

A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement

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Preamble

In any discussion of the transgender movement, the church bears two things in mind and keeps them in balance: the societal danger it poses and the individual pain it expresses.

The danger is real. We are not simply dealing with the right of a relatively small percentage of people to choose how they can express their sexuality free from shame, discrimination, and hatred. We are also dealing with fundamental questions of worldview, such as: who are we as human beings? What is the nature and purpose of our sexuality? What is the nature and purpose of the family? What, if any, connection is there between the two? Even deeper still: what is the nature of truth? Is it even possible to speak of universals when it comes to such questions as the nature of humanity, sexuality, and the family? All these discussions might be considered as taking place in the realm of reason and natural law. Quite obviously, there are also threats the transgender worldview poses for the biblical doctrines concerning the nature of humanity. Some have called this, “the consensus of Christian teaching.”¹ In short, in the transgender movement, we are not only facing a teaching antithetical to basic Christianity, we are also dealing with an ideology that changes perceptions of reality and that creates entirely new cultural norms for society which have no precedents in human history.

All this being said, the pain is also real. People who, for whatever reason, declare themselves to be transgender often do so after they have experienced some physical or emotional, sexual or psychic trauma, ranging from rape and rejection to bullying and belittling—and this often simply because they have not presented some typical preferences and behaviors that are associated with their gender within a particular culture. While they might experience some relief and even euphoria in ‘coming out’ as transgender, this by no means ends their estrangement from general society, nor does it completely resolve their psychological difficulties. Finally, it does not protect them from rejection, shame, and verbal abuse from others—sadly even from some who claim membership in the visible church.

The Church that owes its life to the one whose purpose on earth was “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)² will also find a way to rescue the lost without condoning what is wrong. We constantly bear in mind that our Savior said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick” (Luke 5:31) and realize that we also suffer from the same root malady of sin. In this respect, there is no one by nature who is more healthy or sick than anyone else. There are only those who realize they are sick and in need of a physician, and those who do not. To use a

¹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CICR) of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), “Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective,” Accessed June 21, 2019, at <https://www.lcms.org/docs/3012>.

² Biblical citations and phrases will be from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

34 different biblical metaphor: who better to understand the pain of those who just don't fit in than
35 those who live as exiles (1 Peter), out of joint with the times and out of sync with the world? We
36 live daily with the reality that our true time is not now and our true home is not here. The people
37 of God, therefore, are only living out their calling when their churches become havens where the
38 troubled, the lost, and the estranged can find refuge and help. Our congregations can be such
39 havens without compromising the truth.

40 Purpose and Basic Outline

41 This document is intended to serve as a basic guide for further discussion based upon: a) an
42 understanding of the transgender movement on its own terms as much as possible; b) a
43 discussion of the issues it presents in the light of reason and natural law; c) a deepening of the
44 discussion in the light of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. There will follow d) some
45 basic encouragements for pastors and congregations as we seek to deal in love with those who
46 claim to be transgender. We will conclude e) with a simple, positive confession of faith
47 regarding human sexuality.

48 ***Gender and Transgender***

49 The modern phenomenon of the transgender movement is probably best understood by noting a
50 benchmark difference in two successive publications of the American Psychological
51 Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Their fourth
52 edition (DSM-IV, 1994) spoke of a *gender identity disorder*.³ The markers of this malady were
53 chiefly a strong and persistent cross-gender identification. In layman's terms, the 'disorder'
54 referred to the phenomenon of a man feeling, despite his physical sexual characteristics, that he
55 was really a woman; or a woman, despite her physical sexual characteristics, feeling that she was
56 really a man. This condition, to be diagnosed as such, had to be accompanied by persistent
57 discomfort with regard to one's physical sexuality or a sense of inappropriateness when one was
58 urged to participate in the gender roles typically associated with their physical sex. In addition to
59 these diagnostics, a person with gender identity disorder had to experience clinically significant
60 distress and social impairment. Of no small importance was the fact that this diagnosis
61 specifically excluded those who had been born intersex. Intersex refers to those rare cases in
62 which an individual is born with genitalia or chromosomes that are not clearly male or female.

63 DSM-5 reflects evolving societal attitudes with respect to defining the condition. No longer is
64 someone whose gender identity differs from his biological sex to be considered as suffering from
65 a 'disorder.' Instead, the current manual speaks of *gender dysphoria*.⁴ It can occur in both
66 children and adults. A transgender person identifies temporarily or persistently with "a gender
67 different from their natal gender." A subset of the transgendered would be transsexuals, those
68 who have actually made the social transition from male to female or vice versa. Transsexuals
69 now present themselves in social settings as belonging to the gender opposite to their birth

³ DSM-IV (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 537-538.

⁴ DSM-5 (Arlington, Virginia: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 451-459.

70 gender. They may or may not have received hormonal or surgical remedies. Once again, those
71 born intersex are specifically excluded from these definitions and from the diagnosis of gender
72 dysphoria.

73 The key difference between DSM-IV and DSM-5 is this. In DSM-5, the psychological issue is
74 defined entirely in terms of the feelings of distress as such, not to the fact that one identifies in
75 gender with the opposite sex (as in DSM-IV). Gender dysphoria refers to the mental anguish a
76 person feels as a result of his or her sense of gender identity not matching societal expectations
77 associated with his or her natal gender or “assigned sex.”⁵ The diagnosis leaves open the
78 question of whether or not people should feel the way they do. There is no judgment assumed or
79 implied. The problem to be solved, then, is not the mismatch between gender identity and
80 biological sex. The problem is the emotional distress itself—the anxiety, the restlessness, and
81 depression—that one feels. The therapeutic solution is therefore not necessarily to work towards
82 a realignment of their feelings with their bodies.⁶ It may rather be to align their bodies with their
83 feelings. This can happen through altering behavior or dress, or (in cases where the feelings are
84 powerful and persistent) by hormone therapy, or even by surgery. Some therapists believe that,
85 relief comes to many (if not most) suffering from gender dysphoria when the sufferers embrace
86 transgenderism and become transsexuals.⁷

87 Whatever one may think of this reasoning (and we will have more to say about it from the
88 perspective of natural law first and finally from the perspective of Scripture), one has to concede
89 that it expresses a powerful point of view that influences many in our country.

90 Since we cannot properly assess the transgender movement unless we grasp its underlying
91 theory, it is worth our while examining it. The basic premise is that gender identity—a person’s
92 perception of whether they are a man or a woman—is not dependent on biology alone (genitalia,
93 chromosomes, or endocrinology), but in complex ways⁸ evolves as a distinct entity in itself that
94 can even exist independently of one’s sex at birth. For evidence, theorists often point to the
95 intersex condition. The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) defines intersex as “a general
96 term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual
97 anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.”⁹ In cases where

⁵ There are many terms to learn in order to keep up with the discussion. Not only so, but they are constantly evolving. “Assigned sex” or “natal gender” both refer to the biological gender someone has at birth, usually based upon observation of the genitalia. Who has assigned you that sex is usually not mentioned, but can be easily inferred from the term “sex-reassignment surgery” whereby a person’s sexual organs are physically altered by surgeons. In other words, the first assignment comes from society at a time when you were unable to exercise your own choice. The re-assignment is performed by doctors who follow your desires and directions.

⁶ In fact, many in the transgender movement would regard this approach as a form of psychological malpractice.

⁷ It is fair to say that most in the transgender movement would see this as the new normal. Becoming a transsexual is usually understood to involve some type of medical intervention, such as hormone treatments or surgery.

⁸ Biology is not removed entirely from the mix. The influence of hormone baths during gestation is often pointed to as a possible factor. Neurological differences in the brain and its formation are observed. More on this and its probative value later.

⁹ *Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), FAQ Sheet*, “What is Intersex,” Accessed September 28th, 2019. http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex.

98 peoples' genitalia or chromosomes are ambiguous at birth, gender identity cannot be viewed as
99 simply an expression of biological sex. This would appear to be a reasonable inference to draw if
100 children born with this condition later acquire a sense of being male or female as they grow.

101 It may be worthwhile to pause here and comment briefly on the validity of some of these
102 ideas, especially on the "intersex" phenomenon. We can agree, for instance, that a person's
103 gender identity (a person's consciousness of being a male or female, and appropriate behavior as
104 such) can be affected a great deal by parental expectations, by social and cultural contexts, as
105 well as by various emotional and physical traumas that can occur in life. To illustrate:
106 conceptions of being a man in 21st century America may differ widely from that of 19th century
107 England. Abuse and sexual violence can undoubtedly have life-altering impacts. In short, we see
108 some value in the sex/gender distinction.

109 Secondly, even though there are some points of contact¹⁰ between the concepts represented by
110 the terms "intersex" and "transgender" (both of which are, after all, human constructs), the ISN
111 itself would maintain that there are important distinctions to be made, chief among which are that
112 intersex phenomena are both anatomical and congenital. With intersex, people are truly "born
113 that way" and "doctors or parents notice something unusual about their¹¹ bodies." Transgender
114 people, on the other hand, are "usually [those] who are born with typical male or female
115 anatomies but *feel as though*¹² they've been born into the 'wrong body.'¹³ With the intersex, it is
116 a matter of anatomy and/or genetics. Though some in the ISN might not like the word, we would
117 consider it an atypical congenital condition—genuine enough, but one that does not fit within
118 male and female norms. These rare cases have been identified by doctors for at least a century.
119 Transgender people, on the other hand, are afflicted more by deeply rooted feelings whose
120 biological causes are disputed and uncertain.

121 For us the question is not whether something like what is described as "intersex" exists as a
122 congenital condition. Without accepting all the conceptual baggage that goes along with such a
123 term, we freely affirm that there are some people who are born in such a way that their innate
124 biology does not clearly indicate whether they are male or female. We understand that "gender
125 dysphoria" of a type¹⁴ may develop in these cases. We also understand that special medical
126 remedies may be called for to address these rare congenital conditions, including hormone
127 treatments and surgery. But just as hard cases make bad law, so do atypical conditions: they dare
128 not be used to sweep away the natural distinction between male and female. Nor can they be
129 used as a bridging argument to validate transgenderism.

¹⁰ Some would argue that it is more like a continuum or spectrum, as we shall see.

¹¹ That is, "the affected person's."

¹² Emphasis, mine.

¹³ *ISN FAQ Sheet*, "What is the difference between being transsexual and the intersex condition," Accessed September 28, 2019. <http://www.isna.org/faq/transgender>

¹⁴ Though they are specifically excluded from the definition handed down from DSM-5.

130 For us then the real question is: is it correct to say that the intersex condition supports or lends
131 greater credibility to transgender ideology? It is one thing to say that we can distinguish a
132 person's sense of his own gender from his biological sex. In the case of intersex, there may not
133 be clear and sufficient evidence of one's biological sex in their anatomy or chromosomes, though
134 they may still identify as male or female.¹⁵ This does not, however, provide sufficient warrant
135 for *separating* one's gender from one's biological sex. But this is exactly what some in the
136 transgender movement do.¹⁶ We now resume the discussion of that theory.

137 The transgender argument goes something like this. If gender identity¹⁷ is a concept a person
138 can detach from biology (as the intersex condition 'proves'), we can then say generally that one's
139 biological sex¹⁸ need not be determinative of one's gender. There is no inevitable and necessary
140 connection between the two. Gender in fact can be fluid and changeable. People may discover
141 that they do not identify easily with any of the traditional gender categories (male and female). It
142 is therefore incorrect to think merely in binary terms about human sexuality. The truth is "there
143 are many more sexes than just male and female, just like there are many more genders than just
144 male and female as well."¹⁹ All these genders, like the traditional 'binary' ones of male and
145 female, are largely to be considered cultural and social constructs. They are open to modification
146 and evolution, and changeable at will.

