

Developing pastoral guidelines on dealing with Gender Dysphoria (with a special focus on our Christ-Identity).

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22.05.2022,

1 Content

1	Content	2
2	Terminology	2
3	Introduction: Why this paper is necessary.....	4
4	What is Gender Dysphoria	5
4.1	From Disorder to Dysphoria	5
4.2	4 Categories of Gender Dysphoria.....	5
5	How does the world deal with Gender Dysphoria?.....	11
5.1	Change of Definition: Not seen as a disorder anymore	11
5.2	Treatment	12
6	Back to the Basics, Christian identity.....	14
6.1	We are created	14
6.2	We are sinful.....	19
6.3	We have an Overarching identity	23
7	Pastoral Guidelines	26
7.1	Use the guidelines with love but also “tough love”	26
7.2	Church of sinners	27
7.3	We are called to suffer with Christ	28
7.4	Teach.....	29
7.5	Therapy	32
8	How do we respond to these 4 categories?.....	32
9	Bibliography	35

2 Terminology¹

Sex: The biological sex that a person is born as, or rather was conceived as.

¹ In the transgender debate these terms are often purposely left blurred, as a strict rigorous definition is limiting and oppressive. Robert W. Weise, *Transgender Identity in light of biblical identity*, in: Grifford A. Grobier (ed.), *Ethics of Sex: From Taboo to Delight*, Saint Louis 2017, 181–200, at 183.

Gender: For the purpose of this paper, gender is defined as a person's perception of whether they are a man or a woman.

Transgender: A person suffering Gender Dysphoria.

3 Introduction: Why this paper is necessary

The Question of Gender Dysphoria and how we will deal with it, is not a question of *if* but rather of *when*. While the transgender community is still relatively small, the likelihood that we will encounter Transgender People or those who know them is very high.² If we also consider that the problem is not going away³ and is at least in some aspects being associated to the Woke Ideology⁴, the probability of us as a Synod having to deal with Gender Dysphoria in some way is almost certain.⁵ While Gender Dysphoria is relatively rare, the psychic pain is still very real. Add to this the greater incidences of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse within the transgender community and the very high rate of suicide,⁶ it becomes clear, that Gender Dysphoria must not be taken lightly.

As the question of gender is becoming ever more prevalent, and as there are legitimate dangers if we approach the Gender Dysphoria question unprepared, it is the responsibility of the church to provide an answer to this situation. Therefore, this study would aim to provide such an answer by firstly critically analysing what Gender Dysphoria is, but also how it is being treated by the world. In contrast to this our Identity as Christians will be used as a basis to provide pastoral guidelines on how to deal with Gender Dysphoria in a Christian way. While disorder of sex development (intersex) does not technically fall under Gender Dysphoria, this paper will still address it as the arguments for the disorder of sex development are often used to justify treatment, either social or medical, of Gender Dysphoria.⁷

² Paul O. Wendland, *A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement* 2019, 6.

³ Weise, *Transgender*, 198.

⁴ Also often referred to as the Transgender Movement.

⁵ This is not only a big issue in the USA, see e.g., Ibid., 181–187; See e.g., Nqobile Dlodla / Olivia Kumwenda-Mtambo, *'I'm fighting for my community' says Miss South Africa's first transgender contestant*, in: Reuters, 02/08/2021; Igual Roberto, *SA schools must adopt transgender affirming uniform policies*, in: Mambaonline, 22/02/2022.

⁶ Wendland, *Transgender*, 6.

⁷ Even though this paper does will not address homosexuality explicitly, it is on the basis that homosexuality being made legal and not counting as a disorder anymore, that the Woke Ideology changed the definition of Gender Dysphoria and pushes for the acceptance of transgenderism as normal. See Amber Ault / Stephanie Brzuzy, *Removing Gender Identity Disorder from the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of*

4 What is Gender Dysphoria

4.1 From Disorder to Dysphoria

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) “For a person to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual’s expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her,⁸ and it must continue for at least six months. In children, the desire to be of the other gender must be present and verbalized. This condition causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.”⁹ While the APA might over-emphasize that the distress experienced is the only problem, this distress that is experienced should not be ignored. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th ed. (DSM-5) of the APA further states, “This discrepancy [between one’s sex and gender] is the core component of the diagnosis. Gender dysphoria is manifested in a variety of ways, including strong desires to be treated as the other gender or to be rid of one’s sex characteristics, or a strong conviction that one has feelings and reactions typical of the other gender.”¹⁰

