

The Long Defeat

BY WESLEY HILL

Within a sexually-sodden culture, the life of chastity may seem like a lonely, long defeat, especially to gay and lesbian believers. How can congregations provide the good company which celibate, same-sex attracted believers need for their Christian pilgrimage?

I have come to think about my life as a gay, celibate believer in terms of what J. R. R. Tolkien calls “the long defeat.” His regal character Galadriel in *The Lord of the Rings*, surveying the long years of her immortality and all the seasons of mingled loss and triumph she has witnessed, says, “...through the ages of the world we have fought the long defeat.”¹ And Tolkien himself identifies with her: “I am a Christian, and indeed a Roman Catholic, so that I do not expect ‘history’ to be anything but a ‘long defeat’ – though it contains (and in a legend may contain more clearly and movingly) some samples or glimpses of final victory.”²

Alan Jacobs has called this outlook

...the ideal one for anyone who has exceptionally difficult, frustrating, even agonizing, but nevertheless vitally important work to do. For such people, the expectation of victory can be a terrible thing – it can raise hopes in (relatively) good times only to shatter them when the inevitable downturn comes. Conversely, the one who fights the long defeat can be all the more thankful for victories, even small ones, precisely because (as St. Augustine said about ecstatic religious experiences) he or she does not expect them and is prepared to live without them.³

This perspective on history and on the individual Christian pilgrimage has meant a lot to me. As someone who has not received one iota of the promised “change” in my sexual orientation that some Christians have held

out to me, and as someone who also has not been able to embrace a more progressive understanding of same-sex marriage, I often feel like I am fighting a kind of long defeat. I am gay but not seeking a same-sex partner, and what that feels like is best described in the Apostle Paul's rather stark view of the Christian life: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-23).

I was helped to embrace this viewpoint in my early twenties when I read *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* by Richard Hays. Facing squarely the much-debated question of whether celibacy is "mandated" for all gay Christians in a way that is qualitatively different than the call to chastity for straight Christians, Hays writes:

While Paul regarded celibacy as a charisma, he did not therefore suppose that those lacking the charisma were free to indulge their sexual desires outside marriage. Heterosexually oriented persons are also called to abstinence from sex unless they marry (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). The only difference—admittedly a salient one—in the case of homosexually oriented persons is that they do not have the option of homosexual "marriage" [in traditional churches, we must now add]. So where does that leave them? It leaves them in precisely the same situation as the heterosexual who would like to marry but cannot find an appropriate partner (and there are many such): summoned to a difficult, costly obedience, while "groaning" for the "redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23). *Anyone who does not recognize this as a description of authentic Christian existence has never struggled seriously with the imperatives of the gospel, which challenge and frustrate our "natural" impulses in countless ways* [italics added].⁴

This passage has become a lodestar for me. It goes a long way toward explaining how I and many of my fellow celibate gay friends view our discipleship: we are fighting a long defeat, not necessarily expecting to find a satisfying substitute in this life for the marital happiness we are choosing to live without and instead pinning our hopes for spousal union on the future marriage supper of the Lamb. We are groaning and waiting, often without much natural "fulfillment," and counting on a future weight of glory that will far surpass our present groans.

Much of what Dorothy Day (1897-1980) says in *The Long Loneliness*, a memoir of her conversion and activism for social justice through the Catholic Worker movement she founded with Peter Maurin, dovetails with what Tolkien calls "the long defeat." Day's conversion to Catholicism forced her to grapple with the Church's teaching about sex and marriage. (She is forthright about the Catholic Church's sexual ethics, demonstrating clearly that one can be "conservative" in this arena while not surrendering one ounce of

agitation for social justice—a combination that many people today find baffling.) Day was in a common law marriage to a man named Forster who wanted nothing to do with her newfound faith, and she recognized that choosing the Church over Forster might mean she would forfeit, for good, a great deal of earthly happiness. She writes:

God always gives us a chance to show our preference for Him. With Abraham it was to sacrifice his only son. With me it was to give up my married life with Forster. You do these things blindly, not because it is your natural inclination—you are going against nature when you do them—but because you wish to live in conformity with the will of God.⁵

I wonder how many of us share this vision of the Christian life. Are we—am I—prepared to countenance the fact that God might ask a us to say “no” to our most deeply felt “natural” (in the fallen sense) inclinations for sex and marriage in order to show our preference for God?