147 As we examine the theory, we should also note the amazing complexity of the definitional
148 language this movement has generated: it is constantly evolving and, indeed, protean as gender
149 identities flourish and multiply. We venture to say that no one can maintain a strict accuracy in
150 current terminology no matter how up to date he or she may strive to be. "Transsexual" means
151 one thing in one glossary, and a slightly different thing in another. Some still consider it to be an
152 acceptable term; for others, it has fallen out of fashion.²⁰ This fluidity of language and
153 terminology is no accident. The overall goal for many in this movement is to destroy a blinkered

¹⁵ Though one of the pioneering organizations in the field, The ISN recently disbanded because of perceived 'bias.' Among other things, they advocated the approach of giving an intersex newborn a "gender assignment as boy or girl." This did not involve surgery. Rather parents and diagnosticians would decide to treat the child as a boy or a girl, based on what the child was likeliest to feel as his or her gender upon growing up. The ISN believed that marking an intersex child as a third gender would cause them to be discriminated against. They were also against sex re-assignment surgery on the very young, believing that it ought not be considered until the child was mature enough to make an informed choice on his own. *ISN FAQ Sheet*, "What does ISNA recommend for children with intersex?" Accessed September 28th, 2019. <http://www.isna.org/faq/patient-centered>.

¹⁶ It was, in fact, from a biomedical examination of the intersex condition that the term "gender identity" first began to be used. With some transformations in meaning, it was employed by second-wave feminists to advocate changing the way gender relationships were commonly perceived in America. See Marina Cortez, Paula Gaudenzi, and Ivia Maksud, "Gender: pathways and dialogues between feminist and biomedical studies from the 1950s to 1970s," in *Physis: Revista de Saúde Coletiva*, Vol.29 no.1 Rio de Janeiro (2019).

¹⁷ This can be shortened in the literature to simply "gender."

¹⁸ This can be shortened in the literature to simply "sex."

¹⁹ *The LGBTQ+ Glossary*, entry under "Sex." Accessed June 25, 2019, from itgetsbetter.org.

²⁰ *The LGBTQ+ Glossary*, entry under "Transsexual." Accessed June 25, 2019, from itgetsbetter.org.

154 binary worldview that holds people captive to rigid categories such as male and female.²¹ Binary
155 language like this is seen as oppressive, an attempt to lasso free spirits and to keep from
156 expressing their true identities in a preferred multi-valent, gender-fluid universe.²²

157 The Painful Impact

158 In this confused and confusing world, Americans²³ are learning to think about sexuality and to
159 deal with all the storms of emotion—both joy and sorrow, intimacy and alienation—it brings.
160 We think especially of those whose paths are yet unformed, who are still making their way in the
161 world. Our young people are going to bear the burden of our societal decisions, and they are the
162 most susceptible to suggestion as well as vulnerable to rejection. To defend their integrity as
163 human beings, we need to speak a word to families and society, since families bear the
164 responsibility of rearing the young and they do so best within a stable, well-ordered society.²⁴ At
165 the same time, we cannot forget the current struggles of individual transgender adolescents and
166 adults with whom we come into contact in our various ministries.

167 The transgender community remains relatively small when expressed as a percentage of the
168 general population. But there is evidence that their numbers are growing. “According to a recent
169 estimate, about 0.6% [6 out of every 1000—ed.] of U.S. adults identify as a gender that does not
170 correspond to their biological sex.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the likelihood that we will encounter
171 transgender people or those who know them is very high.²⁶ And while the condition may be
172 relatively rare, the psychic pain is undoubtedly real.²⁷ It is agonizing to feel out of sorts with

²¹ In this connection, Meyer and McHugh remark, “As these terms multiply and their meanings become more individualized, we lose any common set of criteria for defining what gender distinctions mean.” Lawrence S. Mayer, and Paul R. McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender.” *The New Atlantis*, (Fall 2016), 88.

²² These notions of gender fluidity are by no means advocated by all, however. Many in the movement try very diligently to support the thesis that transgender men and women (as well as lesbian women and gay men) are “born that way.” They seek to prove this by pointing to some biological cause based upon chromosomal, endocrinological, and neurological markers. The movement is not of one mind on the matter. We will have more to say of this later.

²³ This is chiefly a Western ideology. Most cultures in Asia and Africa find little of value in this manner of thinking, and in fact resent the cultural hegemony the West is seeking to impose upon them by writing the language into ‘international’ law and or by enacting it through the policies of international organizations. Many individuals with whom I have spoken with personally in Central Africa have expressed their horror at what the “European church” is doing to change doctrine. For a more general reaction of African Anglicans to the proposals of the worldwide Anglican communion, see <https://religionnews.com/2016/03/10/african-bishops-boycott-meeting-anglican-council-episcopal-church-attendance>. Accessed September 18, 2019.

²⁴ By “stable and well-ordered,” I mean a society where there is a strong emphasis on the value of families (two parent, male and female families along with their extended relationships). Stability is not an inevitable outcome of wealth or lack of adversity. Many poverty-stricken third world countries enjoy a strong family life. The post-industrial West has devalued what other cultures have set a high premium upon. It appears the only value left worth mentioning in the West is the autonomous power of an individual's choice.

²⁵ Mayer and McHugh *Sexuality and Gender*, 8.

²⁶ See Pastor Nathan Wordell's paper discussing this point, in which he notes that a congregation of only 200 members is likely to have at least some form of contact with fifty people who are dealing with transgender feelings. “Are Transgender People Sinning?” [WLS Essay File](#), accessed June 1st, 2019, 13.

²⁷ There is no need to dismiss the reality of the pain. Those who are tempted to do so act as if they have some crystal ball into people's hearts which gives them the right to deny the reality of what people in counselling have expressed to many therapists over the course of many years. This does not seem wise.

173 one’s biological gender, to be a stranger in one’s own body, to feel alienated from one’s own
174 natal gender, and to identify with a sex not yours by birth. To feel the shame and stigma of not
175 meeting the behavioral expectations of peers, parents, and society. This psycho-social pain is not
176 to be minimized, much less disdained or mocked by caring Christians. Add to this the greater
177 incidence of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse within the transgender community. One
178 benchmark figure alone is deeply sobering: “The rate of lifetime suicide attempts across all ages
179 of transgender individuals is estimated at 41%, compared to under 5% in the overall U.S.
180 population.”²⁸

181 A. A Reasoned and Compassionate Response

182 In dealing with individuals who perceive themselves as transgender, the only questions that
183 Christians face are not, “Are the experiences authentic?” but “What is the most compassionate
184 response?” and “How can we best help?” We will say more about pastoral and congregational
185 responses to transgender individuals a little later. It is now time to discuss what debt of love we
186 owe as Christians to a movement, and increasingly to a society that believes gender identity
187 ought to be favored above one’s biological sex if there is a perceived incongruity between the
188 two. As we pay that debt, we constantly bear in mind that there is no truth without love and no
189 love without truth (Eph 4:15).

190 We have observed that few in this movement are so radical as to suggest that biological sex
191 has no impact on a person’s gender identity. As we have already seen, however, some definitely
192 want to move away from language and stereotypes that imply a merely binary “male and female”
193 cis-gendered²⁹ world. It would appear that they are simply taking to its logical conclusion the
194 concept of a gender that can exist in mind and emotions independently of the ‘givens’ of the
195 biological body. “Thinking binary” is the problem. Thinking creatively is the solution. Gender
196 identity, they say, is fluid and people should feel free to experience and explore their identities.
197 In fact, gender creative parents worry “that their child will be boxed into gender stereotypes” so
198 they seek to raise their children as free from them as possible, eschewing gendering language as
199 much as they can (he/she) and calling their offspring “theybies.” One parent’s rationale for this is
200 revealing:

201 I’m very tired of the heteronormative and cisnormative model. I’m very tired of the
202 patriarchy. A part of why we are parenting this way is because intersex people exist, and
203 transgender people exist, and queer people exist, and sex and gender occur on a spectrum,
204 yet our culture loves to think people, all 7 billion of them, can and should be reduced to
205 either/or.³⁰

²⁸ *Sexuality and Gender*, 8.

²⁹ “Cisgender” refers to an individual whose gender identity is the same as his biological sex. It contrasts with “transgender” which refers to an individual whose gender identity is the opposite of his biological sex.

³⁰ Alex Morris, “Is It Possible to Raise Your Child Entirely Without Gender From Birth?” *The Cut*, (April 3, 2018). <https://www.thecut.com/2018/04/theybies-gender-creative-parenting.html>.

206 Note, among other things, that we are talking about *babies* here, not adolescents or pre-
207 pubescent or even toddlers wondering if they are a boy or a girl. The problem, according to
208 them, is that people are culturally conditioned to think in “either/or” terms about sex and gender,
209 when really sex and gender are fluid, occurring on a spectrum. If gender is nothing but a social
210 construct that can exist independently of and even in opposition to one’s sex, then what this
211 parent is saying contains a certain logic.

212 Our reply? The issue is not so much that one’s subjective sense of gender cannot be
213 *distinguished* from one’s biological sex. The distinction is useful,³¹ and as we’ve said before, a
214 person’s gender identity is formed out of many influences, biological, cultural, and deeply
215 personal (i.e. trauma of some kind). We can also agree that there are people who genuinely suffer
216 from gender dysphoria because their subjective sense of their gender is not in sync with the
217 biological reality of their bodies. We rather define the basic ethical issue this way: it is morally
218 wrong to assert that one’s sex can be *separated* from gender identity so radically that one’s ‘true’
219 gender is derived from what one feels without reference to the body. As the *Congregation for*
220 *Catholic Education* puts it, “The concept of gender is seen as dependent upon the subjective
221 mindset of each person who can choose a gender not corresponding to his or her biological
222 sex...the individual...is seen as radically autonomous.”³² We would call this the doctrine of the
223 autonomous, choosing self. This, it seems, is the only basis left for morality in Western society.
224 “So long as I hurt no one, I can do as I please,” is its first (and only) commandment. But who
225 defines “hurt”? Aye, there’s the rub!

226 Arguments from Natural Law

227 We believe that it is useful to address this ideology first of all from the perspective of natural law
228 and reason. At the outset we state that Scriptural theology is the only firm foundation, and that
229 many of the following arguments will strike some as unconvincing. We do not rest our
230 confession on them. If, however, I believe that “God made them male and female,” I am also
231 inclined to believe that there will at least be some congruence between what we see in the world
232 and God’s creative will expressed in Scripture.

233 So then, apart from specifically theological considerations, there is an argument to be made
234 that separating gender from sex so radically simply defies common sense and runs counter to
235 easily observable phenomena. Natural law is the idea that “there is an objective and universal

³¹ The concept of gender identity is also helpful in considering how different societies look at “masculine” and “feminine” behaviors. There is no reason to deny that culture plays a role in how groups of people and individuals grow up to perceive masculinity or femininity. To give another illustration: one’s “gender identity” and resultant behaviors as a man in post-Christian America may differ from how that masculine gender identity is perceived and enacted in Central Africa.

³² *Congregation for Catholic Education*. “Male and Female He Created Them: Towards A Path Of Dialogue On The Question Of Gender Theory In Education.” Vatican City, 2019, 8.

