoint has been held by many Charismatic, Pentecostal, Fundamentalist, and other conservative Evangelical Churches. He includes parachurch organizations *Exodus International*,⁸ *Focus on the Family*,⁹ and *Love in Action* among others. More contemporary organizations and individuals who espouse this perspective would include the *Restored Hope Network* and the *National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality*. Denny Burk, professor at Boyce College and the President of the *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, and ex-gay Rosaria Butterfield¹⁰ also fit in the *Promise of Healing* perspective.

Costly Discipleship

The third perspective is the *Costly Discipleship* viewpoint. This view agrees with the *Promise of Healing* view that orientation change is possible, but acknowledges that there are some for whom it seems an unlikely outcome. For those who have put forth the necessary effort and failed to realize orientation change, celibacy is expected as homosexual behavior remains outside the boundaries of God's design for sexual activity (p. 98). This group believes that having homosexual temptations is not sinful unless those temptations are acted upon.¹¹

⁷ In this section, Holben provides detailed theoretical and practical basis for "Reparative Therapy" as contextualized by Elizabeth Moberly (though popularized by Joseph Nicolosi). A more detailed discussion of Reparative Therapy is found in "Ex-Gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation" by Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse.

⁸ It is of note that Exodus (which wasn't a treatment provider but an umbrella organization that referred to other treatment providers) closed in 2013, largely because their leadership was unable to come to a consensus on the efficacy of reparative therapy after a number of key proponents recanted their testimonies of orientation change.

⁹ Focus on the Family has also distanced itself from the orientation-change movement since Holben's writing.

¹⁰ Butterfield's memoir *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (2012) is a helpful read. Videos of her testimony can be found online.

¹¹ This chapter includes a number of quotes from a letter written by C.S. Lewis to Sheldon Vanauken as well as passages from Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* (1942).

Homosexual orientation is recognized as “a reality within human experience” (p. 100) but “a legitimate moral distinction is made between a homosexual condition and homosexual acts” (p. 101).

While laws criminalizing homosexual behavior should be repealed, society should remain opposed to same-sex marriage. Pastoral care and counseling emphasizes the hope of orientation change but urges celibacy as the only alternative. Those with a homosexual orientation “have the potential for being every bit as whole, mature and stable as heterosexuals. They are capable of loving deeply, of leading highly productive lives, and of achieving profound spiritual maturity” (p. 101). While “homosexual acts are always and without exception sinful,” the “homosexual condition is not culpably sinful, although it is one of the many manifestations of disorder and brokenness that mark God’s creation after the Fall” (p. 103).

This position has long been held by the *Roman Catholic Church*.¹² Holben included the *United Methodist Church*, the *Presbyterian Church USA*, and the *Episcopal Church* in this category, though it seems several of those groups have shifted further to the left on this issue.¹³ A more contemporary review would add several holiness denominations such as the *Wesleyan Church*, the *Church of the Nazarene*,¹⁴ and the *Bible Methodist Connection of Churches*¹⁵ as well as other professional groups such as the American Association of Christian Counselors and the

¹² The US Conference of Catholic Bishops published *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message To Parents Of Homosexual Children And Suggestions For Pastoral Ministers* in 1997.

¹³ Holben actually predicted this shift in these three denominations.

¹⁴ “Love Wins: LGBT” is a ministry of a local Church of the Nazarene congregation in Kansas City, MO. They list their mission to “equip the Church of the Nazarene to make disciples in the LGBTQ community.

¹⁵ Item 42 of the 2014 revision of the Bible Methodist discipline specifically condemns “homosexuality, lesbianism, pederasty, bisexuality” in a list of “sinful perversions” but, in item 44, clarifies that no *practicing* homosexual/lesbian shall be ordained (from which I draw that the same exclusion does not apply to non-practicing individuals who acknowledge same-sex attraction).

