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GENDER AND SEXUALITY

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In recent years, one cultural debate has emerged as an apparent frontrunner for the most controversial in America, and it involves the topic of gender and sexuality. Unlike many social issues, discussions about sexuality and gender raise personal and fundamental questions about human identity: *Who am I? How was I created to be?*

Christians may find themselves in particularly delicate situations where a family member or loved one is struggling with their identity. As difficult as these conversations may be, the Church cannot shy away. The body of Christ must directly engage in conversations about gender and sexuality to remind our culture of the immeasurable love the Creator has for us, and the spiritual liberty God's word provides. But before doing so, it is imperative that Christians equip themselves with the knowledge to understand the philosophies that compete with the truth of God's word.

Commentators usually discuss issues of gender and sexuality as falling under an umbrella category called "LGBTQ+ issues," shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Proponents of "queer theory" or "trans" ideology use the plus sign to signify a core feature of "LGBTQ+" ideology, that feature being that any omitted letters are not to be construed as exclusions.

"Queer theory" and trans ideology are commonly taught at the collegiate level, funded and advanced by university systems. This does not mean, however, that Christians should be intimidated from debates with those who call themselves "experts" or "scholars" on these subjects. In fact, Christians should be encouraged by the fact that both "queer theory" and trans ideology are simply understood.¹

"Queer theory" makes two basic claims: First, traditional sexual ethics and gender "roles" that encourage self-restraint or self-discipline only serve to shackle people from reaching true freedom, from fully expressing their sexual identity. Second, full sexual liberation requires that society accept all aberrant forms of sexual behavior to which a person assents.

Trans ideology divorces gender from sex. It argues that gender is a "social construct" based on societal expectations of a person based on their biology. Resting upon the belief that gender is a social construct, trans ideology rejects the idea that gender is "[binary](#)," composed of two kinds. Instead, they argue gender is a "spectrum" of many identities. Thus, those who feel a psychological discordance between their biology and "gender" are transgender.

Contrary to popular myth, "transgender" theory is not new. Rather, it is simply the *newest* iteration of **dissociative liberation theory**, which argues that freedom is an individual transcendent state that results from separating the "material" from the "spiritual" (the body from the spirit). The first of these historically heretical theories was gnosticism.

¹ For a more detailed explanation of queer theory, See Ryan T. Anderson, *Transgender Ideology Is Riddled With Contradictions. Here Are the Big Ones.*, The Heritage Foundation (Feb. 9, 2018) (available at <https://www.heritage.org/gender/commentary/transgender-ideology-riddled-contradictions-here-are-the-big-ones>). See also Christopher Rufo, *A Parent's Guide to Radical Queer Theory* (available at https://christopherrufo.com/content/uploads/2022/09/Chris-Rufo_Radical-Gender-Guide-v2.pdf)



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As a general belief system, however, gnosticism's origins are uncertain. [Some historians believe that it emerged before the birth of Christ as an](#) "aberrant form of Judaism, combined with certain ideas about divine reality drawn from the Platonism of the time (which had developed beyond the philosophical ideas of Plato)."

If one were to ask, "what is real," they would be asking a question about the nature of existence or being. In philosophy, questions like this are the foundation of ontology, the study of being, or more specifically "what *exists*." [According to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato](#), *existence* is divided into two realms: the realms of "Being" and "Becoming." The key difference between these two realms is that the former contains *eternal, unchanging, abstract ideals* while the latter contains the perceived instantiations of the ideal, which do change.

In the realm of "Being" exists the "Forms," which, [according to Plato](#), are abstractions that are unchanging, such as Truth, Justice, or Beauty. Humans cannot fully observe these "Forms" because all things in our physical universe will eventually decay, which is contrary to the nature of the Forms. Nevertheless, we can observe instantiations of these abstractions in the realm of "Becoming," our changing universe. Take, for example, if one were to climb to the top of a mountain, observe thousands of miles of nature beneath them, and declare, "nature is beautiful!" According to Plato, those words acknowledge how the presently observable nature of the Earth resembles the "Form" of Beauty, even though the "nature" of the Earth is subject to change by natural phenomenon.