236 [morality] which is innate or accessible to natural reason without recourse to [Scripture].”³³ It is
237 the fundamental belief that “the universe is governed by a law inscribed into the nature of
238 things.”³⁴ The Scriptures confirm that this knowledge exists and is available to all (Romans 1 and
239 2). Nevertheless, natural law’s persuasive power rests not on the authority of Scripture, but on
240 common sense reasoning from the nature of the things we see.³⁵ We begin our discussion here
241 since those outside the church (as well as Christians raised without a high view of Scripture) are
242 not likely to be moved by appeals to an authority they don’t recognize. Appeals to reason and
243 common sense may at least give some pause to think further.

244 *Argument from Purpose and Design*

245 One of the first and most obvious points to be made arises from the purpose inherent in the
246 design of the male and female sexual organs. Here someone might argue that there is no “design”
247 so there can be no “purpose.” This flies in the face of common sense. Richard Dawkins, a
248 notable atheist, conceded that “adults, even scientifically trained ones, possess a bias to favor
249 purpose-based explanations,” and that “we do not simply outgrow the tendency to see purpose in
250 the world but have to learn to tamp it down through formal education”³⁶ (a rather stunning
251 admission!) As an example of this, Nancy Pearcey points out that geneticists routinely “talk
252 about DNA as a ‘database’ that stores ‘libraries of genetic information.’³⁷ All of these metaphors
253 imply knowledge, design, organization, and order. Rather than deny the evidence of our senses
254 and the reasonable inferences our minds draw from it, might we not say, “There is a design here
255 that implies a purpose.” One does not have to believe in the Christian God, or indeed any god at
256 all, to believe that there is some order in the universe.

257 And whether or not one is convinced of a Designer by the apparent design that exists in what
258 we see:

259 Since the dawn of human civilization and across all cultures, [human beings] have known
260 that the male and female organs are made for different functions. Humans know what
261 they are; they are free to act in accordance with them or to act in opposition to them. The
262 organs match. What is so difficult to understand about that? Humans learn these things
263 by reason and nature; no books on anatomy, psychology, or sociology are needed.³⁸

³³ *A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations*. “The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness.” The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, April 2013, 55ff. <https://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=5021>, 7.

³⁴ Carl E Braaten, “Reclaiming the Natural Law for Theological Ethics.” *The Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 7, no. 10 (October 2007). <https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/484>.

³⁵ We recognize from the outset that one argument from reason can be overturned by another argument from reason. In the end, the goal is not to compel belief, but to create room for doubt amid some of the certainties expressed by those held captive by transgenderism. There are intellectually respectable positions that run counter to their arguments.

³⁶ As qtd. in “Natural Knowledge,” LCMS-CTCR, 42, fn 152.

³⁷ *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Baker Books, 2019, 22.

³⁸ Braaten, “Reclaiming.”

264 “But,” the counter argument runs, “a sense of one’s gender is clearly not innate. It is formed
265 from a complex array of influences, not simply from the body’s physical nature. Your argument
266 from design completely avoids the question of whether or not one has experienced persistent
267 feelings of alienation over against one’s own physical body.” This counter-argument, however,
268 to have persuasive power, must again assume a radical separation of gender from sex. We are not
269 talking about what people feel. We are talking about what people are. Why should one’s feelings
270 be regarded as more decisive than the physical facts of one’s body?³⁹ To make the point that this
271 is really a flight from nature, Nancy Pearcey quotes philosopher Carol Bigwood who writes, “If
272 we reduce the body as a whole to a purely cultural phenomenon and gender to a free-floating
273 artifice, then we are unwittingly perpetuating the deep modern alienation of our human being
274 from nature.”⁴⁰

275 People who believe that the transgender individuals should conform their bodies to their
276 personal perception of gender are really saying that the body is accidental to their true nature. In
277 effect, the physical body is not their true self. Their truest self resides in their mind and feelings.
278 If the body does not exist in harmony with feelings, then it needs to be brought into line by any
279 means necessary. To this we simply ask again, “Why are the facts of physiology, anatomy,
280 chromosomes, and DNA any less real than a person’s subjective feelings of gender?”⁴¹

281 We would further argue that for people to alter their bodies through medical interventions and
282 sex-reassignment surgery is for them to violate their very selves. When a woman in Africa
283 submits to female circumcision, the western world disapproves—and rightly so! It is not merely
284 a case where her genitalia are being ‘redesigned’ to conform to societal expectations. Her whole
285 person—body and mind—is being violated. It clearly degrades the ‘given-ness’ of her physical
286 being into a mere object to be manipulated at will. In terms of a general attitude towards the
287 body, it’s difficult to see the difference between this act—of which all disapprove—and radical
288 surgical interventions for the sake of alleviating gender dysphoria.⁴²

³⁹ Note, we are not discussing “intersex” people here.

⁴⁰ In *Love Thy Body*, 208.

⁴¹ I am condensing and paraphrasing Pearcey’s argument from *Love Thy Body*, 195. At this point, transgender ideology bears some points of similarity to Platonic and Pythagorean mystic thought, a philosophy that regarded the body as a prison for the soul/mind (σῶμα/σῆμα—e.g. *Phaedrus* 250c). The world of *Truth* and *Reality* was the world of the spirit, a realm regarded as infinitely higher than the material world. Privileged and preferred over a debased creation was the world of the mind. We will come back to this when we engage theologically with the ancient Christian heresy of Gnosticism, which also resonates in some places with transgender thought.

⁴² Obviously those in the transgender movement would utterly reject this analogy, labeling female circumcision as an act carried out under compulsion whereas gender reassignment is done as an expression of individual freedom. The point, nevertheless, remains: both are ideologies and cultures in which genital mutilation is a ‘thinkable’ act. If one denies the existence of natural law, then for a person to shrink in horror at the what another culture does could easily be seen as a classic case of ethnocentrism. It expresses a sense of moral outrage combined with a whiff of cultural colonialism. Furthermore, I am not as convinced that female circumcision is necessarily more an act of compulsion than the altering one’s sex organs. All cultures have ways of setting boundaries that, in turn, exert pressure to think and act like the rest of the herd. By that I mean, the pressure not to be a stale old “cisgender” person may be keenly felt by a teen seeking to account for their sense of “different-ness” in a way that might well elevate them in the esteem of their peers. Pressure is pressure, and the truly autonomous choice is a myth. Without

289 *A Genderless World and the Family*

290 Not all transgender theorists dream of a genderless world. But many do and view it as a worthy
291 goal that can remove “arbitrary and unnecessary limitation[s] on human potential.” They regard
292 the discarding of binary gender as ‘liberatory.’⁴³ Whether or not people belong to this camp, they
293 take an irrevocable step towards it when they concede that gender can be separated from sex to
294 such a degree that one’s gender identity, in the final analysis, is more determinative of one’s
295 personhood than one’s biological sex. The danger here is that a genderless world undermines the
296 nature of marriage and family.⁴⁴

297 Marriage as the lifelong union of a man with a woman used to be one of those fundamental
298 notions that few in our society would have quarreled with. It does not have to be justified by
299 specific Christian or even generic religious dogma. It is an idea that flows naturally from the
300 inescapable biological fact that, in the normal way of things, it takes a male to impregnate a
301 female in order to reproduce children and ensure the continuity of the race. Human infants,
302 furthermore, are completely helpless, depending on others for their survival for many years.
303 What can be more natural, then, than for the biological parents to care for the child until he can
304 live on his own? If a person were an evolutionist, he might even consider it to be a biological
305 imperative.

306 There is, furthermore, no culture of any note—ancient or modern—that has failed to make
307 some kind of provision, whether by traditional law or by positive legislation, for the stability of
308 marriage, male with female.⁴⁵ People may not have lived monogamous lives, but they recognized
309 that kind of life as an ideal worth protecting, and with good reason! If marriage can be between a
310 man and a man, if a child can have two ‘moms,’ if the goal of some is to create a genderless
311 world, then the very definition of marriage has been radically destabilized. It becomes some
312 vague compact of two people to ‘partner’—perhaps in the interests of having children, perhaps
313 not. Though the normal way of having children will still be that of a man impregnating a woman,
314 genderperson Z married to genderperson ZZ will find ways around it to create endless forms of
315 ‘family,’ whether by adoption, or surrogacy, or by artificial insemination (notably, not by gender
316 reassignment surgery which renders people sterile). Lacking any coherent societal definition,
317 traditional marriage and family—or any ‘marriage’ however conceived—could one day

the existence of an overarching law of nature, there is no way to adjudicate between competing claims or to pronounce both misguided.

⁴³ See “Postgenderism” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postgenderism>. Accessed July 2, 2019.

⁴⁴ Something which is not lost on theorists. See Mandy Len Catron’s article in *The Atlantic* entitled, “What You Lose When You Gain a Spouse,” July 2, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/07/case-against-marriage/591973/>. The subtitle really says it all: “What if marriage is not the social good that so many believe and want it to be?” She does not believe that marriage is likely to go away, but not so much because it is a positive social “good,” but because it lends greater power and status to couples who are married. Whether one believes the theoreticians or not, there is no doubt that the current trend in society is to postpone marriage or to forego it altogether.

⁴⁵ Many underdeveloped societies ensure stability by an exchange of wealth or property between clans. Caesar Augustus promulgated the *leges Iuliae* to curb adultery and promote marriage.

318 evaporate entirely as a cultural artifact.⁴⁶ What defies definition cannot be protected by law or
319 custom.

320 Redefining ‘normal’ always comes with risks. Those risks are beyond measure for a society
321 willing to play around with the definition of marriage. Perhaps it is too apocalyptic to say that
322 society itself could crumble without the necessary institution⁴⁷ of marriage. But it seems clear
323 enough even at this stage that those who pay the greatest cultural price are women in poverty and
324 their children.⁴⁸ In other words, this debate is not just about protecting the legal rights of
325 transgender people. We are talking about society’s acceptance of fundamental ideas that
326 underpin the transgender movement and that, in turn, undermine marriage. An African proverb
327 speaks wisdom here, “When you pull a pumpkin from the patch, you bring the leaves and vines
328 along with it.” If it were just a matter of protecting a class of individuals from harm to their
329 persons, that would be one thing. We are also concerned about the entailments that come along
330 with the acceptance of the idea that sex can be radically separated from gender identity.

331 ***Biology is Destiny?***

332 We will now return to the question of whether or not there is any solid biological evidence—
333 chromosomal, endocrinological, or neurological—for the phenomenon of gender dysphoria. Here
334 the transgender movement itself is divided. Some say, “Yes”; others, “No” (or better: biological
335 markers are not helpful for advancing the cause).⁴⁹ The disagreement exposes a basic
336 contradiction in transgender reasoning. On the one hand, if people are ‘born that way,’ then it
337 makes perfect sense to remove all the obstacles that prevent the transformation of one’s body so
338 as to match one’s gender identity. On the other hand, if people are ‘born that way,’ then there
339 must be something important about tethering one’s gender to one’s biological sex. To embrace

⁴⁶ With some saying, ‘Good riddance’! One woman writes, “The meaning of marriage is so deeply rooted in patriarchy and gender inequality, that, in the modern sense, it does not make sense for a young woman to tie the knot unless she has a partner willing to reject all traditional overtures of marriage.” Caroline Zielinski. “Marriage Isn’t for Me, Thank You.” Daily Telegraph. Australia April 14, 2015.

⁴⁷ See Russell Hittinger’s article in *First Things*, entitled, “The Three Necessary Societies,” July 2017. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2017/06/the-three-necessary-societies>.

⁴⁸ Unmarried ‘solo’ women with children (i.e. without a co-habiting partner) rank highest in terms of percentage living in poverty. From there follow (in descending order): ‘solo’ men with children, cohabiting parents with children, and married parents with children. This according to the Pew Research Center, “Facts On Unmarried Parents in the U.S.,” April 25, 2018. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/04/25/the-changing-profile-of-unmarried-parents/>. Accessed July 8, 2019.