4.2 4 Categories of Gender Dysphoria

While Gender Dysphoria is mostly only categorized in two categories, either children (or adolescents) and adults it may be better to provide 4 differing categories: disorder of

Mental Disorders’: A Call for Action, in: Social Work 54 (2009), 187–189. The Woke Ideology sees Homosexuality and Transgenderism as two forms of expressing one’s real sexual identity as opposed to the biological body, and further sees both issues as a fight against the old “bigoted” system. Even though homosexuality does sometimes arise in people suffering Gender Dysphoria, we cannot treat homosexuality the same as Gender Dysphoria. In the one case we are dealing with active sin and the other we are dealing with the brokenness of the world because of sin.

⁸ In most cases this is the sex of a person.

⁹ American Psychiatric Association, ed., Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C: American Psychiatric Association, 2013, 450.

¹⁰ Ibid.; Weise, *Transgender*, 193–194 provides a more in-depth analysis of the characteristics assigned by the DSM-5, but for the purpose of this paper the above mentioned definition is sufficient.

sex development, Persistent Gender Dysphoria, Transient Gender Dysphoria and Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria.¹¹ Even though disorder of sex development and Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria are technically not seen as Gender Dysphoria¹², people who are suffering under any of these 4 categories are often labelled transgender by themselves or their community and it would therefore be prudent to also mention these. It is very important that we know about these four categories, because how we deal with a person who is suffering under Gender Dysphoria depends to a large extent into which category they fall. Sadly, most of these categories are treated in the same way. E.g., the very rare cases of disorder of sex development are all too often used by the Woke Ideology as biological proof of Gender Dysphoria. And we as Christians often make a similar mistake in treating those genuinely suffering under Gender Dysphoria or disorder of sex development as if they belong to the group of Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria.

4.2.1 disorder of sex development

Those who were born with a disorder of sex development are probably more commonly known as hermaphrodites or intersex. These individuals are born with a physical condition that has genetic or hormonal causes. While some of these individuals may seem to be more male than female, or vice versa it is often the case that they do not fit the typical definitions of female or male, being sexually ambiguous sometimes even at a chromosomal level.¹³

While an individual suffering from disorder of sex development may not fit the concept of Gender Dysphoria according to the APA or the concept of being transgendered, such a person may develop “Gender Dysphoria” of a type, even though this is not the same as

¹¹ Rodseth Reitze, *Gender Dysphoria*. Congregation of Christ, Kirchdorf, Wartburg, South Africa, 27/02/2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOonA631zbw&t=326s>.

¹² In the case of Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria, this is mostly because it is a relatively new phenomenon that has not yet been properly researched.

¹³ Wendland, *Transgender*, 27; See also Scott E. Stiegemeier, *How Do You Know Whether You Are a Man or a Woman?* in: *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79:1–2 (2015), 19–49, at 21 who states, that even though he believes every person has a true sex, either male or female, it is not always possible for us to know which. He urges caution when trying to apply precedence of one body part over another.

normal Gender Dysphoria.¹⁴ These suffering disorder of sex development will likely know some measure of distress or dysphoria as such a physical condition could give rise to a number of social, psychological, or theological struggles.¹⁵

These rare and exceptional cases should not become a new rule.¹⁶ Some¹⁷ argue that treating any Transgender Person as an exception doesn't value the individualism of that person. But a viewpoint that does not allow exceptions, does not want to see that there can or rather is something wrong. We as a church have a clear stance of what is right and what is wrong. Gender Dysphoria is very clearly part of the fallen world. The exceptions should not define the rule. Rather the intersex condition as a true anomaly proves the binary rule.¹⁸

We make such a stark differentiation between disorder of sex development and the rest of Gender Dysphoria, because there is something physically wrong with a person suffering from disorder of sex development. And as such, there is valid reason treating the body, and not only the mind, as well. Gender Dysphoria is in all regards a completely psychological problem. There is no certain physiological or genetic cause for Gender Dysphoria.¹⁹ But this does not in any way make Gender Dysphoria less serious, especially if we are talking about Persistent Gender Dysphoria.