Day also describes having to “let go” of her natural love for her daughter and place her consciously in God’s care.

When I left Tamar that afternoon and went back to Montreal, I never was so unhappy, never felt so great a sense of loneliness. She was growing up, she was growing up to be married. It did not seem possible. I was always having to be parted from her. No matter how many times I gave up mother, father, husband, brother, daughter, for His sake, I had to do it over again.⁶

Day is alluding to Mark 10:29, in which Jesus observes that many of his disciples have given up their closest ties—to homes and siblings and parents and even children—in order to follow him. Can we imagine Christ calling us to such a deep level of surrender? Can we imagine placing—through one long, repeated act—our greatest loves before him?

I suspect that many of our debates about “mandatory gay celibacy” in the church today involve, at the end of the day, differing understandings of the character of God. Would God in Christ ask his children to embrace a lifelong loneliness, a long defeat? I do not want to be misunderstood here: I know many “progressive” Christians see same-sex marriage as a lifelong self-sacrifice, and there are many stories of gay partners standing by one another in sickness and in health alike to support their view. Nevertheless, can some of our disagreement about whether gay sex is morally appropriate for Christians be traced back to differing beliefs about whether God might ask us to do what feels well-nigh impossible: to give up the one thing that our “natural” selves most want? It’s a question I would like to explore more with my progressive friends, to see what common ground and what lack of agreement we might find.

Day improves on Tolkien’s vision of the “long defeat,” I think, when she

stresses that surrendering to God in this way – by giving up hope of “natural” fulfillment – paradoxically does not lead to a life without human love: “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.”⁷ No doubt she had read the rest of that passage in Mark:

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Mark 10:29-31

The long defeat and the long loneliness are meant to be lived in good company, with other guests who are bound for the same Wedding Supper that is to come. This has led me to think more about how congregations can provide the good company that their celibate, same-sex attracted believers will need for the long journey. What I have come up with is not a “ministry plan,” but some characteristics of the people, gestures, and conversations that have helped me find grace and hope when I needed it most over the years, but especially when I

was a deeply-closeted college student. I share these characteristics now in the hope that they may inspire faith communities to talk openly about chastity and sexuality in ways that welcome LGBT believers and encourage all members in their Christian pilgrimage.

The ministries that have helped me most *do not underestimate the power of small gestures*. I recall hearing a sermon by John Piper on the word “everyone” in Romans

1:16 (“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”), in which he says,

Can some of our disagreement about whether gay sex is morally appropriate for Christians be traced to differing beliefs about whether God might ask us to do what feels well-nigh impossible: to give up what our “natural” selves most want?

O, what an exhilarating word to those of us in this room who feel that there is something about us that rules us out! Wrong family, wrong background, wrong education, wrong language, wrong race, wrong culture, wrong sexual preference, wrong moral track record.

Then to hear the word, “Everyone who believes.” Everyone! One thing can rule you out: unbelief. Not trusting Jesus. But nothing else has to. The good news that Christ died for our sins, and that he rose from the dead to open eternal life, and that salvation is by grace through faith—all that is for everyone who believes.⁸

In that one mention of sexual preference, Piper reaches out to congregants who might be ashamed of their same-sex attraction and worry that it somehow disqualifies them from living a Christian life. This tiny, fleeting reference shows me Piper is aware of gay folks in his congregation. They are on his heart, and he wants them to hear the gospel as a word specifically for them. It is only a minuscule gesture in the big scheme of things, but it landed powerfully on me at the time.