Christian Association for Psychological Studies. Perhaps the most influential writers from this perspective would be Wesley Hill and Sam Allberry.¹⁶

It has been said that the first three perspectives (*Condemnation*, *Promise of Healing*, and *Costly Discipleship*) fall on the theological right and that these next three perspectives fall on the theological left.

Pastoral Accommodation

The *Pastoral Accommodation* viewpoint (sometimes referred to as the *Marginally Acceptable* perspective) agrees that homosexuality reflects brokenness but notes that there are “narrowly limited contexts” when homosexual acts are “morally acceptable” (p. 123). Proponents also advocate for change efforts in those who desire to do so. They also affirm those who embrace celibacy should they feel so led. For those unable to change and unable to embrace celibacy, they affirm that a monogamous, same-sex relationship is an acceptable alternative. Though “homosexual practices are unnatural and godless” (p. 124), they are a “redemptive alternative” (p. 131) in the same way that second-marriages (following divorce) are viewed. Adherents note that Pauline denunciations of homosexuality “are never in and of themselves the point of the passages” (p. 125).

Society should repeal laws that criminalize homosexual behavior and pass laws that protect from discrimination on the basis of orientation. Pastoral care and counseling maintain that opposite-sex relationships are the ideal but that homosexual behavior is no different from any other sin, and that committed same-sex relationships, while not blessed by God, are presented as a viable option following attempts at orientation change (p. 135). Those unions,

¹⁶ Hill and Allberry are two Christian scholars who have “come to terms” with their same-sex attraction. Their memoirs are both included as Recommended Reading. While they both fit into the Costly Discipleship perspective, they don’t agree on everything – which underscores the complexities of this issue and the appropriate pastoral response.

however, are “imperfect and incomplete, an accommodation to the fallen state of the world” and “never to be granted any sort of moral parity with heterosexual marriage” (p. 142).

Holben stated that few churches or organizations espouse this view but noted that individual mainline pastors seemed to endorse this perspective. A contemporary review would perhaps find Justin Lee, founder and former president of the *Gay Christian Network*, in this category.

Affirmation

The *Affirmation* viewpoint differs in that its proponents believe that homosexual orientation is a gift from God, normal and natural for a minority of adults. This is a significant step beyond the previous views in that homosexual behavior is viewed as morally neutral, no different from heterosexual behavior (p. 153). Provided the behavior isn't exploitive, it is to be accepted and embraced. Loving, committed same-sex relationships have equal status and equal rights within society and the church.¹⁷

Laws criminalizing homosexual behavior should be repealed and laws limiting discrimination on the basis of sexuality should be passed (p. 181). Homosexuality is “simply a natural variant occurring consistently throughout history and cultures” (p. 175). Efforts at orientation change should be discouraged as unhelpful if not unhealthy (p. 177). Pastoral care and counseling focus on clergy repentance for past condemnation of homosexuality (p. 180) and the distribution of information that seeks to present homosexuality as normal and natural. Homosexual acts should “be evaluated exactly as are heterosexual acts” (p. 178).

Churches that have embraced this perspective include the *United Church of Christ* and the *Unitarian Universalist Association*. Parachurch ministries with mainline denominations also

¹⁷ It should be noted that in this chapter Holben provides extensive discussion on translation (of Scripture) issues and issues of (Scriptural) context, among other issues.

align with this position.¹⁸ Contemporary writers Matthew Vines, Rachel Held Evans and John Pavlovitz would fall into this category as well.

Liberation

The *Liberation* viewpoint is the extreme position on the Left of the continuum. Not only do proponents believe that homosexuality is equal but they believe that they are tasked with liberating the church so that “it can embrace the erotic as a foundational part of everyone’s life and pathway to spirituality” (p. 199).¹⁹ In this view, homophobia is seen as the greater vice within society (p. 211). Pressure should be placed on churches and educational institutions to celebrate homosexual orientation as part of cultural diversity. Orientation change strategies are “absurd” (p. 213), seen as dangerous and should be illegal for minors. Pastoral care and counseling focus on welcoming openly homosexual congregants into full membership and clergy positions (p. 217).

