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Trans-Formation

A Former Transgender Responds to LGBTQ

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Trans-Formation by Linda Seiler is more than a personal story, it outlines a theology and framework in responding to people who identify as LGBTQ. This book draws on her personal journey along with research to provide the reader with understanding and tools for engaging with the LGBTQ community. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions, encouraging the reader to not read this book alone.

Seiler does begin acknowledging this is her story and that everyone’s experience is different. She vulnerably discloses her struggle with identity, same-sex attraction, the process of being transformed, including struggles after her commitment to Christ. After laying bare her story, Seiler lays out a biblical theology of sexuality and gender identity. Beginning with “Who is God?” Seiler argues our identity, as the image of God, “involves unity in diversity” (38). From here she explores sexual orientation and gender identity. Seiler provides definitions on sex, gender, expression and orientation, arguing a misalignment is a form of Gnosticism, viewing a separation between the body and soul.

After laying a biblical foundation, Seiler engages with the science and theories on sexuality and gender. She appears to provide a balanced view on the science (I say “appears” as I am not an expert in this field), even proposing “biological factors may play a minor role” (92). However, Seiler does highlight the stability of opposite-sex attracted people. She identifies five responses (referred to as “streams”) to LGBTQ. These streams are discrete and sometimes flow into each other: condemnation, affirmation, accommodation, mortification, and transformation.

She provides a definition for each stream, covering a theology for the response, its origin, pastoral care, strengths and weaknesses, and proponents of each stream. This proved helpful, as I was aware of several of the authors and Seiler provided a framework to explain the differences.

Seiler leads to her main argument for the stream of transformation. Using Romans 12:2 as her key passage (quoted in the front matter of the book), transformation is for everyone to experience. Transformation is a holistic process, involving the body, soul and spirit. Seiler continually draws from her story, paralleled with Scripture and research in presenting a model of transformation. Transformation is primarily the work of the Spirit. Seiler acknowledges her Pentecostal experience as a major influence in her journey and research. Transformation is a relational process, involving both God and friends.

As a Pentecostal, I resonated with Seiler’s work. Some popular Christian positions stop before transformation. They acknowledge a biblical definition of sexuality but argue their orientation cannot be changed. Seiler challenged this based on her experience and Pentecostal theology. She is very open in sharing her transformation was not a simple “slain in the Spirit” encounter and then stand up a new person. However, she describes and defines transformation as a life-long process.

One of the strengths of the book is her practical advice to individuals, family, friends and church leaders who are responding the LGBTQ. This not only included recommended resources but a discussion for responding to important issues, such as pronouns and weddings.

I found *Trans-Formation* an easy to read, well-informed and practical book on dealing with a rising issue in the world and church today.