My friend Brent Bailey characterizes “safe people” — people with whom gay and lesbian Christians can be honest without fear of judgment or disgust—as people who are not afraid to raise the issue:

Without a doubt, someone’s willingness to broach LGBT issues in any sort of positive or empathetic tone is the clearest and most visible indicator they might be prepared to listen to me talk about my sexuality. They may do something as noticeable as leading a Bible study about homosexuality or as simple as posting a link on Facebook to a story about sexual minorities; but in environments where nontraditional sexuality receives no attention, even the tiniest statement of knowledge or interest can communicate a loud-and-clear message (accurate or not) that this person is the safest person in the room.⁹

Those ministries that have helped me most *avoid making assumptions about the causes of same-sex attraction and my personal history*. I recall trying to make an initial appointment with a Christian counselor to talk about my homosexuality. As we were emailing and comparing calendars, he asked me to describe briefly what I hoped to discuss with him. When I said that I was gay and was experiencing a great deal of confusion in a particular friendship, he immediately wrote back and asked if I could bring my father along with me to our sessions since, he said, he had never met a gay man whose sexuality was not, at root, about a deficit of masculine, fatherly affirmation. I was dismayed. This counselor had never met me, had not heard me try to articulate what was drawing me to seek counseling, and already he was offering a diagnosis. I felt hemmed in and confined, as if the multi-shaded threads of my story were being bleached to a monochrome. No matter that I felt my relationship with my father was a far cry from this typical “father wound” story the counselor presumed.

Melinda Selmys writes very powerfully about how hurtful it can be when straight Christians offer a one-size-fits-all narrative of the origins of same-sex desire:

Where the animosity [from LGBT people] comes in, is when people try to aggressively project such narratives onto others. It's one thing to say "My mother really was smothering, my father really was absent, and that really did leave me in a headspace where I feel driven to have sex with men in order to reconnect with my damaged masculinity," [but] it's another thing to say, "That guy over there is just saying that he had a perfectly normal childhood because he's unwilling to confront the pain of the deep wounds which his parents left on his psyche." That guy over there has an absolute and inalienable right, for as long as he is alive, to wrestle with his own experience in his own way, to seek the Truth of it within himself, and to construct whatever narratives he requires to provide for his own spiritual and psychological needs.¹⁰

The helpful ministries have assumed my story is unique, my gayness is not the same as anyone else's, and this uniqueness is worthy of attention and respect and dignity.

Further, those helpful ministries *recognize that my sexual orientation affects everything about me, just like heterosexuality does for others*. They understand, in the words of my friend Misty Irons, "the experience [of being gay or lesbian] is nearly parallel to finding oneself heterosexual."¹¹ If you are heterosexual and want to know what it feels like to awaken, during or even before puberty, to being gay and to understand what it feels like to long for intimacy and companionship as a gay person, your best bet is to reflect deeply on what it feels like for you to be heterosexual. Just as your (straight) sexuality suffuses much more than your overt romantic encounters, attractions, or relationships, the same is true for a gay or lesbian person. Our sexuality is more like a facet of our personalities than a separable piece of our behavior; it is more like a trait than a habit, more like a sensibility than an action.

Eve Tushnet captures what it feels like to be gay and Christian when she explains:

My lesbianism is part of why I form the friendships I form. It's part of why I volunteer at a pregnancy center. Not because I'm attracted to the women I counsel, but because my connection to other women does have an adoring and erotic component, and I wanted to find a way to express that connection through works of mercy. My lesbianism is part of why I love the authors I love. It's inextricable from who I am and how I live in the world. Therefore I can't help but think it's inextricable from my vocation.¹²

Experiencing same-sex sexual desire is not just about whom you want to go to bed with; it shapes your entire way of being in the world.

Nevertheless, the helpful ministries *recognize that my sexual orientation does not define me*. Sexual orientation as we know it is culturally constructed.

In other words, same-sex attracted people throughout history have not always understood themselves as having fixed sexual “orientations” and cultural “identities,” nor will they go on doing so forever. Those understandings of what “being gay” amounts to are a reality of our particular cultural moment, and same-sex attracted people like me must figure out how to navigate them.

Realizing that my gayness is not some fixed script that I must conform

Realizing that my gayness is not some fixed script that I must conform to has given me freedom to explore historic Christian, chaste ways to express my love for men. What my culture defines as “gay” is not something I have to embrace.

to has given me freedom to explore historic Christian, chaste ways to express my love for men.¹³ What my culture defines as “gay” – the story my world offers me for who I am supposed to be and how I am supposed to live – is not something I have to embrace. There is freedom in choosing to express my love for men through friendship and service rather than through marriage or romantic partnership. Granted, opting out of the dominant way of understanding “gay”

often feels more like martyrdom than freedom. But if traditional Christianity is true, then self-denial – taking up one’s cross and following Jesus – is, in fact, regardless of how it feels to us, real freedom.