4.2.2 Persistent Gender Dysphoria

Persistent Gender Dysphoria is generally what we would think of, if we talk about Gender Dysphoria. This type of Gender Dysphoria does not seem to go away and will persist in a person until they die. While this seems very extreme, Persistent Gender Dysphoria and for that matter disorder of sex development are very rare and even though I

¹⁴ Wendland, *Transgender*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ E.g. Heinzpeter Hempelmann, *Gender-Mainstreaming und Kirche: Eine kritische Sichtung in konstruktiver Absicht*, in: *Theologische Beiträge* (2020), 67–91, at 81.

¹⁸ Wendland, *Transgender*, 13.

¹⁹ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 3; The American Psychiatric Association sees no biological cause to Gender Dysphoria, except in cases of disorder of sex development, see DSM-5, 457.

said we will deal with transgenderism in the future the chances of us dealing with a person who is suffering under one of these first two categories should have been very slim.²⁰ And I say should have been, because there seems to be a dramatic increase in people being referred into the Persistent Gender Dysphoria category. While it may be that this is because of rising awareness of Gender Dysphoria and the “looping” effect,²¹ it seems that it is more likely, that people are treating Transient Gender Dysphoria and Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria as Persistent Gender Dysphoria.²²

4.2.3 Transient Gender Dysphoria

Transient Gender Dysphoria refers to those for whom Gender Dysphoria does not continue into adulthood. In both cases of Persistent Gender Dysphoria and Transient Gender Dysphoria the affected individuals experience extreme discomfort because of their Gender Dysphoria and this problem should be taken seriously, no matter the age of the person.²³ But only about 27% of children with Gender Dysphoria continue to experience these feelings into adulthood. For about 73% of children with Gender Dysphoria the mind becomes congruent with the body over times.²⁴ The problem is that one cannot identify who is suffering Transient Gender Dysphoria or Persistent Gender Dysphoria until the person has gone through puberty and their Gender Dysphoria has either persisted or desisted. This becomes even more complicated, that the sudden rise in Persistent Gender Dysphoria may also be credited to the medical treatments provided for children with symptoms of Gender Dysphoria as this early transitioning is very likely to drive some children to persist when they might otherwise have been just suffering Tran-

²⁰ Reitze, *Gender Dysphoria*.

²¹ People often construct their identities from given medical conditions. The rise of awareness of Gender Dysphoria can therefore lead to an increase in people perceiving to have Gender Dysphoria. The very awareness of a disorder can contribute to its proliferation. Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 35.

²² Paul W. Hruz / Lawrence S. Mayer / Paul R. McHugh, *Growing Pains: Problems with Puberty Suppression in Treating Gender Dysphoria*, in: Center for the Study of Technology and Society 52 (2017), 3–36, at 6.

²³ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 30.

²⁴ Ibid., 32; DSM-5, 454.

sient Gender Dysphoria.²⁵ This does not mean that those who suffer from Transient Gender Dysphoria are completely fine after puberty as gender-atypical young children are far more likely to end up as coming out as homosexual than gender typical young children.²⁶

4.2.4 Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria

But even if we include disorder of sex development, Persistent Gender Dysphoria and Transient Gender Dysphoria, people suffering Gender Dysphoria should still have been a very rare occurrence, but we find that ever more people are coming out as transgender. I have to agree with Rietze who argues that we are not necessarily dealing with normal Gender Dysphoria but rather with a type of craze.²⁷ Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria is labelled such because it happens suddenly, without any prior history, and also tends to happen in groups rather than only in individuals. There is no precedent to Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria, but it seems to be a social and political movement rather than a mental issue. If we consider, that coming out as transgender provides an adolescent with high social value, and that online communities often support coming out as transgender, especially to those who are experiencing confusion during puberty²⁸, it is no wonder that ever more adolescents are coming out as Transgender. Some even go so far as to state that they do not require Gender Dysphoria to come out as Transgender, as gender is a social construct.²⁹ This rise of Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria is likely due to the rise of the Woke Ideology.