⁴⁹ On the “yes” side we can definitely count Lady Gaga (along with a host of Hollywood cultural influencers), whose number one hit “[Born This Way](#)” was unequivocal in affirming the ‘truth.’ One might say it is a populist position among the transgendered, in fact (see Aliyah Kovner’s article “Born This Way: Transgender Brains Show Similarity to Those of Their Desired Gender from a Young Age.” IFLScience. Accessed July 3, 2019, who cites the work of Dr. Julie Bakker’s on brain structure. Kovner makes the completely unsupported claim that “medical providers and mental health experts in most western nations have, thankfully, embraced the leading theory that sexual orientation and gender identity are hardwired into the brain during fetal development.”) A cautious “no” is spoken by Alex Barasch (self-identifying as ‘trans’), who points out the scientific flaws in drawing such a sweeping conclusion. As the title to his article suggests, he feels an overemphasis on finding a biological cause could do more harm than good. A biological anomaly, he points out, can just as easily be seen as a symptom of a disease needing correction than as evidence of a physical cause for being transgender. “Seeking a Scientific Explanation for Trans Identity Could Do More Harm than Good.” *Washington Post*. (6/27/2018). Accessed July 3, 2019.

340 both a genderless world and a world biologically determined seems to embrace an impossible
341 contradiction. Gender cannot be entirely separated from sex, it would seem.

342 The truth is this: scientific evidence to date does not support “the hypothesis that gender
343 identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings...independent of biological sex.”⁵⁰ Of
344 course we are careful to observe the intersex condition as a true anomaly, the biological
345 exceptions that prove the binary rule. We would certainly agree that medical interventions might
346 be necessary in these rare cases. But as discussed above, they cannot justifiably be used to
347 support transgender ideology.

348 The depth of the biological difference between men and women is often not fully appreciated.
349 It is more than a matter of male and female sex organs being “made for different functions.”⁵¹ It
350 is more too than that, from the moment of conception, a boy has XY chromosomes and a girl has
351 XX chromosomes. Women’s health expert Paula Johnson said it most forcefully when she
352 declared:

353 Every cell has a sex—and what that means is that men and women are different down to
354 the cellular and molecular level. It means that we’re different across all of our organs,
355 from our brains to our hearts, our lungs, our joints.”⁵²

356 These biological facts cannot be willed away even with the most radical of hormonal and
357 surgical interventions.⁵³

358 No degree of supporting a little boy in converting to be considered, by himself and
359 others, to be a little girl makes him biologically a little girl. The scientific definition of
360 biological sex is, for almost all human beings, clear, binary, and stable, reflecting an
361 underlying biological reality that is not contradicted by exceptions to sex-typical
362 behavior, and cannot be altered by surgery or social conditioning.⁵⁴

363 Nor are these facts contradicted by Dr. Julie Bakker’s studies on brain structure, referred to in
364 passing earlier (see footnote # 49). Those studies have found some evidence for transgender
365 persons’ brain volumes deviating from their biological sex-norms to more nearly resemble the
366 norms of their “experienced sex.”⁵⁵ In other words, a female-to-male transgender shows greater
367 similarities in some areas of brain formation to natal males than to natal females.

368 The problem with all brain studies is that they cannot offer anything like conclusive proof of a
369 biological ‘reason’ for transgenderism. That is due to the well-known phenomenon called
370 “neuroplasticity.” This is a word that simply means “brain changes” and it refers to the fact that
371 the brain’s structure can be altered due to many factors, including a person’s behavior and
372 experience. If transgender individuals “have been acting and thinking for years” as a member of

⁵⁰ Mayer and McHugh “Sexuality and Gender” *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2016, 8.

⁵¹ Braaten, “Reclaiming.”

⁵² As qtd. in Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 196.

⁵³ For example, so-called “sex-reassignment” or “conversion” surgery.

⁵⁴ Mayer and McHugh “Sexuality and Gender,” *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2016, 93.

⁵⁵ Bakker, Julie. “Brain Structure and Function in Gender Dysphoria.” *BioScientifica*, 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.1530/endoabs.56.S30.3>. Accessed July 9th, 2019.

373 the opposite sex, this “may have produced brain changes that could differentiate them from their
374 biological sex.”⁵⁶ It’s the chicken or the egg phenomenon: did the behavior come first and
375 produce the changes, or did the changes come first and produce the behavior? There is simply
376 no sure way of knowing. Brain studies therefore are not conclusive.

377 “Facts are stubborn things,” John Adams once said; his words certainly apply to the stubborn
378 facts of biology. The fact of male/female reproduction is impossible to overlook. There are
379 profound differences between male and female that exist right down to the cellular level.⁵⁷ If
380 gender identity has a connection with one’s underlying biology, it seems a far stronger argument
381 to say that gender differences arise out of the basic genetic differences between male and
382 female⁵⁸ rather than to say that there is some biological cause for men and women experiencing a
383 sense of alienation with regard to their natal sex.

384 But let us grant, for a moment, that one day certain biological causes for gender dysphoria
385 will be discovered. What will it prove? It does not make the case that a male is ‘really’ a female
386 or vice-versa.⁵⁹ There are many genetic anomalies that occur in the conception and gestation of
387 infants. Intersex or “DSDs”⁶⁰ are one example. One does not make an anomaly the norm. What’s
388 more, unless you are a radical biological determinist,⁶¹ you will grant that even if other serious
389 behavioral conditions (depression, proneness to outbursts of anger,⁶² etc.) show signs of having
390 genetic precursors, individuals are not stripped of their moral agency. There will be a lot more to

⁵⁶ Mayer and McHugh “Sexuality and Gender,” *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2016, 103.

⁵⁷ Giving rise to the biologist’s dictum, “All cells have a sex,” Neil A. Bradbury, “All Cells Have a Sex: Studies of Sex Chromosome Function at the Cellular Level,” in *Principles of Gender-Specific Medicine* (Third Edition), edited by Marianne J. Legato, 269–90. San Diego: Academic Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-803506-1.00051-6>.

⁵⁸ Again, without denying the influences of culture, upbringing, and personal factors.

⁵⁹ A fact recognized by Alex Barasch in the previously-referenced article in the *Washington Post* “Seeking a Scientific Explanation for Trans Identity Could Do More Harm than Good” (6/27/2018). Accessed July 3, 2019.

⁶⁰ Disorders of Sexual Differentiation.

⁶¹ “Biological determinism refers to the idea that all human behavior is innate, determined by genes, brain size, or other biological attributes. This theory stands in contrast to the notion that human behavior is determined by culture or other social forces. Inherent to biological determinism is the denial of free will: individuals have no internal control over their behavior and dispositions, and thus are devoid of responsibility for their actions,” “Biological Determinism,” *Encyclopedia.Com*. Accessed July 9, 2019. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science-and-technology/biology-and-genetics/biology-general/biological-determinism>.

⁶² I have received some pushback on this paragraph and rightly so. Let me clarify: depression and outbursts of anger exist in abundance in my family. I myself have experienced them. While I was not capable of a great deal when under a cloud of depression, I do believe I still had choices to make, one of which was to seek help. I would regard outbursts of anger somewhat differently. Depression is often a state where the one afflicted wishes (*wills*) deeply it was otherwise. One feels nothing. It is hard to think. But when a gust of angry passion occurs, it happens through the intellect, emotions, and will. As I have experienced it, I first perceive an act of someone that may cause me harm. I classify it in my mind as a threat. My emotions surge, and I want to respond. Often, I do with angry words. After the words, I usually feel regret almost immediately, but for a time the passion has overwhelmed my better judgment. Truth is, I have seen my characteristics on display from time to time in others in my genetic family. Here’s my bottom line: I really wouldn’t be surprised if someday, someone discovers a chromosomal “predisposition” to depression and outbursts of passion. ***That does not make me any less a human being responsible for my actions.*** In the case of depression, to seek help. In the case of the outburst, to suppress its outward expression at least.

391 add to the subject of genetics when we talk in theological terms about the corruption of original
392 sin. But for now, we are simply arguing natural law.

393 ***“And a Child Shall Lead Them”—Treatment and Care***

394 Despite the overwhelming biological evidence, medical care professionals who want to be
395 viewed as mainstream increasingly must accept the basic assumptions of the transgender
396 movement. If necessary, the body must be conformed to the feelings in one’s mind rather than
397 the mind being conformed to the givenness of one’s body. As a case in point we might consider
398 the treatment protocol of the American Academy of Pediatrics.⁶³ The AAP calls its approach
399 “Gender-Affirmative Care.” Transgender identities “do not constitute a mental disorder.”
400 Instead, identity variations are considered “normal aspects of human diversity, and binary
401 definitions of gender do not always reflect emerging gender identities.” “If a mental health issue
402 exists, it most often stems from stigma and negative experiences rather than being intrinsic to the
403 child.”⁶⁴ The overall goal of the therapy is:

404 To destigmatize gender variance, promote the child’s self-worth, facilitate access to care,
405 educate families, and advocate for safer community spaces where children are free to
406 develop and explore their gender.⁶⁵

407 This means that, in many cases, doctors are encouraged to walk alongside the child or
408 adolescent by “affirming” their sense of gender identity to the point of prescribing puberty
409 blockers and hormone therapies. When they become young adults, the next logical step is sex re-
410 assignment surgery.⁶⁶ To destigmatize these children, they may need to “educate” the parents
411 into understanding that nothing whatever is wrong with their child wanting to be a different sex.
412 Community safe spaces for exploring gender fluidity are to be encouraged.

413 One can hardly fault the desire to demonstrate unconditional love for children struggling with
414 persistent and ongoing issues of gender identity. Bullying and social isolation are never
415 acceptable responses. But what this form of care is advocating is really something more. This

⁶³ Founded in 1930, the AAP is “the” American professional association of pediatricians, boasting 64,000 members. In addition to its public policy statement on transgender children and adolescents, it has proved influential in its pronouncements regarding car seats, gun violence, and school start times. It is not a total stranger to controversy, having had to withdraw a policy statement on female genital cutting (in which it allowed for a ceremonial ‘nick’ in the US to prevent the families from sending their daughters overseas for full circumcision).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Academy_of_Pediatrics. As an organization, the AAP should be distinguished from the much smaller (500 member) American College of Pediatricians (ACP), which has taken a firm stand against what it calls “Gender Ideology,” saying simply that it “harms children.” (see: “Gender Ideology Harms Children,” *American College of Pediatricians Blog*, February 2, 2016. <https://www.acpeds.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/gender-ideology-harms-children>.) Those in the transgender movement label the ACP as an “Anti-LGBT” group trying to fool people into thinking that it is the AAP. The pro-LGBTQ equality Human Rights Campaign simply calls it a “hate” group (<https://www.hrc.org/blog/hate-group-masquerades-as-pediatrics-organization-to-attack-trans-kids>).

⁶⁴ Jason Rafferty, “Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents.” *Pediatrics*, 142, no. 4 (October 1, 2018), 4: e20182162. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2162>.

⁶⁵ Rafferty, “Ensuring Care,” 4.

⁶⁶ This entire “pathway” is labeled by some as “GAT”—Gender Affirming Therapy. Increasingly, surgery is seen as a viable option well before the child reaches adulthood.

416 fact is best recognized in the kinds of therapy the AAP rejects as either “inappropriate” or simply
417 “outdated.”