Fifth, the ministries that have helped me most *take the risk of speaking up about same-sex attraction*. For a congregation to even broach the topic of homosexuality is dangerous right now, because it’s almost guaranteed to offend dozens of people on every “side” and to cause a firestorm. But what if Christians stay silent? What if we never preach a sermon on this, or lead a Bible study on it, or mention it in a prayer group? Andrew Sullivan has written about the deadly consequences of silence:

In my adolescence and young adulthood, the teaching of the Church was merely a silence, an increasingly hollow denial even of the existence of homosexuals, let alone a credible ethical guide as to how they should live their lives. It is still true that in over thirty years of weekly churchgoing, I have never heard a homily that attempted to explain how a gay man should live, or how his sexuality should be expressed. I have heard nothing but a vast and endless and embarrassed silence, an awkward, unexpressed desire for the simple non-existence of such people, for their absence from the moral and

physical universe, for a word or a phrase, like “objective disorder,” that could simply abolish the problem they represented and the diverse humanity they symbolized.¹⁴

The ministries that have helped me venture to say something about how I might live my life, how I might go about giving and receiving love. The times when a Christian friend or priest has offered me some concrete, hopeful possibility of how I might shape my life—those have been lifelines for me. But they have required my friends to take the risk of speaking up and of committing themselves to learning along with me.

Another feature of the ministries that have helped me most is their *engaging Scripture and Christian theology in a deep, rigorous way*. We same-sex attracted folks do not have the luxury of remaining neutral on “the issue.” Since we must make concrete choices about how to “glorify God in our bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:20), many of us crave deep, searching engagement with Scripture and Christian theology. We are impatient with hasty arguments and shallow scriptural reasoning. We are frustrated when our fellow Christians want to slap a quick answer on our questions. We want to know whether the church’s historic opposition to gay sex is just about cultural prejudice or it is rooted in the Bible’s basic view of human nature and redemption.

This is illustrated in a letter to Rod Dreher from a Millennial who has left the church because of her congregation’s refusal or inability to offer a serious theological case for its ethical stance.

In all the years I was a member, my evangelical church made exactly one argument about SSM [same-sex marriage]. It’s the argument I like to call the Argument from Ickiness: being gay is icky, and the people who are gay are the worst kind of sinner you can be. Period, done, amen, pass the casserole. When you have membership with no theological or doctrinal depth that you have neglected to equip with the tools to wrestle with hard issues, the moment ickiness no longer rings true with young believers, their faith is destroyed. This is why other young ex-evangelicals I know point as their “turning point” on gay marriage to the moment they first really got to know someone who was gay. If your belief on SSM is based on a learned disgust at the thought of a gay person, the moment a gay person, any gay person, ceases to disgust you, you have nothing left. In short, the anti-SSM side, and really the Christian side of the culture war in general, is responsible for its own collapse. It failed to train up the young people on its own side, preferring instead to harness their energy while providing them no doctrinal depth by keeping them in a bubble of emotion dependent on their never engaging with the outside world on anything but warlike terms. Perhaps someday my fellow ex-evangelical Millennials and I will join other churches, but it will

be as essentially new Christians with no religious heritage from our childhoods to fall back on.¹⁵

Clearly, theology matters. Serious, sustained reading of Scripture is vital to those of us who are trying to figure out what to do with our baptized bodies. We need ministries that recognize this.