Supporting churches for the *Liberation* perspective include the *Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches*.

Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church: Two Views

Perhaps the best way to fundamentally distinguish the six perspectives from one another is to review them not as six, but as parts of two. It is assumed that this is why Zondervan chose to present two views in their *Counterpoints* book, each encompassing three of Holben’s perspectives. In Sprinkle’s own book on homosexuality, he uses the terms *affirming* and *non-affirming* to describe the two views.²⁰ As the editor of the *Counterpoints* book, he shifts to using

¹⁸ Dignity (Roman Catholic), Integrity (Episcopal), Presbyterians Concerned, Affirmation (United Methodist), GLAD (Disciples of Christ), and Lutherans Concerned among others.

¹⁹ This viewpoint is not without disagreement among adherents. Holben notes “considerable difference of opinion” on the matter of monogamy (p. 209).

²⁰ Sprinkle’s book, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not Just an Issue* (2015), is also on the Recommended Reading list.

the terms *Affirming* and *Traditional*. *Affirming* refers to those in the second set of three views wherein proponents affirm those who engage in same-sex behavior while *Traditional* refers to those with the understanding that all forms of same-sex sexual behavior are prohibited by Scripture (p. 15).

Affirming

The authors selected to represent the *Affirming* position are Dr. Bill Loader and Dr. Megan DeFranza.²¹ Upon first review of Dr. Loader's essay, the reader may end up double-checking to see which perspective he is positing, since Dr. Loader says clearly that the Bible says that same-sex sexual relations are prohibited. It is not until more than halfway through his essay that things become clear: Loader is able to affirm the sanctity of monogamous, same-sex relationships only after considering "advancements" in the areas of biology, anthropology, sociology, and other fields.

Dr. DeFranza's position is that the Scriptural passages that argue for the prohibition of same-sex behavior are misinterpreted. She notes that, given the cultural context, the prohibitions are related to power differential and exploitation rather than gender.

Traditional

The authors selected to represent the *Traditional* position are Dr. Wesley Hill and Dr. Stephen Holmes.²² Dr. Hill is a biblical scholar and, since it's relevant to the discussion, someone who has self-identified himself as a gay Christian. He believes those in his condition are called to celibacy. Hill argues for the traditional view by discussing Scripture along with the theology of marriage, sex, and procreation.

²¹ Loader is regarded as "the foremost scholar on sexuality in ancient Judaism and Christianity" (p. 13). He is the author of five scholarly volumes on sexuality. DeFranza is author of the book *Sex Difference in Christian Theology*.

²² Hill is a self-identified gay Christian. He is a "biblical scholar and theologian who has written several books and essays related to our topic." Holmes is also a frequently-published theologian.

Dr. Holmes presents agreement with the prohibition passages but emphasizes the theological constructs in the discourse, positing that procreation is the goal of marriage and sex and that fact rules out the sanctity of same-sex behavior.

Variance in Sources of Authority

In his influential book, *Homosexuality and the Christian*, Dr. Mark Yarhouse (2010) opens by talking about the importance of recognizing sources of authority. While there's no specific hat-tip to John Wesley, Yarhouse states that guidance should come from four sources of authority: Scripture, Christian tradition, reason, and personal experience. As he describes each source of authority, it becomes clear (even though he wrote years before the *Counterpoints* book was written): those who emphasize Scripture as the highest authority endorse the *traditional* view and, by extension, those who hold to the *affirming* view are those who end up holding another source of authority – reason or personal experience – above that of Scripture.

Now, can we extrapolate that difference between the two views in the *Counterpoints* book to the six views presented by Holben way back in 1999? It would seem we can. A review of the statements made by the individuals and organizations espousing each position on the continuum seems to indicate that each position is highly correlated with the adherents' view of Scripture.

Concluding Reflections

It has taken great effort to stay on task and not to vary from the focus of this paper. There have been a number of points that could easily have led down alternative paths. Now that the objective of presenting the continuum of positions has been met, I'd like to offer some concluding reflections.