418 Let’s say a little boy or a little girl comes into a therapist saying they’d rather be one of the
419 opposite sexes. Imagine a therapist gently encouraging the young children to believe that
420 everything’s okay. That there’s nothing wrong with the body they have. He might even teach
421 them to sing the old Mr. Rogers’ song, “Everybody’s Fancy”:

422 Boys are boys from the beginning.

423 Girls are girls right from the start.

424 Everybody’s fancy.

425 Everybody’s fine.

426

427 Your body’s fancy and so is mine.

428

429 Only girls can be the mommies.

430 Only boys can be the daddies.

431 Everybody’s fancy.

432 Everybody’s fine.

433

434 Your body’s fancy and so is mine.⁶⁷

435 That kind of therapy the AAP calls “conversion” or “reparative” treatment, which is used to
436 “prevent children and adolescents from identifying as transgender or to dissuade them from
437 exhibiting gender-diverse expressions.” It further states “Any therapeutic intervention with the
438 goal of changing a youth’s gender expression or identity is inappropriate...[and] outside the
439 mainstream of traditional medical practice.” Finally, it warns ominously that “conversion therapy
440 was banned...in New York...and 9 other states.”⁶⁸ Mr. Rogers, you better watch out!⁶⁹

441 But that’s not all. What if a therapist simply wants to wait and see?⁷⁰ Perhaps the child will
442 change his or her mind. The DSM-5 states that “for natal boys, resolution [i.e. a return to a
443 gender identification in keeping with one’s birth sex] occurs” in as many as 98% of cases (some
444 studies putting it at 70%). “For natal females resolution occurs” in as many as 88% (some studies

⁶⁷ Fred Rogers. “Everybody’s Fancy” *The Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood Archive*. Accessed July 14, 2019.
http://www.neighborhoodarchive.com/music/songs/everybodys_fancy.html.

⁶⁸ Rafferty, 4.

⁶⁹ I had my children review this article, and they felt this remark was a trifle too cutting, seeming to trivialize the pain of those experiencing gender dysphoria. This was not at all my intent. I debated removing it for that reason but decided to leave it in because of the way it underlines the larger points I was trying to make. The pendulum has swung so far in the advocacy of this way of treating gender dysphoria that even Mr. Rogers would be called to account and found wanting--and not only by professional organizations, but (in the not so subtle threat) by the law! I confess, there is an edge to the remark, but it is not the edge my children picked up on. Rather I find it supremely ironic and more than a little shocking that Mr. Rogers himself would be weighed in the balance and found wanting. In him we have a child psychologist who is lionized by all today because he listened to the doubts and fears of the very young, responding to them with love and respect. Yet his common sense advice here can not only be ignored but labeled as harmful.

⁷⁰ A form of therapy called “watchful waiting.”

445 putting it as low as 50%). Simply put, for the vast majority of males and for a solid majority of
446 females, gender dysphoria goes away with the progress of age.⁷¹

447 It is nonetheless argued, based on the current evidence, that “Gender Affirming Treatments”
448 (GATs) improve general quality of life in some cases. We answer: there could be many reasons
449 for this, not least among which is the relief at the achievement of a long-held goal. The whole
450 truth about GATs is this: many significant quality of life issues persist. The treatment in the long
451 term fails to resolve all psychological or physical problems for the patient. One study concludes,
452 “Even though surgery and hormonal therapy alleviates gender dysphoria, it is...not sufficient to
453 remedy the high rates of morbidity and mortality found among transsexual persons.”⁷² We have
454 already mentioned their highly elevated risk of suicide. For all too many transgender persons, sad
455 to say, it would appear the good feelings do not last.

456 That is why we must ask, if the gender affirming treatments are far from being a sure cure,
457 and if, in many cases, gender dysphoria simply goes away—especially with the young—might it
458 not be the better part of wisdom for a therapist to wait and see? Not according to the AAP:

459 This outdated approach does not serve the child because critical support is withheld.
460 Watchful waiting is based on binary notions of gender in which gender diversity and
461 fluidity is pathologized...valuing children for who they are, even at a young age, fosters
462 secure attachment and resilience.⁷³

463 This characterization of “watchful waiting” is patently unfair. Whoever suggested
464 withholding “critical support” for the child? Not the watchfully waiting therapist or his parents!
465 We would assume that the child is still being seen, listened to, encouraged. In rejecting not only
466 what they call “conversion therapy” but also “watchful waiting,” it becomes perfectly clear that
467 the AAP is no longer taking a position appropriate for a professional organization. They’ve
468 adopted the transgender movement’s ideology and have become an advocacy group for “gender
469 fluidity.” Their notion of “critical support” means using their version of gender affirming
470 therapy, and theirs alone. All other therapies are to be suppressed!⁷⁴

471 Remember, too, we are not talking about adults here, but about the treatment recommended
472 for suggestible and curious children and for struggling adolescents (who as we all know are at an

⁷¹ See DSM-5, 455.

⁷² Cecilia Dhejne, , Paul Lichtenstein, Marcus Boman, Anna L. V. Johansson, Niklas Långström, and Mikael Landén. “Long-Term Follow-up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden.” *PloS One* 6, no. 2 (February 22, 2011): e16885. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016885>, 7. See also Anna Nobili, Cris Glazebrook, and Jon Arcelus. “Quality of Life of Treatment-Seeking Transgender Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *Reviews in Endocrine & Metabolic Disorders* 19, no. 3 (2018): 199–220. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11154-018-9459-y>.

⁷³ Rafferty, 4

⁷⁴ “Suppress” is not too strong a word. Michelle Cretella writes, “Professionals who dare to question the unscientific party line of supporting gender transition therapy will find themselves maligned and out of a job.” “I’m a Pediatrician. How Transgender Ideology Has Infiltrated My Field and Produced Large-Scale Child Abuse.” *The Daily Signal*, July 3, 2017. <https://www.dailysignal.com/2017/07/03/im-pediatrician-transgender-ideology-infiltrated-field-produced-large-scale-child-abuse/>. My guess is, the disbanding of the Intersex Society of North America was due also in part to this kind of “suppression.”

473 age fraught with identity crises and alienations of many kinds). Putting an impressionable mind
474 at age 15 or earlier⁷⁵ on a fast track to a life-altering decision seems, quite bluntly, to be a failure
475 of care. The truth is, no one knows what the full impact of puberty blockers are in the long run.
476 We do know that sterility is one possible side effect.⁷⁶ Similarly no longitudinal study exists of
477 the high doses of hormonal treatments of androgen and estrogen required for the female-to-male
478 or male-to-female transition and its maintenance over the years.⁷⁷ Hormones have been linked to
479 a higher incidence of heart problems such as stroke (41% higher), blood clots (100% higher) and
480 heart attacks (29% higher).⁷⁸ No wonder specific “surveillance” of the blood chemistry and bone
481 density is recommended every 6-12 months.⁷⁹

482 These are all the supposedly “reversible” components of the gender affirming medical
483 interventions. We need not even mention the ultimate treatment, which is gender re-assignment
484 surgery. From that there really is no going back.⁸⁰ At the very least one can say that a vast
485 medical experiment is taking place, and the ones being experimented on are children, in the
486 name of better mental health.

487 After this review of what is currently considered ‘best practice’ in treating gender dysphoria
488 among children and teens, what is most striking is the absence of the parents in the decision-
489 making process. They are to be educated, it seems, into affirming their children’s inclination to
490 be cross-gendered. If they balk, we can assume, they are to be considered as part of the problem,
491 not part of the solution. Even the therapist’s role in gender affirming therapy is somewhat murky.
492 He or she ought not to encourage the child to “wait and see.” The AAP views it as tantamount to

⁷⁵ The question is seriously asked, “Are toddlers too young to know they’re a different gender?” See “Is Three Too Young for Children to Know They’re a Different Gender? Transgender Researchers Disagree.” KQED, August 26, 2018. <https://www.kqed.org/futureofyou/440851/can-you-really-know-that-a-3-year-old-is-transgender>.

⁷⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puberty_blocker.

⁷⁷ See Cécile A Unger, “Hormone Therapy for Transgender Patients.” *Translational Andrology and Urology* 5, no. 6 (December 2016): 877–84. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tau.2016.09.04>. She writes, “Large-scale prospective studies are lacking. Many of the studies that currently exist have small patient numbers as well as short or medium-term follow-up, and very few of the patients studied are over the age of 65. Furthermore, no head-to-head comparisons of hormone regimens have been published. It is therefore, not possible to draw definitive conclusions about the adverse effects of long-term cross-sex hormone use.”

⁷⁸ “Gender Transition Drugs Could Be Bad for the Heart.” 18 February 2019. *Medical News Today*. Accessed July 15, 2019. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324482.php>.

⁷⁹ Unger, “Hormone Therapy.”

⁸⁰ Attempts have been made to reverse gender reassignment surgery, but they cannot remove the scars of the previous surgeries nor (obviously) restore the *status quo ante* in other respects. One’s male gonads, for example, cannot be restored and the ‘reversal’ has to be maintained by hormonal therapy. On the subject of the frequency of “regret” surgery, see Sara Danker, Sasha K. Narayan, Rachel Bluebond-Langner, Loren S. Schechter, and Jens U. Berli. “Abstract: A Survey Study of Surgeons’ Experience with Regret and/or Reversal of Gender-Confirmation Surgeries.” *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Global Open* 6, no. 9 Suppl (September 26, 2018). Accessed September 20, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.GOX.0000547077.23299.00>. A first-person account regarding the surgery itself and its outcomes can be found in Walt Heyer’s account, “Transgender Sex Change Regret: Transitioning Won’t Heal Real Issues,” *USA Today*. February 11, 2019. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/voices/2019/02/11/transgender-debate-transitioning-sex-gender-column/1894076002/>. There is great controversy around the subject of “de-transitioning” as it is called.

493 malpractice to encourage—even gently—the child to conform their minds to their bodies. “A
494 little child shall lead them” seems to be the watchword, though not in any biblical sense. It is
495 hard to imagine any other major medical decision—or indeed major life decision—in which a
496 parent would simply be guided by the child’s wishes rather than to offer her own guidance to the
497 child. Sometimes good parents simply say ‘no’ despite the fact that, in so doing, their children
498 may feel deeply frustrated for a time. Quite simply, it seems that gender affirmation therapy is a
499 demand for parents to abdicate their calling as parents.

500 B. Scripture Teaching and Confessional Witness

501 It may seem strange for a pastoral response to the transgender movement to delay so long in
502 citing Scripture. After all, the light of Scripture for us is like the bright sun compared with the
503 flickering star of human reason. At best natural law and natural reason can only argue and
504 demonstrate probabilities, never give us certainties as Scripture does. As Luther put it, “No
505 [merely human] reason is so firm that it cannot again be overthrown by reason.”⁸¹

506 Yet there is some value in pointing out that it is not irrational to express concerns over the
507 transgender phenomenon, and that Christians are not simply ‘haters’ with no substance to our
508 thinking. Thus, in the previous section, we were aiming only at modest goals: first we wished to
509 clarify things for the faithful who might find themselves confused by the extravagant claims and
510 moral certitudes expressed by those within the transgender movement. Our second was to at least
511 raise questions in the minds of those who find the ideology persuasive. While they may still
512 dismiss us as ‘haters,’ they can at least see that we have some reasons for our position, ones that
513 are not simply derived from an authority like Scripture (which they do not recognize). And we
514 might make them aware of certain assumptions about the world which they have simply accepted
515 without due reflection.

516 Scripture proofs alone, of course, are the final and convincing authority for believers.⁸² We
517 acknowledge and confess this joyfully because our own hearts have been won and our
518 consciences have been confiscated by him who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal 2:20).
519 When he speaks to us in his Word, we listen and follow gladly because we trust him. He has
520 never lied to us, would never harm us, nor want for us anything but good. When dealing,
521 therefore, with those individuals who are struggling with a transgender mindset, our
522 congregational ministries would do well to remember that unconditional love first won our
523 hearts. After compassionate listening to the struggles of those who believe themselves to be

⁸¹ As qtd. in *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther*, Siegbert W. Becker. Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 1982, 38.