The helpful ministries *try to imagine the difficulty of being gay and the costliness of staying single*. Sometimes straight Christians have tried to comfort me in my loneliness by reminding me that marriage is no cakewalk either — and, in many cases, marriage can exacerbate loneliness. “I’m in a very happy marriage,” a friend said to me, “and I still battle loneliness.” I appreciate that perspective very much, and I need it, since I have an inveterate romantic streak that I am always trying to temper. But frankly, the more lasting consolations have come from people like my friend David Mills, who are willing to say things like this:

We ask our homosexual brethren, and our divorced brethren without annulments, to deny themselves something almost everyone else can have: a marriage, two people forming a haven in a heartless world, with someone they actively desire, with all the pleasures of romance that sexual desire brings. We ask them to live as celibates in a sexually-sodden culture where they may never find the alternative of deep, committed friendships. We ask them to risk loneliness we don’t risk.¹⁶

The way I am trying to live often seems very hard, and I appreciate it when my fellow Christians acknowledge that.

Those helpful ministries also *try to imagine and implement creative avenues to spiritual kinship and friendship*. They focus on the positive kind of life and relationships to which same-sex attracted believers are called. Eve Tushnet puts it well:

...initially, I conceived of my task, as a lgbt/ssa Catholic, as basically a) negative (don’t have gay sex) and b) intellectual (figure out why Church teaching is the way it is). I now think of it much more as the positive task of discerning vocation: discerning how God is calling me to pour out love to others.¹⁷

These ministries refuse to look down on celibacy as “second best.” Too often the possibility of chaste, committed friendship goes unexplored because we are determined to get as far away as possible from singleness. Many people on the left side of the spectrum want same-sex marriage rather than celibacy, while those on the right favor ex-gay approaches that hold out the promise of opposite-sex coupling rather than celibacy. But the ministries that have been most helpful to me, without dishonoring marriage in the least, have encouraged me to imagine a single life overflowing with familial

ties and hospitality and “thick” kinship commitments.

Furthermore, helpful ministries *recognize and nurture the spiritual gifts of gay and lesbian believers*. In their zeal to minister to LGBT Christians, they do not neglect to encourage the ministry of LGBT Christians. They do not view LGBT Christians as pitiable or “broken” or the perpetually needier, more fragile party in the relationship, but rather see them as complex, in-the-process-of-being-redeemed persons — “glorious ruins” (in Francis Schaeffer’s fine phrase) — whose experiences of temptation, repentance, grace, and growth have equipped them with unique perspectives and have forged a certain sensitivity that can be drawn out for the good of the church.

Honestly, my gay and lesbian Christian friends are some of the deepest, most thoughtful, most compassionate believers I know, and the ministry I have received from them has been some of the most caring. As Misty Irons has written:

So many times when I encounter a song, a performance, or a piece of art [or, I would add, an act of service or kindness in the Church] that strikes me as so true and subtle and poignant and uplifting..., I later learn the artist behind it is gay. It’s happened so often I now take it for granted. Maybe there’s something about being gay that enables an artist to see more clearly what it means to be human, to identify certain truths about us all. Maybe it is the ones who are forced to the margins who truly understand what it is we all have in common.¹⁸

C. S. Lewis once noted there are “certain kinds of sympathy and understanding [and] a certain social role” that only gay people can play in the church.¹⁹ Perhaps we are “called to otherness,” and the church’s ministry to us is in large measure about cultivating the ministry we can offer to the church.

Finally, the ministries that have helped me most *focus on the basics of the gospel and the “normal means of grace.”* The best “gay ministry” has only rarely mentioned anything “gay” at all. It has not been a gay support group or gay-themed Bible study or anything like that (as helpful as those may be for some people!). Rather, the most stabilizing and encouraging ministry has been garden-variety gospel preaching that holds the Cross and Resurrection constantly before me.

When I was in the throes of the coming out process and struggling with more loneliness than I had felt before or have felt since, I belonged to a church that emphasized how suffering and tears and struggle were normal parts of the Christian experience. In other words, it recognized that our discipleship will seem like (what I called above) “the long defeat.” By providing me with a sort of framework, or plausibility structure, if you like, that ministry made my personal frustration and struggles seem bearable and maybe even beautiful.

