

The Transgender Movement: Part 1
The Christian Faith and Contemporary Challenges
May 9, 2021

“For transgenderism to be coherent, the society in which it occurs needs to place a decisive priority on the psychological over the physical in determining identity.” – Carl R. Trueman

“Bodily brokenness of any kind, if we have eyes to see, can point us to the broken body of Christ—and through that brokenness, to the eventual restoration and healing that comes through him.” – Sam Alberry

I. Introduction

A. Two News Stories

1. “Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story,” by Buzz Bissinger. *Vanity Fair*. June 25, 2015.¹
2. “A Whole New Being: How Cricket Nimmons Seized the Transgender Movement,” by Deborah Sontag. *The New York Times*. December 12, 2015.²

II. The Transgender Ideology

A. Key Terms and Distinctions

1. Transgender – an umbrella term for people who experience or express their sense of “gender identity” differently from people whose sense of “gender identity” aligns with their biological sex.³
2. Gender identity – how people *experience* themselves as male or female, or something else entirely, including how masculine or feminine (or neither) a person feels.
3. Gender dysphoria – the distress experienced when someone’s gender identity (i.e., a person’s psychological and emotional sense of themselves as female or male, for example) does not match or align with their birth sex as male or female.
 - a) “Gender Identity Disorder” vs. “Gender dysphoria” (the American Psychiatric Association’s [APA] *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* [or, the *DSM*]).
 - (1) *DSM-I* (1952) – no mention of sex-specific disorders.
 - (2) *DSM-III* (1980) – “gender identity disorder” to describe patients who experience “feelings of discomfort or inappropriateness about his or her anatomic sex and by persistent behaviors generally associated with the other sex.”⁴
 - (3) *DSM-V* (2013) – “gender dysphoria,” since “gender nonconformity is not in itself a mental disorder.”⁵

¹ <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/06/caitlyn-jenner-bruce-cover-annie-leibovitz> (accessed March 11, 2019).

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/us/knick-kimmons-transgender-surgery.html> (accessed March 11, 2019).

³ Cf. Mark A. Yarhouse. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*, Kindle Location 262.

⁴ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-III* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1980), 261. Available at <http://displus.sk/DSM/subory/dsm3.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2018).

⁵ 2013 statement by the APA, found at https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/DSM/APA_DSM-5-Gender-Dysphoria.pdf

B. Four Influences

1. Gnosticism (2nd century)
 - a) The “real” person is found somewhere inside the body.
2. John Money and “gender” as a psycho-sexual description
 - a) Until the 1950’s, “gender” was exclusively grammatical.
3. “Second Wave” Feminism of the 1960’s and 70’s
 - a) French existentialist Simone De Beauvoir: “*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.*”⁶
4. Legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015 (Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. __ [2015])
 - a) *TIME Magazine*: “The Transgender Tipping Point: American’s Next Civil Rights Frontier” (June 9, 2014)

C. The Evolution in Transgender Ideology

1. “Biological sex” vs. “Gender identity”
 - a) NCAA (2011): “*The key feature of being transgender is having a **psychological identification** as a man or a woman that differs from the person’s **sex at birth** . . . Biological sex and gender are different; gender is not inherently connected to one’s physical anatomy.*”⁷
 - b) *TIME Magazine* (2014): “. . . **sex is biological**, determined by a baby’s birth anatomy; **gender is cultural**, a set of behaviors learned through human interaction . . .”⁸
2. “Assigned sex” vs. “Gender identity”
 - a) Planned Parenthood (2018): “*What’s assigned sex (aka ‘biological sex’)? **Assigned sex** is a label that you’re given at birth based on medical factors, including your hormones, chromosomes, and genitals. Most people are assigned male or female, and this is what’s put on their birth certificates . . . Your **gender identity** is how you feel inside and how you express those feelings.*”⁹
 - b) Dr. Deanna Adkins (Director of Duke Child and Adolescent Gender Care at Duke Medical School)
 - i. “*From a medical perspective, the appropriate determinate of sex is gender identity.*”
 - ii. “*It is counter to medical science to use chromosomes, hormones, internal*

⁶ Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1952, repr.; New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 267.

⁷ *NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes* (August 2011), pp. 3, 22.

http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Transgender_Handbook_2011_Final.pdf (accessed January 4, 2018).

⁸ Katy Steinmetz, “America’s Transition,” *TIME Magazine* (June 9, 2014): 40.

⁹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/gender-gender-identity> (accessed January 9, 2018).

reproductive organs, external genitalia, or secondary sex characteristics to override gender identity for purposes of classifying someone as male or female. Gender identity does and should control when there is a need to classify an individual as a particular sex.”

- iii. *“Although we generally label infants as ‘male’ or ‘female’ based on observing their external genitalia at birth, external genitalia do not account for the full spectrum of sex-related characteristics nor do they ‘determine’ one’s sex.”¹⁰*

III. A Biblical Anthropology

A. Principle #1 – Man (Male and Female), as the Image of God, consists of a body-soul unity

1. The body is included in the image of God

a) Key Texts

- i. **Gen 1:26–27** – *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*
- ii. **Gen 2:16–17** – *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**”*
- iii. **Gen 3:19** – *“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for **you are dust,** and to dust **you shall return.**”*
- iv. **John 11:43** – *“**Lazarus,** come out.”*
- v. **1 Cor 15:49** – *“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”*

b) John Calvin and Westminster Assembly

- i. Calvin: *“And although the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks did not glow.” (Institutes, 1.15.3)*
- ii. WSC Q. 37: *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*
(1) *A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.*

c) Herman Bavinck

- i. *“The body is not a prison, but a marvelous piece of art from the hand of God Almighty, and just as constitutive for the essence of humanity as the soul . . . It is so integrally and essentially a part of our humanity that, though violently torn from the soul by sin, it will be reunited with it in the resurrection of the dead.” (Reformed Dogmatics, 2:559)*

2. The Soul is included in the image of God

¹⁰ https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/AdkinsDecl.pdf (accessed January 9, 2018).

a) Key Texts

- i. **Ezek 44:7** – “. . . uncircumcised **in heart and flesh**. ”
- ii. **Eccl 2:3** – “I searched with **my heart** [lēḇ] how to cheer **my body** [bāsār] with wine.”
- iii. **Eccl 11:10** – “Remove vexation from **your heart** [lēḇ], and put away pain from **your body** [bāsār]”
- iv. **Prov 14:30** – “A tranquil **heart** [lēḇ] gives life to the **flesh** [bāsār].”
- v. **Eccl 12:7** – “. . . the **dust** returns to the earth as it was, and the **spirit** returns to God who gave it.”

3. Body and Soul as a picture of our dependence on the Lord

- a) Geerhardus Vos: “That man consists of two parts, spirit and flesh, of which the one is dependent on the other for its mobility and functioning, has the deeper meaning that it pictures the dependence of man on God. Just as our spirit breathes into our body in order to make it an organic instrument, so God’s Spirit must breathe into the entire man in order to qualify him for spiritual good.”¹¹
- b) Compare, Susan Stryker: “This takes us to one of the central issues of transgender social movements—the assertion that the sex of the body (however we understand body and sex) does not bear any necessary or predetermined relationship to the social category in which that body lives or to the identity and subjective sense of self of the person who lives in the world through that body ... Breaking apart the forced unity of sex and gender, while increasing the scope of livable lives, needs to be a central goal of feminism and other forms of social justice activism.”¹²

¹¹ Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, trans. Annemie Godbehere et al., vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012–2016), 3–4.

¹² Susan Stryker, *The History of Transgenderism: The Roots of Today’s Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Seal, 2017), 16–17.