⁸² It is not surprising that Cheryl Evans (who argues for Christianity to be ‘inclusive’ and to accept transgender people without passing judgment) has to deny the inspiration of Scripture in order to get any traction for her arguments. Like Erasmus, she broadly dismisses the Bible’s reliability by declaring that its messages are “unfinished, unclear, and almost purposely ambiguous.” *What Does God Think?: Transgender People and the Bible*. Published by Cheryl B. Evans, 2017, 68.

524 transgender, basic law and unconditional gospel are always the place to begin a biblical
525 discussion.

526 At the same time what is clearly stated in Scripture must be clearly confessed to all, and
527 without apology. Human sexuality is not merely a side issue of little significance. It is bound up
528 with all the chief articles of our faith. Historic Christianity has always affirmed these truths. To
529 demonstrate this, in organizing what the Scriptures have to say we will follow the basic pattern
530 of the Apostles' Creed. We believe in the Creator, who made this world and everything in it. We
531 believe in our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who became fully human to rescue this world and
532 everything in it from corruption, sin, and death. And we believe in the Holy Spirit who is even
533 now renewing the world and everything in it.

534 *First Article Truths*

- 535 1. In the beginning God created the human race in his own image by an act of special
536 creation. (Gen 1:26-27).
- 537 2. He created us body and soul—a single being with both a physical component and a
538 spiritual component. We are personalities created with bodies and souls (Gen 1:26-27;
539 Gen 2:7; Ps 73:26; Matt 10:28; Eccl 12:7).
- 540 3. God's purpose for humanity was expressed in his act of creating us, that is, in his creative
541 design (Matt 19:4-6).⁸³
- 542 4. He created us “male and female,” that is: with a sexuality that takes only one of two
543 forms (Gen 1:27; 2:20-23).
- 544 5. He created male and female to unite us in marriage⁸⁴ (Gen 2:20-24; Matt 19:6).
- 545 6. He makes man and woman one in marriage to ease our loneliness, to provide mutual help
546 and companionship, and to produce and raise children (Gen 2:20; 1:28; Matt 19:6). God's
547 intent is to build families.
- 548 7. God's creation in all its aspects was and is “very good” (Gen 1:31).
- 549 8. Our original righteousness and holiness were lost in the Fall (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24; 1 Cor
550 2:14; Rom 7:18; Rom 8:7) and human beings became thoroughly corrupt and depraved in
551 their natures.⁸⁵ (Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; John 3:6; Eph 2:1, 3; Matt 15:19; Rom 7:18; Rom

⁸³ This is the underlying assumption of Genesis 1: the division of day from night, ‘the stars in their courses,’ the rising and setting of the sun, the succession of seasons, the empowering command for living things to be fruitful—these are all mentioned in Genesis 1 as being set in their order by God's creative word and design. The rest of the Scriptures affirm this with one voice (Ps 33:6; Ps 148:1-6; 2 Pet 3:5; Rev 4:11).

⁸⁴ God's gift of marriage does not exhaust Scripture's accounting for our creation as male and female. Unmarried men and women also have vital roles to play. Their maleness and femaleness is integral to those roles. Paul says we need each other as we serve in love in our unique callings as man or woman (1 Cor 11:11).

⁸⁵ “Nature” here is used as the Scriptures and Luther use it, to refer to “the negative or positive characteristics of a thing.” It does not refer to the “essence, body and soul of the human being.” Formula of Concord, SD I: 51 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 540. The sinful inborn characteristics of humanity after the fall have to be distinguished from humanity's essence as God's creatures fashioned with a body and a soul: “Otherwise, God would be a creator of sin...It is true this creature...of God is tragically corrupted by sin....God makes and fashions human

- 552 8:7). Nevertheless, the essence of our humanity—our creation as beings fashioned
 553 wonderfully and well, with body and soul, and as male and female for marriage—remains
 554 God’s handiwork even after the Fall (Ps 139:13-16; Matt 19:4-8).
- 555 9. Sexuality, marriage, and the family, therefore, are not merely social or cultural
 556 constructs. They cannot simply be changed by human will, desire, or feeling. They ought
 557 not be tampered with by human notions of what is right and progressive. “From the
 558 beginning” they have been gracious gifts of God, interwoven into human nature and
 559 foundational to human society (Matt 19:6).⁸⁶
- 560 10. The Church confesses, “I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave
 561 me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.”⁸⁷
- 562 11. The only appropriate response to our Creator for our existence, for our identities as male
 563 and female, and for marriage is to gratefully receive these things as gifts from our
 564 Creator’s hand, and “to thank and praise, to serve and obey him”⁸⁸ (Ps 139: 14; Ps 150:1,
 565 2, 6; Rom 12:1; Rom 1:21).
- 566
- 567 Because of these scriptural truths
- 568
- 569 12. We cannot accept a worldview that assumes humanity, rather than being a special
 570 creation of God, is more or less a random assemblage of atoms coalescing by
 571 happenstance (evolutionism).⁸⁹
- 572 13. We cannot accept an ideology that assumes that our world is constantly being refashioned
 573 by our subjective perceptions and the words we use to describe them. We reject the idea
 574 that all definitions and descriptions of the universe are merely expressions of personal

nature, as it now is, so tragically corrupted by sin, so that he might cleanse, sanctify, and save it through his dear Son...Original sin does not come from God, nor is it a creature or handiwork of God...In order to distinguish God’s creation and work ...from the devil’s work, we say that it is God’s creation that the human being has a body and soul and can think, speak, act, and accomplish anything, ‘for in him we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:28). That this nature is corrupted and that our thoughts, words, and deeds are evil is in its origin a handiwork of Satan...Sin cannot be the human being itself for God receives human beings for Christ’s sake into grace but remains hostile to sin for eternity” (FC SD I.38-42, 45 in Kolb and Wengert, 538-539).

⁸⁶ Here we stand together in conscious agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and their “Position Statement on Sex and Gender Identity.” They write, “God created the human race with unique gender distinctions as male and female,” available at https://els.org/wp-content/download/doctrine/Sex_and_Gender_Identity.pdf. We also agree with the statement adopted by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, which states, “From the standpoint of our bodies—which is the only objective means of determining who is male or female—we have a God-given identity that is either masculine or feminine,” CTCR “Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective.” Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, May 17, 2014. <http://www.lcms.org/docs/3012>, 5.

⁸⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther*. Edited by Stephen Geiger, Joel Otto, John Braun, and Ray Schumacher. Northwestern Publishing House, 2017, 130.

⁸⁸ *Luther’s Catechism*, in Geiger, Otto et al, 130.

⁸⁹ A note to all who work in science: we are not seeking to define the *theory of evolution* here. We are rather talking about the inferences drawn from it by people who oppose God’s revelation of beginnings. These would include ideologues who insist that we are mere meat skeletons, or that we are chemical cocktails, or that we are biologically determined (with no “Determiner” at the helm). These inferences, drawn from evolutionary theory, are not intrinsic to it as such. Nevertheless, in popular and scholarly circles, they are drawn. This gives the “ism” to evolutionism.

575 opinion without any basis in objective reality, and that all so-called “truths” are merely
576 interpretations based upon culture and individual feelings. We cannot accept the thought
577 that people are radically free to re-shape their world in any way they please, based upon
578 their feelings and desires (postmodernism). Such an ideology is contrary to both common
579 sense and natural law,⁹⁰ and it flatly contradicts the truth of the goodness of God’s
580 creation. There can be no compromise with a philosophy that rejects the objectivity of
581 God’s purpose and design for the world he has made. Our words do not make the world;
582 God’s Word does (Gen 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Ps 33:6-9; Heb 11:3).

583 14. We cannot accept the ancient Greek notion that the body is a tomb for the soul, or the
584 more modern notions that the body is a mere ‘meat-skeleton’ and that what you feel
585 defines your essence.⁹¹ We cannot accept that the true and authentic person is the
586 “autonomous choosing self” which can be radically separated from the physical body in
587 such a way that people are free to discard, reshape, and transform it any way that best
588 pleases their minds. “This is ancient Gnosticism in new garb.”⁹² To believe these
589 untruths is to reject the goodness of our Creator and to despise the gifts of body and soul
590 he has given us (Rom 1:21; Rom 9:20). God created us as humans with a body and soul
591 whose physical being is just as intrinsic to our essential nature as our soul (Gen 2:7; Matt
592 10:28). Matter matters.⁹³

593 15. We cannot accept that changing one’s birth sex through hormone therapies or surgeries is
594 right or even possible.⁹⁴ While we reject the false ideology of transgender theory as
595 contrary to natural law and Scripture, we retain every sympathy for individuals who are
596 affected by the powerful voices of their peers, their culture, and the dominant media.
597 These voices find an answering echo in their own sinful hearts. We pledge to express our
598 love to them in every way possible that remains consistent with our biblical confession.

599 16. Paul’s message to the Roman Christians serves as helpful commentary on these matters.
600 He uses the language of Genesis 1:26-28 to depict the fallen-ness and disorder of
601 humanity because of sin.⁹⁵ Paul assumes that God is a God of peace and order. He created
602 an orderly world. He created humanity in his image as male and female. He made his

⁹⁰ By this we are merely signaling that this statement is not a uniquely “Christian” insight. Consider the testimony of a former Christian, who found no strong antidote in the Anglicanism he grew up in to the “social justice” campus movements in Britain that were advocating an ideology he couldn’t accept, “All of these [movements]...seemed to have the same vision of man: a *deracinated, protean aggregate of desires* [emphasis mine]” Jacob Williams, “Why I Became Muslim.” *First Things*, May 2019. <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/05/why-i-became-muslim>.

⁹¹ As described by a young woman on a BBC program and as qtd. in Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 197.

⁹² Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 195.

⁹³ This is not the first time the Lutheran Church has had to contend with what the Confessions call “Manichean error” (FC SD 1.26). Against Flacius who claimed that original sin was essential to fallen humanity, the Confessors had to reaffirm the goodness of God’s creation.

⁹⁴ The essential biology of a man or woman remains male or female respectively, no matter what interventions take place--Genesis 1:26-27. We have previously mentioned that we recognize anomalous conditions known as intersex.

⁹⁵ Words like “image” (Rom 1:23, cp Gen 1:27); “male” and “female” (Rom 1:26, 27, cp Gen 1:27); “birds” and “reptiles” (Rom 1:23, cp Gen 1:27). This is more than accidental. Paul is evoking one account to increase the weight and gravity of his description of the current state of affairs. Even though humanity was part of God’s good creation at the beginning, its present state is deeply flawed and fallen because of sin and therefore stands under God’s wrath.

603 power and majesty known in the things he created. But fallen human beings suppress
604 these truths. Worse, they exchange these truths for lies. Instead of worshipping the
605 invisible Creator God, they fall into disorderly patterns of thinking. Instead of God
606 making man in his image, man makes God into his image. Not content with this, they
607 make him look like a bird, an animal, and even a reptile (Rom 1:23). Instead of
608 worshipping the Creator, they worship created things (Rom 1:25). The chaos caused by
609 sin and the disorder of humanity’s fallen state does not stop there. It is also seen in the
610 disordered sexual lives of people. Man and woman were created for each other to become
611 one flesh in marriage. But now women exchange their natural, God-given sexual function
612 for what is contrary to nature. And men do the same, abandoning women to have sex with
613 other men (Rom 1:26-27). This disordered state Paul further accentuates with expressions
614 like “unnatural” “shameful” “indecent” and “error” (Rom 1:26-27).