The *Aldersgate Forum Statement of Faith*²³ does not specify an institutional endorsement for any particular view of homosexuality. However, since it does recognize the “supreme authority” of Scripture as it relates to faith and practice, it can be inferred that the membership falls into the *Traditional* view. It is my expectation, however, that there may be points of disagreement within the membership resulting in our holding differing perspectives on the continuum proposed by Holben. In those areas of agreement, let’s work together to help those in distress and to equip those families and their clergy who are navigating these difficult issues. In those areas of disagreement, let’s engage in a spirit of brotherly collaboration.

Recently, a well-known and highly-regarded member of the *Promise of Healing* perspective publicly disparaged a well-known and highly-regarded member of the *Costly Discipleship* perspective, calling him a “liberal sell-out” who is a “razor’s edge” from being in the affirming group.²⁴ Not only does this seem to be an inaccurate portrayal of perspectives, but it caused unnecessary division between two groups of people who agree that sexual expression should be reserved for heterosexual marriage and that godly pastoral care and counseling must be provided for those with same-sex attraction.

Let’s acknowledge that (on the right side of the continuum) there may be some variance among us. Let’s work together to uphold a biblical sexual ethic and to provide adequate care and counseling for those in distress when it comes to sexual attraction and orientation.

Addendum: The Nashville Statement

This paper was conceptualized in March of 2017 and the draft was submitted in July of 2017. In August of 2017, the *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* released “The

²³ While I am not a member of the Aldersgate Forum, I was able to find the published Statement of Faith online: <https://sites.google.com/site/thealdersgateforum/statement-of-faith>.

²⁴ The speech, by Rosaria Butterfield, and a response from a member of the organization founded by Wesley Hill, can be found here: <https://spiritualfriendship.org/2017/07/20/a-response-to-rosaria-butterfield/>.

Nashville Statement: A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality.”²⁵ The preamble notes that the signers are “persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female.” Along with CBMW President Denny Burk, initial signatories include John Piper, James Dobson, Russell Moore, J.I. Packer, Wayne Grudem, Albert Mohler, Tony Perkins, D.A. Carson, and John MacArthur²⁶.

The statement includes a preamble and 14 articles. Each article includes a statement of affirmation and a corresponding statement of denial. The document is only three pages long including a one-page preamble and two pages of articles.

Responses to the Nashville Statement fall into three categories. On one side are those who embrace the Statement as “a clear declaration of God’s purpose in creating human beings as male and female.”²⁷ Those on this side of the statement indicate their belief that nothing new has been presented, that this is a simple affirmation of “Christian moral teachings” in response to “dogmas of secular progressivism.”²⁸ Others swiftly responded in opposition. Nashville’s mayor took exception to the name, noting that Nashville holds to “inclusive values.”²⁹ *Affirming* pastors decried the Statement as likely to “cause verifiable psychological harm to LGBT+ Christian youth in churches around the world.”³⁰ Those in opposition pointed out how many signers are

²⁵ The name “Nashville Statement” was chosen because the document was published following the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention hosted in Nashville, Tennessee in August of 2017. Burk noted that “there is a long Christian tradition of naming doctrinal statements after the places where they were drawn up.”

²⁶ The Nashville Statement lists 187 initial signatories. The first ten on the list are included here.

²⁷ Albert Mohler tweet.

²⁸ Robert P. George tweet.

²⁹ Megan Berry tweet.