One might ask, "where did the Forms come from?" According to [Plato](#), the source of the Forms is something called "the Good." In *The Republic*, Plato writes as follows: "the sun is only the author of visibility in all visible things, but of generation and nourishment and growth, though he himself is not generation ... in like manner *the good* may be said to be not only the author of knowledge to all things known, but of their being and essence, and yet the good is not essence, but far exceeds essence in dignity and power."

In plain language, Plato views "The Good" like the sun. Just as the sun's light makes everything around us perceivable and intelligible, so too does "the Good" make all other "Forms" intelligible. Even more, the essence of "the Forms" emanates from "the Good."

The philosophy of Plato was guided by a belief that an objective truth *truly* exists, and that we can come to know these objective truths better through our use of reason. The German philosopher [Friedrich Nietzsche likened Plato's belief](#), as well as the belief of other philosophers, to the Christian concept of faith: "Even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine."

Properly interpreted, Plato's theory of the Forms is remarkably similar to the beginning of the [Nicene Creed](#): "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, *of all things visible and invisible*." In this light, platonic philosophy is *not* fundamentally opposed to Christian belief, albeit elements are equally obnoxious to Judeo-Christian principles. But, in the early days of Christianity, the "Gnostics" merged features of platonic thought [such as the idea of the two



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realms] with Christianity to propose a mythology and narrative of human salvation entirely different from scripture. **The Church Father Irenaeus, who was the [disciple of Polycarp](#) (the disciple of the Apostle John), confronted the anti-biblical beliefs of Gnosticism in his multi-volume work titled [Against Heresies](#), summarizing them as follows:**

Their [the Gnostics] manner of acting is just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed by some skilful artist out of precious jewels, should then take this likeness of the man all to pieces, should rearrange the gems, and so fit them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox, and even that but poorly executed; and should then maintain and declare that this was the beautiful image of the king which the skilful artist constructed, pointing to the jewels which had been admirably fitted together by the first artist to form the image of the king, but have been with bad effect transferred by the latter one to the shape of a dog, and by thus exhibiting the jewels, should deceive the ignorant who had no conception what a king's form was like, and persuade them that that miserable likeness of the fox was, in fact, the beautiful image of the king.

The term “gnostic” etymologically derives from the Greek term “gnōstikos,” [meaning](#) “knowing, able to discern, good at knowing.” As a historic heresy, Gnostics believed that the God of the Israelites, whom they referred to as the [Demiurge](#) was *evil*, the true Satan. Though the gnostics believed this “evil” god created the material universe, they believed the demiurge was inferior to a supreme god called [“the Ineffable.”](#) Jesus, [according to the Gnostics](#), was not the incarnate God; rather, Jesus was a spiritual messenger sent by the Ineffable to free humanity from the enslavement of the Demiurge and the corruption of the world. As such, the [gnostics believed that](#) “[s]alvation belongs to the soul alone, for the body is by nature subject to corruption.” **In other words, salvation is intrinsic through knowledge fully realized in the mind of man, not a grace freely given by God to save us from our sin. Where there is knowledge, there is power, a power that humans can use to liberate our true selves from the corruption of the body.**

[One scholar summarizes Gnostic theology](#) as follows: “Gnosticism is the belief that human beings contain a piece of God (the highest good or a divine spark) within themselves, which has fallen from the immaterial world into the bodies of humans. All physical matter is subject to decay, rotting, and death. Those bodies and the material world, created by an inferior being, are therefore evil. Trapped in the material world, but ignorant of its status, the pieces of God require knowledge (gnosis) to inform them of their true status. That knowledge must come from outside the material world, and the agent who brings it is the savior or redeemer.”