615
616 While Paul may point to idolatry and confused sexuality as prime examples of the
617 disorder of man’s fallen state, people would seriously mis-read him if they were to think
618 that erroneous ideas of God and/or sex were the worst of all possible sins. As Paul’s
619 description continues, he includes the entire inner thought-life of humanity: our
620 arrogance, greed, and envy, our gossiping tongues and malicious hearts. All these are
621 equally examples of a depraved, disordered, and bent mindset (Rom 1:28-31). Clearly no
622 human being has the right to claim he is better than another. Clearly, “God commands all
623 people everywhere to repent’ (Acts 17:30). He says, “all people”—no single human being
624 is excluded. This repentance teaches us to recognize sin: namely, that we are all lost,
625 neither hide nor hair of us is good, and we must become absolutely new and different
626 people.”⁹⁶

627 *Second Article Truths*

- 628 1. Yet the object of God’s love and pity is, by his amazing grace, that same fallen
629 creation: “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever
630 believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The world which
631 John describes earlier as being “in darkness,” unwilling and unable to recognize its
632 Maker (John 1:5, 10) is the same world into which God sends his Son. The Word
633 became flesh (John 1:14). Jesus is the human incarnation of the one eternal God (Phil
634 2:6).
- 635 2. In other words, there is no greater evidence than the incarnation of Jesus Christ that
636 our essential humanity is still God’s good creation—body and soul. As our
637 confessions say, “God’s Son assumed our human nature without sin, [and]... he
638 ‘became one of us, in every respect like us’ apart from sin (Heb 2:17) ...Christ...is of

⁹⁶ Smalcald Articles, III.3.35 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 317-318.

- 639 one essence with us, his siblings. For he took upon himself his human nature which is
640 in every way identical with our human nature in its essence and in all its essential
641 characteristics (with the exception of sin.)”⁹⁷
- 642 3. Therefore a distinction must be made between the essence of humanity itself and the
643 sin that inheres in all of us, body and soul. This is not to minimize sin. It remains a
644 terrible corruption that affects and pollutes our whole being: our thinking, feeling, and
645 willing (Gen 8:21Ps 51:5; John 3:6; Rom 3:10-18; Rom 8:7).
- 646 4. But Scripture teaches that though we are by nature⁹⁸ “objects of God’s [just] wrath”
647 (Eph 2:3), “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to
648 save the world through him” (John 3:17). After becoming one of us, Jesus willingly
649 offered himself as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John
650 1:29). Though “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” nevertheless “all
651 are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”
652 (Rom 3:23-24).
- 653 5. As our confessions put it, “God makes and fashions human nature as it now is, so
654 tragically corrupted by sin, so that he might cleanse, sanctify, and save it through his
655 dear Son.”⁹⁹
- 656 6. The only appropriate response to our Savior’s love is to gladly embrace him with our
657 whole heart and confess, “He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature,
658 purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the
659 devil...that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in
660 everlasting righteousness”¹⁰⁰

661
662 Because of these scriptural truths

- 663
- 664 7. We cannot accept as accurate the despairing cry that declares, “God made me this
665 way [i.e. a transgender person] and I have no choice but to be what God made me.”
666 This contradicts not only the goodness of God’s creation, but also the truths of the
667 incarnation, that Jesus assumed our essential humanity into the godhead, and that our
668 essential humanity is still God’s good work. To say anything else turns God into the
669 author of sin. What’s more, it could no longer be said that Jesus is our brother and
670 kinsman-Redeemer since Scripture declares that he was without sin. It is true that sin
671 has corrupted us in body and soul. But if sin is part of our human essence, Jesus is no
672 kin of ours. On the contrary, those who penitently accept the truth of Jesus’

⁹⁷ FC SD I.43, 45 in Kolb and Wengert, 539

⁹⁸ Though it may sometimes be confusing for the reader, we are retaining the two meanings for “nature” employed by the Lutheran confessions. The first refers to the “nature” or essence of a creature of God; the second to its “inborn characteristics.” We employ the second meaning here. See Footnote # 68 for more clarification.

⁹⁹ FC SD I.39 in Kolb and Wengert, 538

¹⁰⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism*, Northwestern Publishing House, 2017, 148.

673 incarnation trust that the whole reason why our Lord came was to set us free from sin
674 by his redeeming love.

675 ***Third Article Truths***

- 676 1. God justifies us personally through the gospel message of the forgiveness of sins,
677 won by our Savior Jesus (Rom 4:25). We receive this forgiveness by grace, through
678 faith alone, and not because of our own good works or acts of love. Faith itself is not
679 our own doing, but a gift of the Spirit working through the gospel (Rom 10:17; Rom
680 3:28; Rom 8:2; Rom 8:16; Eph 1:13; Eph 3:8). The gospel is a complete pardon of the
681 entire life of the whole person, body and soul. As Paul says, “You were washed, you
682 were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the
683 Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).
- 684 2. In the teaching of justification, the role of faith is simply to trust that what God has
685 done in Jesus, he has done ‘for me’ (John 3:16). But the receiving hand in
686 justification becomes an active hand in sanctification. The Holy Spirit takes up his
687 dwelling in us and makes in our bodies his temple (1 Cor 6:19). The new birth of faith
688 flows into the new life of faith. This means we are not only freed from sin’s guilt, we
689 are also freed from its absolute power to control and determine our lives and conduct
690 (Rom 8:9; Rom 6:14, 18, 23). The Spirit works in us the new creation (2 Cor 5:17).
691 Through God’s grace, he liberates us to live a new and holy life (Rom 6:1-7; 12-13).
692 With the power of the Spirit, we call out to God as our Father in all needs and
693 distresses (Rom 8:15). With the power of the Spirit we “put to death the misdeeds of
694 the body” (Rom 8:13) and are able to live lives dedicated to God (Rom 6:22).
- 695 3. We live by faith, however, and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). The world as we see it still
696 “displays the results of sin and death.”¹⁰¹ God’s good creation groans under the
697 “bondage to decay,” the result of the curse God pronounced on human sin (Rom 8:20-
698 23). Everything man sees, everything he feels, everything he thinks, everything he
699 wants, everything he does, everything he experiences is corrupted by death and serves
700 as a reminder of his fallen state (Gen 3:16-19). This remains true even for Christians.
701 While the new life of faith has already begun in us in this earthly existence, it has not
702 yet been perfected and will not be until we see our Savior’s face in glory (Phil 1:6; 2
703 Cor 4:16-18; 1 John 3:2-3). Only then will creation itself be fully liberated and
704 brought into “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).
- 705 4. That is why when Paul describes the sweet rule of grace (freeing us from sin and
706 making us masters over its uncanny power), he does speak as if we were beyond
707 being influenced by our sinful natures. He does not depict our present lives as if we
708 had left sin’s powers completely behind, as if sin were not still a clear and present

¹⁰¹ CTCR “Gender Identity Disorder,” 7.

709 danger, as if sin could not assume rule over us again (Rom 6:7; 12-14; 8:12-14; Gal
710 5:17-26). In short, “Sin in the flesh is not completely gone or dead.”¹⁰²
711 5. Paul deepens our understanding of the power of this indwelling sin by depicting the
712 Christian’s life as a hard inner struggle: “What I do is not the good I want to do; no
713 the evil that I do not want to do, this I keep on doing” (Rom 7:19). It is a struggle that
714 defies our understanding (Rom 7:15) and leads to that heart-wrenching cry, “What a
715 wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:24). The
716 only solution is not to rely upon our own powers, but to find solace in God’s
717 pardoning grace alone, “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom
718 7:24; see also Rom 8:1).

719
720 Because of these scriptural truths

721
722 6. We cannot accept that a Christian with the gift the Holy Spirit can at the same time
723 purposefully live under the mastery of sin. Feelings are one thing; acting upon them is
724 another. Sinful thoughts may come, but we do not have to cherish them in our hearts.
725 Evil yearnings may rise within us, but we don’t have to carry them out. “Christian
726 theology has consistently sought to distinguish desires and feelings from
727 behavior.”¹⁰³At the same time we understand that Christian people often struggle, feel
728 confused and alienated from their own being (Rom 7:23-24). This genuinely Christian
729 combat is intensely painful because a person doing battle against his sinful nature is at
730 war with himself. “Even though the killing of the old creature and the renewal of their
731 minds in the Spirit has begun—nonetheless, the old creature still continues to hang on
732 in their nature and all of its inward and outward powers.”¹⁰⁴ This is a battle to the
733 death and there can be no quarter given. To state it differently, “There is no true,
734 saving faith in those who have...no sorrow, and who have the evil intention to remain
735 and continue in sins.”¹⁰⁵ In this battle we have the gospel comfort of knowing that we
736 are still accepted as God’s sons and daughters for the sake of our Savior. There truly
737 is “now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). In addition
738 we have the consolation of knowing that even though they may have glaring faults
739 and seem small in our own eyes, “believers’ good works are pleasing and acceptable
740 to God even though they are impure and imperfect in this flesh.”¹⁰⁶

741 C. Pastoral Encouragements

742 This sets a trustworthy theological context for understanding the phenomena of transgender
743 persons and the transgender movement. As purveyors of an ideology and societal worldview, the

¹⁰² SA III.XIII.1 in Kolb and Wengert, 325.

¹⁰³ CTCR “Gender Identity Disorder,” 5.

¹⁰⁴ FC SD VI.7 in Kolb and Wengert, 588.

¹⁰⁵ FC SD III.26, in Kolb and Wengert, 566.

¹⁰⁶ FC SD IV.8, in Kolb and Wengert, 575.

744 transgender movement makes claims that are contrary to both natural law and fundamental
745 articles of the Christian faith. The ideology undermines the family and is destructive to God's
746 gift of marriage. It poses a threat to impressionable children and adolescents. Some may say that
747 it is hateful for us to say such things. But there is no love without truth. That's why we believe
748 just the opposite is true. It would be hateful to keep silent. We are convinced that it is very much
749 in keeping with love's call to serve our neighbor, just as it is loving to seek to liberate people
750 from any ideas that are false, harmful, or illusory. If someone is anorexic, one does not seek to
751 confirm in them the illusion they are fat or encourage them to seek medical remedies to make
752 them lose more weight.

753 Speaking a message to society about a non-biblical ideology is one thing. Dealing with
754 individuals who are struggling with sinful feelings and misconceptions is another. Here again,
755 biblical teachings of God's creation, man's fallen nature, Christ's redemption and the sanctifying
756 work of the Spirit also help greatly in determining the best approaches for dealing with
757 individuals.

758 All the way through our presentation, we regarded intersex people as a special case. They are
759 born with a physical condition that has various causes (genetic or hormonal) and that exhibits
760 itself in various ways. In some cases, the genitalia at birth are ambiguous. In other cases, intersex
761 people may not easily be classified within the normal chromosomal categories of XY-male or
762 XX-female. "They do not fit the typical definitions of female or male."¹⁰⁷ One can readily
763 perceive that the physical condition could give rise to a number of social, psychological, or
764 theological struggles. Yet care must be exercised not to expand these rare and exceptional cases
765 into a new rule.