I have come to see that the kind of ministry I most crave — because it most helps — is the regular, bog-standard ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Sitting under preaching that points me to Jesus and receiving Communion (which is “Jesus placing himself in our hands so we know exactly where to find him,” as one of my Lutheran colleagues has put it) are the hallmarks of the ministry I need. Kneeling at the altar rail is where I receive the strength to keep going on this long journey.²⁰

NOTES

1 J. R. R. Tolkien, “The Mirror of Galadriel,” *The Lord of the Rings*, Book II, chapter 7 (London, UK: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004 [1954]), 353-366, here citing 357.

2 J. R. R. Tolkien in a letter to Amy Ronald on December 15, 1956, recorded as Letter 195 in *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, edited by Humphrey Carpenter (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000 [1995]), 255.

3 Alan Jacobs, “The Long Defeat,” *The American Scene* (October 13, 2008), theamerican-scene.com/2008/10/13/the-long-defeat/ (accessed September 17, 2016).

4 Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 402.

5 Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1952), 256.

6 *Ibid.*, 239.

7 *Ibid.*, 286.

8 John Piper, “To the Jew First, and Also to the Greek,” *desiringGod* (July 5, 1998), www.desiringgod.org/messages/to-the-jew-first-and-also-to-the-greek/ (accessed September 18, 2016).

9 Brent Bailey, “Safe People,” *Odd Man Out* (October 9, 2012), oddmanout.net/post/33230777647/safe-people/ (accessed September 18, 2016).

10 Melinda Selmys, “Leggo My Micronarrative,” *Sexual Authenticity: Intimate Reflections on Homosexuality and Catholicism* (March 28, 2012), sexualauthenticity.blogspot.ca/2012/03/leggo-my-micronarrative.html (accessed September 18, 2016).

11 Misty Irons, “What It’s Like to Be You,” *More Musings on Christianity, Homosexuality & the Bible* (March 11, 2009), moremusingson.blogspot.ca/2009/03/what-its-like-to-be-you.html (accessed September 18, 2016).

12 Eve Tushnet, “Order from Confusion Sprung,” *EveTushnet.com* (June 14, 2010), eve-tushnet.blogspot.ca/2010_06_01_archive.html#1921445070183139 (accessed September 18, 2016).

13 I write about this in *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015).

14 Andrew Sullivan, *Love Undetectable: Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 42.

15 Rod Dreher, “Confessions of an Ex-Evangelical, Pro-SSM Millennial,” *The American Conservative* (February 27, 2014), www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/ex-evangelical-pro-gay-millennial/ (accessed September 19, 2016).

16 David Mills, “Yes, We Should Apologize to Homosexual People, and a Lot of Others,” *Aleteia* (June 29, 2016), aleteia.org/2016/06/29/yes-we-should-apologize-to-homosexual-people-and-a-lot-of-others/ (accessed September 19, 2016).

17 Eve Tushnet, “Yay Denver, Home of Happiness!” *Spiritual Friendship: Musings on God, Sexuality, Relationships* (May 23, 2012), spiritualfriendship.org/2012/05/15/yay-denver-home-of-happiness/ (accessed September 19, 2016).

18 Misty Irons, “Thoughts on Ian Charleson,” *More Musings on Christianity, Homosexuality & the Bible* (January 19, 2011), moremusingson.blogspot.ca/2011/01/thoughts-on-ian-charleson.html (accessed September 19, 2016). She reflects on Charleson’s portrayal of “the flying

Scotsman” and later missionary Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire* (1981).

19 The phrase comes from a letter C. S. Lewis wrote to Sheldon Vanauken in 1953, which appears in Vanauken’s spiritual autobiography, *A Severe Mercy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1977), 146-148. Ron Belgau reflects on the significance of this letter in “C. S. Lewis to Sheldon Vanauken on Homosexuality,” *Spiritual Friendship: Musings on God, Sexuality, Relationships* (August 25, 2013), spiritualfriendship.org/2013/08/25/c-s-lewis-to-sheldon-vanauken-on-homosexuality/ (accessed September 19, 2016).

20 Material in this article is drawn from my blog entries “The Long Defeat and the Long Loneliness” (August 23, 2016), “Ministry that Helps (Part 1)” (July 11, 2016), and “Ministry that Helps (Part 2)” (July 12, 2016) at *Spiritual Friendship: Musings on God, Sexuality, Relationships*.



WESLEY HILL

is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.