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church defeated this ancient heresy and eventually affirmed the true, biblical nature of God in the Nicene Creed: the Trinity. God is the unity of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. **That nature is revealed to us in scripture through the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God the Son. Similarly, the nature of salvation is revealed through Jesus’s identity as the [perfect lamb of God](#): “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”**



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The blood and bodily sacrifice of Jesus, as the perfect lamb, reconciles us to the Father, and his resurrection and gift of the Holy Spirit transforms our bodies His Temples (1 Corinthians 6:19). And [Philippians 3:20-21](#) teaches that God will one day “transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” **In other words, through the power of His blood, Jesus transforms our bodies as sacred dwelling places for the Holy Spirit and will, one day, regenerate them to be as glorious and perfect as Him.**

In the twentieth century, a new movement in sociology and psychology gave rise to another strain of dissociative liberation theory in the West: the sexual revolution. In the early 1900s, Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud rose to prominence for his study on [sexual “repression”](#) – the primitive erotic impulses that Freud believed humans suppressed while operating in civil society. Freud believed that failing to address suppressed sexual desires would cause anxiety; so he developed a theory called “[psychoanalysis](#),” a method of discourse between himself and patients. [According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), “the object of psychoanalytic treatment may be said to be a form of self-understanding – once this is acquired it is largely up to the patient, in consultation with the analyst, to determine how he shall handle this newly-acquired understanding of the unconscious forces which motivate him.” Once deeply repressed sexual desires were unearthed, Freud believed he could prescribe a cure for their release.

Many leading twentieth-century academics agreed with Freud’s basic conclusion about sexual repression. However, the sexual revolutionaries decried the need for a “cure,” in part because of the research by academics like Dr. Alfred E. Kinsey of Indiana University, whose work earned him the title of “father of the sexual revolution, according to the [Kinsey Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University](#).

In 1948, Kinsey published a work titled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, wherein Kinsey introduced the concept of a [sexual spectrum](#): “Males do not represent two discrete populations, homosexual and heterosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. Only the human mind invents categories to force facts into separate pigeonholes.” [Kinsey’s research](#) is [widely criticized today](#), but it nonetheless formed the basis for his social views. According to the historian and biographer [James H. Jones](#), Kinsey “was determined to use science to strip human sexuality of its guilt and repression. He wanted to undermine traditional morality, to soften the rules of restraint, and to help people develop positive attitudes toward their sexual needs and desires.” Jones adds that Kinsey “spent his every waking hour attempting to change the sexual mores and sex offender laws of the United States.”

The degenerate work of Kinsey profoundly influenced the likes of [Hugh Hefner](#), the now deceased founder of Playboy Magazine and the first mass-progenitor of pornography in America. Indeed, even the [Washington Post](#) described Hefner an “advocate for the sexual revolution” and a key backer of the “Kinsey Institute’s research into sex, reproductive rights and the Equal Rights Amendment for women.” Hefner was the cultural propagandist for a pseudoscience that fundamentally altered America’s ideas about liberty.

Eventually the sexual revolution made its way into American constitutional law, beginning with the notorious [1963 case known as *Griswold v. Connecticut*](#), one of the most poorly reasoned cases in Supreme Court history. In *Griswold*, the Court not only criticized a state policy prohibiting



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contraception, engaging in a kind of commentary that falls beyond the purview of the judiciary, they declared it unconstitutional. The Court justified their decision with the following reasoning: “specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance.” In other words, the Constitution is not the source of this contrived right. Rather, its source was a modern, inchoate, and ostensibly unrestrained view of liberty endorsed by sexual revolutionaries. The Supreme Court went on to apply this revolutionary view of liberty to nationalize legal abortion (*Roe v. Wade*), eliminate marriage as the union between a man and woman (*Obergefell v. Hodges*), and end state laws prohibiting the practice of sodomy (*Lawrence v. Texas*). Among all these cases, [one line written by Justice Anthony Kennedy](#) stands out as remarkably similar to promises of the serpent in the Garden of Eden: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

Freedom, according to the sexual revolutionaries, essentially separates man's spirit from his body. Kinsey, and others like him, rejected the idea that the body was a sacred dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. To the sexual revolutionaries, sex wasn't the means to procreate and further mankind. Rather, it was a universal impulse shared by all animals, which would be unnatural to fight. Accordingly, freedom to the sexual revolutionaries meant the freedom to choose how to act upon erotic, animalistic desires.