766 In offering pastoral counsel, we might bear in mind that, like other examples of congenital
767 disorders, Christians explain this phenomenon with the biblical understanding that God's good
768 world has been corrupted by sin (Rom 5:12; Rom 8:20-21). Yet we take care to distinguish
769 between the general corruption that affects all creation, and a specific sin as a cause for the
770 disorder. The former we affirm; the latter we deny (John 9:1-2). Furthermore, we encourage
771 parents and the one so affected to understand that God says there is nothing wrong with their
772 essential humanity—they are God's good creation just as every other human being. We remind
773 them of second and third article truths as well: that Jesus became fully human, just as they are
774 except for sin; that through the rebirth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit makes them children of God,
775 no different than any other Christian (Gal 3:28). Finally, we also encourage them to seek
776 appropriate psychological and medical treatments, ones "that allows the greatest possible fullness
777 of service to Christ and to others by the individual."¹⁰⁸ This could include hormonal treatments
778 as well as surgery when biological or sexual ambiguity is present.

¹⁰⁷ "What Is Intersex? | Definition of Intersexual." *Planned Parenthood Blog*. Accessed July 25, 2019.

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity/whats-intersex>.

¹⁰⁸ CTCR "Gender Identity Disorder," 8.

779 In dealing pastorally with individuals suffering from gender dysphoria without a clear
780 biological basis, or with those who claim to be transgender, pastors first of all must be sure that
781 they as pastors have a clear understanding of biblical truth and natural law as outlined above.
782 “But [this] is not the sum of pastoral care. The church’s ministry is instead always anchored in
783 the responsibility to proclaim, reflect, and enact the love of God in Christ Jesus—his love for a
784 fallen world—in the lives of specific individuals.”¹⁰⁹

785 In the case of many adults so afflicted, they may not simply be struggling with thoughts of
786 being transgender, they may also have suffered sexual traumas from childhood. They may be
787 current victims of bullying, disdain, hatred, and ostracism. Sadder still, some of this may have
788 come their way from Christians who have somehow come to believe that the church is not a
789 hospital for the sick but a citadel for the saints. More often than not what they need is not a
790 sermon on morality, but a compassionate friend with a willing ear. We should not assume—
791 despite whatever bravado might be initially on display—that we are dealing with a willful sin.
792 Underneath the surface, there may well be a person who would very much prefer to be other than
793 what he feels he is. Their condition may be connected to profound feelings of shame. If our first
794 parents felt shame in their experience of their now-disordered sexuality (Gen 3:7; cp Gen 2:25),
795 why should it be any different for us their children? What’s more, the sense of being the wrong
796 gender may be so deeply set as to be unable to attribute to a conscious choice, “I’ve always felt
797 this way.” In this regard they are no different than any other Christian who may struggle with
798 deeply rooted aspects of his sinful nature. This one may be prone to alcoholism, another is easily
799 angered, another is inclined to gossip, still another to envy or selfish ambition and so on (Gal
800 5:19). These thoughts, feelings, and passions may be so ingrained as to involve individuals in a
801 war they may not feel they’re winning. Original sin is a deep and pervasive evil in our natures.
802 The answer remains the same for all: the gospel reassurance that Jesus died for them and his
803 blood purifies them from all sin (1 John 1:7). They are God’s royal sons and daughters through it
804 all. His power is made perfect not only *despite* their weakness but actually *in* their weakness (2
805 Cor 12:9). The struggle, far from evidence of failure, is evidence of the Spirit (Gal 5:17). Let the
806 battle continue!

807 Pastors are unlikely to possess the expertise needed to deal with the psychological issues
808 adults face with gender identity disorder. But they can continue to serve as their pastors in a
809 number of ways. Finding competent therapists for them who will not undermine biblical truth
810 is—from what has been written above—clearly a tall order in itself. Pastors should be ready to
811 recommend people that are not only trustworthy but equipped with the expertise to deal with this
812 condition. What’s more, they should also assure the individuals that they have every intention to
813 stand alongside them as they continue to fight this battle, assuring them of the Lord’s forgiveness
814 and equipping them with the Spirit’s power through the means of grace.

¹⁰⁹ CTCR “Gender Identity Disorder,” 8

815 There are, sadly, bound to be cases where the individual ultimately proves to be recalcitrant,
816 wanting nothing to do with the truth of Scripture. He would rather persist (despite all admonition
817 and calls to repentance) in expressing his desires in his life. The church's duty in such cases is
818 clear. Putting such a one under discipline is the final debt of love we can pay, praying that it will
819 bring him to his senses and back to the embrace of the family of believers (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor
820 5:4-5).

821 Parents and children also present a special case. The influence of culture and the media can
822 confuse children and parents, and (more crucially for parenting) threaten to rob parents of their
823 common sense, as well as keep them from offering the solid parental guidance which is their
824 right. Parents may also be tempted to overreact. Trying to reinforce unhelpful male and female
825 stereotypes can estrange children from their birth sex. A boy may be quiet, sensitive, and quick
826 to express his feelings. A girl may be loud and boisterous, and enjoy rough and tumble games. It
827 is not helpful in either case to say to the child, "Boys/girls don't act that way." Growing up with
828 siblings of the opposite sex may also affect a child's desire to be considered 'one of the boys' or
829 'one of the girls.' There is no need for panic. It is normal for young children to be interested in
830 and experiment with their sexuality. Pastors can equip parents in a confusing world with the clear
831 voice of reason and the even clearer testimony of God's Word. Encourage them to be parents and
832 to love their children. Encourage them to trust their parental instincts. The best advice is usually,
833 "Wait and see." If a child's feelings persist, causing distress for the child or a persistent change
834 in behavior patterns, the help of a trustworthy counselor is called for.

835 With adolescents and young adults, the struggle with transgender feelings may be especially
836 intense. They are the ones most deeply impacted by the current culture. Passions run strong. The
837 pain may be overwhelming. Many of our own Christian 'cisgender' adolescents and young adults
838 may even feel a sense of righteous anger on their behalf, perceiving them to belong to a
839 marginalized group whom they believe (and perhaps not without cause) have received harsh
840 treatment from a judgmental and hypocritical church. Here remember Paul's admonition to
841 pastors to "encourage with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Tim 4:2). This is good
842 advice to give parents too. Sometimes in the storms of adolescence and young adulthood, the
843 best a parent can hope for is simply to hang on in the face of hard accusations and bitter hostility.
844 Keep calm. Don't harangue. Don't pontificate. Love unconditionally. Build bridges as much as
845 in you lies, not walls. Listen with all compassion, even when you disagree. The pain your
846 children feel is real and deeply felt. Love them enough to be silent. Love them enough to speak
847 the hard thing even if they don't want to hear it. Pray for discernment to know when silence or
848 speech is called for. Remember the great debt we have all been forgiven (Matt 18:23-35), and let
849 love cover over a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:7). Even if they reject our testimony and walk away
850 from us in anger, remember and imitate our Father, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the
851 good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). Above all, bear in mind
852 that we are not perfect parents nor are they perfect children. But we are both forgiven, and that

853 gives us a strong place to stand together, a firm identity in Christ that neither death, nor sin, nor
854 the passage of time can touch (1 Pet 1:3-4).

855 These are emotionally charged experiences. Having a pastor walk alongside with the gospel
856 comfort and guidance of the Word is vital. It goes without saying that the assistance of a trusted
857 counselor will be extremely beneficial as well. It is hard sometimes to hear what another is
858 saying through the fog of pain. It is hard to speak the truth in love when another feels deeply hurt
859 or has deeply hurt us. Having a counselor mediate and assist us to speak and listen in love is a
860 great blessing. The overall goal, of course is that the adolescent embraces the truth of God's
861 Word and fights against thoughts, desires, and feelings that run counter to it. We pray that he
862 may come to see that true freedom is not found in doing what we want (that path leads to the
863 most abject slavery—Luke 15:16), but in wanting what God wants (Rom 8:2; 15). But a worthy
864 mid-term goal is to agree to wait, pointing out that decisions made in haste now can have
865 irrevocable consequences. Time brings clarity and the majority of gender dysphorics felt
866 differently when they grew older.

867 We may also be called to give pastoral care to some who have already had hormone
868 treatments and/or sex reassignment surgery and who now regret it. If it is possible for the
869 individual to change the situation and he desires it, that's one thing. But there are some situations
870 that are difficult to undo. A broken marriage often cannot be restored. A childhood trauma
871 cannot be reversed. The best pastoral response *is always* to point the penitent to the cleansing
872 power of Jesus' blood; it *may be* to encourage him to carry out the calling he now has (1 Cor
873 7:20) rather than live from endless longing for another. Consultation with a trustworthy therapist
874 would be called for.

875 In every case, the call to the Church is clear. In the face of transgender ideology, we articulate
876 the common sense of natural law and confess the unchanging truth of God's Word, "Male and
877 female he created them" (Gen 1:27). This truth, and all that flows from it, must be taught and
878 practiced unabashedly in our fellowship, for the good of individuals, for the good of the family
879 and for the good of society. It is the loving thing to do. At the same time we need to exercise care
880 how we confess these truths so that we don't heap woe upon woe on those in our midst who
881 struggle with feelings of gender confusion or who are close to those who do. We cannot give the
882 impression—any more than we would want to with any other sin—that this is the worst of all
883 possible sins and those who fall prey to it are beyond redemption. We cannot give the impression
884 that the Church is a toxic place for the hurting, the wounded, the struggling, the alienated of our
885 age. Pastoral leadership is called for here, not only in what we say—that it be clear and true—but
886 in how we say it—that it be loving. It would be wrong to so inveigh against society's ills as to
887 give the impression that never could it be said that "such were some of us" (1 Cor 6:11). There
888 may be a number of sinner/saints in our audience who have struggled with these and with a host
889 of other sinful feelings and desires. We distinguish between thoughts, feelings and cravings
890 which are products of our sinful nature and the sinful behavior that comes from them. With the
891 Spirit's power, we battle against sin at its source in evil desire, unwilling to allow it to flow

892 outward into actions. Luther once approvingly quoted an aged Christian who gave this advice to
893 a younger one, “Dear brother, you cannot prevent the birds from flying over your head, but you
894 can certainly keep them from building a nest in your hair.” And he concluded by citing St.
895 Augustine, “We cannot prevent trials and temptations from overtaking us, but with our prayer
896 and our invocation of God’s assistance we can stave off their victory over us.”¹¹⁰ The fact is, we
897 all have besetting sins that we battle with as we live from the grace of forgiveness.

898 A Christian congregation knows this, and therefore wants to be a welcoming place for sinners
899 of all kinds. As we reach out to one another in genuine love and friendship, trusting relationships
900 can be established that offer opportunities to listen to one another’s struggles as well as to point
901 to the Savior who loved us and gave himself for us. Genuine Christian love (a rare bird indeed)
902 serves as a powerful inducement for those outside the church, disarming their hostility, causing
903 them to question their assumptions, motivating them to want to learn more (1 Pet 2:12, 15, 3:1;
904 15-16). Society believes generally that Christians are hateful, hypocritical, and judgmental. Our
905 testimony about the transgender ideology is often seen as proof of this. Let our lives give the lie
906 to this lie!

907 In all this we place our confidence in our Triune God. Our Father has made us wisely and
908 well, male and female. Though we bear the marks of sin upon our bodies and souls, our sinless
909 Lord Jesus has redeemed us by becoming like us body and soul to take our sin away. Through
910 the gospel, the Spirit has begun his new creation in us by faith and sustains that faith by the same
911 gospel. He gives us the power to say ‘no’ to sin and ‘yes’ to God even though we still struggle
912 under much weakness. He has washed us with the blood of the Lamb to give us the power to
913 overcome our accuser. The love of Christ compels us to demonstrate this love to others. We are
914 convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live
915 should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. This is
916 our sacred mission.

917 Fourth Draft--Corrected Version 4.0.1 for the WLQ after receiving Dr. Rob Balza's comments.
918 September 30, 2019

¹¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 42: Devotional Writings I*. “An Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer for Simple Laymen” Edited by Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999, 73.