³⁰ Blumberg, A. (2017, August 29). “Evangelical Leaders Release Anti-LGBTQ Statement on Human Sexuality.” *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/evangelical-leaders-nashville-statement_us_59a5b705e4b00795c2a217fc

members of President Trump’s Evangelical Advisory Council,³¹ something they feel is inconsistent with taking a hard stance of matters of sexual conduct.³²

A third set of responses attempt to acknowledge the need for clarity while questioning the signers and their statement. Some in this third group questioned the timing of the Statement. Just days after racial tension was at a high, the signers appear “tone-deaf”³³ by releasing the statement while a hurricane ravaged the fourth-largest American city. Others noted the absence of repentance over past actions by the church towards sexual minorities³⁴ and even current sexuality-related trends within Evangelist Christianity (such as a high divorce rate and prevalence of routine pornography use). Some have noted concern not just with the list of those who were asked to sign, but also the list of those who were not invited to participate (Wesley Hill, Preston Sprinkle, and Mark Yarhouse among them). Respondents from this third category also question the statement’s attempt to marginalize those who disagree, since Article X asserts that “no true Christian” can “agree to disagree”³⁵ with the articles as presented.

Burk and other signers mobilized to characterize those in the third group as ill-informed, noting that the Statement simply affirms “historic Christian faith.”³⁶ But is that accurate? The pre-Statement draft of this paper noted that the line drawn between the *Traditional* view and the *Affirming* view relates to same-sex behavior. In the *Nashville Statement*, the “line in the sand” is

³¹ Beaty, K. (2017, August 31). “Why Even Conservative Evangelicals are Unhappy with the Anti-LGBT Nashville Statement.” *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/31/why-even-conservative-evangelicals-are-unhappy-with-the-anti-lgbt-nashville-statement/>

³² Dreher, R. (2017, September 6). “Is the Nashville Statement a Surrender?” *The American Conservative*. <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/is-the-nashville-statement-a-surrender/>

³³ Merritt, J. (2017, August 30). “Take a Deep Breath. The Nashville Statement won’t Change Anything.” *Religion News Service*. <http://religionnews.com/2017/08/30/take-a-deep-breath-the-nashville-statement-wont-change-anything/>

³⁴ I recognize that this term may be unfamiliar (even uncomfortable) for some because the term “minority” is often associated with race. The use of the term here (in reference to those who are not heterosexually-oriented) is meant to reflect that they are in the “minority” and not to stipulate that orientation should be compared to ethnicity.

³⁵ These two phrases are in quotes because they are colloquialisms and not because they are direct quotes. This is a concern expressed however – that Article X draws a line in the sand for orthodoxy.

³⁶ Al Mohler tweet

not whether same-sex behavior is sin but, as noted in Article VII, whether a “homosexual self-conception” is sin – that is, regardless of behavior. The Statement seems to move the line from between groups 3 and 4 to between groups 2 and 3. In my pre-Statement draft, I placed Denny Burk in the *Promise of Healing* camp. It seems that Article 7 of the Statement is specifically aimed at ruling out the possibility that one can acknowledge exclusively same-sex attractions and be a Christian. I referenced (without mentioning her name) in my pre-Statement draft Rosario Butterfield’s (an ex-gay) public disparagement of Wesley Hill by name.³⁷ Is the Nashville Statement an attempt by Burk and Butterfield (among others) to specifically draw a line in the sand that excludes Hill and those who testify to purity through Christ despite persistent same-sex attraction?

I join with those who have not signed the Nashville Statement, not because I do not affirm the need for a biblical sexual ethic, but because the Statement as crafted is incomplete, and thus unhelpful.³⁸ It does not adequately represent the complexities of several of the issues that it intends to address with clarity. It doesn’t lead to edifying discourse but creates an extra-biblical standard that has perhaps already been used to oust a respected scholar who would not sign.

Now, back to my closing statement before this *Nashville* addendum: “Let’s acknowledge that on the right side of the continuum there may be some variance among us. Let’s work together to uphold a biblical sexual ethic and to provide adequate care and counseling for those in distress when it comes to sexual attraction and orientation.”

³⁷ This information was added in Footnote 24.

³⁸ Perhaps the response that most resonated with me was the response written by Sprinkle on his person blog: <https://www.prestonsprinkle.com/blogs/theologyintheraw/2017/9/3/my-nashville-statement>

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