In the Christian context, this definition of “freedom” is equivalent to disorientation, the state of being lost without a sense of direction. In the Christian tradition, sex has a *design* and a *purpose*. It is a gift.

Contrary to popular myth, scripture teaches that God designed sex to bring joy to men and women, not shame and guilt. See, for instance, the instruction Solomon gives to his sons in [Proverbs 5](#):

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

Here, Solomon likens a spouse to a “cistern” and sexual desire to “water.” Of course, this implies that sexual desire is quite natural, much like water. In fact, other passages like Solomon 7 even teach how sexual attraction can be good because sexual attraction is oriented toward the objective beauty of a beloved.

But without proper structure, scripture teaches that sexual desire can cause disorder, much like water if allowed to flow out of a well and into the streets. Solomon was well aware that this disorder could produce angst, or even lead another “astray.” So he informs his sons that God



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created the monogamous marital union for our good, to maximize the joy that comes from sex and prevent any guilt, shame, or angst. [One biblical commentator writes as follows](#): “[T]rue freedom does not come by someone’s being liberated from marriage. **The truth is that genuine liberation comes in marriage. Marriage is a secure hedge that protects love as it grows. As love is nurtured, it produces freedom and fulfillment.**”

But sexuality does not dictate our identity, nor does it dictate our ultimate calling. Scripture teaches that the identity of man, and the ultimate object of our desires, should be the way of God for our glorification. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3).

God’s purpose for sex, like anything else, is to be used in devotion to him. Its purpose is not to make us confused, or resolve ourselves to act as animals chasing instinct. Indeed, [Paul says](#): “*I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.*”

Sexual confusion is not the only fruit of social disorder produced by the sexual revolution. Indeed, other scholars applied the degeneracy of Kinsey to gender, such as [Dr. John William Money](#), a Harvard University professor and the founder of the Gender Identity Clinic at Johns Hopkins University established in 1966. In a 2006 commemoration, the [New York Times](#) described Money as “an early proponent of sex reassignment surgery for men and women who believed that their biologically given sex was at odds with their sexual identity.” Money, the first to coin phrases like “gender identity,” endorsed methods that drove one patient [to suicide](#).

Transgender theory, or any dogma that views gender as an identity discovered on a spectrum for that matter, denies the Christian nature of man, the hylomorphic unity of body and spirit. Much like gnosticism, transgender theory sees the body as an impediment to be overcome so that an individual can embrace their “true” identity. But unlike gnostics, transgender theorists believe the body can be “fixed.” The body can be like an idol, an object shaped and tailored to the spiritual entity that inhabits it. Where the body is not “fixed,” others must simply be compelled to deny the body as governing another’s identity.

The Church’s approach to gender confusion should be two-fold. First, it must root itself in the truth of our identity as humans; we are unique image-bearers of God. In the image of God, we are all equal in value. But God also created objective differences in humans to reflect His beautiful order, including the difference between men and women. This sexual difference is not *merely* a reflection of biology; it is also a reflection of spiritual identity. A “man” is not simply a “biological male.” A “woman” is not simply a “biological female.” Men and women are different in function, and possess unique callings based on their sexual difference.



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Nonetheless, it can be difficult for Christians to communicate with others who struggle with a disordered view of their gender, and thus their own identity. The Church cannot help those who struggle in this way by affirming a false sense of gender identity. That affirmation only encourages confusion. Rather, Christians should think of themselves as compasses that God uses to direct those who are lost to true freedom. God allows all of us to suffer just as the Father allowed his Son to bear the cross. God uses suffering to perfect our character, making us more like Jesus with each day that passes. But Christians can fill a role like Joseph of Arimathea once did for Jesus during his suffering, reminding those who struggle with issues of identity that they do not bear their cross alone. The Church supports one another in our respective paths to follow God's calling in our lives. All of us, in some way, need encouragement, and that can be as simple as reminding others about the ultimate end God has in store for them – their glory.