Because the idea that our gender is just a social construct, finds its roots in the Woke Ideology. The Woke Ideology argues that one's gender is not dependent on biology but

²⁵ Hruz/Mayer/McHugh, *Growing Pains*, 6.

²⁶ Alice Dreger, *Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood: Inconclusive Advice to Parents*, in: *The Hastings Center* 39 (2009), 26–29, at 27.

²⁷ Reitze, *Gender Dysphoria*.

²⁸ Which is part of going through puberty.

²⁹ Reitze, *Gender Dysphoria*.

rather can even exist independently of one's sex at birth.³⁰ Following this thought, Woke Ideology reasons that there is an I, completely detached from all physical things. Our bodies are just some meat vessels that we happen to drive in our lives and we should be able to choose how we express our identity, in whatever way we want, even our gender, no matter our sex or flesh vessel.³¹ The key idea being, no one, not even our sex can say who we are.³² The individual is lifted to such a height, that even if he disagrees with all of society, there cannot be anything wrong with them, but rather there must be something wrong with all of society.³³

This complete separation of sex and gender does not explain why the most different of societies still hold to distinctions between man and woman according to their sexes. While Gender is differently expressed in different cultures but in most societies and cultures the sex of a person plays a very big part in how we express our gender.³⁴ It has furthermore never been scientifically proven, that our gender is in any way independent of our sex rather the opposite seems to be true.³⁵

Nevertheless, the Woke Ideology has become a new truth which cannot be in any way questioned. Not only is gender a social construct, the Woke Ideology sees sex as a con-

³⁰ Weise, *Transgender*, 199.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

³² Dieter Reinstorf, *Becoming all things to all men ... to save some* (Synodical Report Synodical Convention) 2014, 3–4 mentioned how SIT Social identity theory provides three central concepts of how we form our identities: Categorisation, identification and comparison. The problem with the Woke Ideology is that it strives to remove all form of categorisation. Following the SIT model, it then makes sense that those who are in the Woke Ideology struggle with finding a unifying identity. Their only category is one of either for or against the Woke Ideology. Especially as the followers of the Woke Ideology don't want to be categorised, it is problematic for the Woke Ideology to form a group identity. This may be a reason Without the categorisation, the comparison part of identity is not possible. The "us" and "them" dynamic mentioned by the SIT model only breaks apart and every member of Woke Ideology is alone turning the dynamic into a "I" and "everybody else", where "everybody else" is perceived negatively.; There is the evil them, those who are not a part of the movement, but because everybody is a hyper individual, no one can truly be part of a group. See Hempelmann, *Gender-Mainstreaming*.

³³ Ault/Brzuzy, *A Call for Action*, 187.

³⁴ Hempelmann, *Gender-Mainstreaming*, 71, 78.

³⁵ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 27.

struct as well, people therefore *are* the sex they claim to be and All those who oppose such a view of life are seen as uneducated and as bigots.³⁶

5 How does the world deal with Gender Dysphoria?

5.1 Change of Definition: Not seen as a disorder anymore

The problem is that the Woke Ideology does not only give rise to Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria as a new form of Gender Dysphoria, but it also heavily impacts how Gender Dysphoria is being treated. This can already be seen in how Gender Dysphoria's definition was changed. Due to political pressure, and not new scientific evidence,³⁷ Gender Dysphoria is no longer considered as a mental health disorder and may not be labelled as such.³⁸ Gender Dysphoria has changed from being a disorder in the person's identity to being an unwanted emotional state.³⁹ The focus of Gender Dysphoria is on the dysphoria experienced rather than one's broken identity. To solve the problem of Gender Dysphoria, the world, and also the body needs to be brought into alignment with one's "perfect" identity.⁴⁰

The problem many saw with the old definition was that by labelling Gender Dysphoria as a disorder one was already implying a value judgment unto the patient and led to a form of treatment that often wanted to "remove" the problem rather than help the person deal with his problem or worse, to hide the problem away.⁴¹ But such a narrow view of treatment doesn't do the broad width of treatment and help available to people suffering

³⁶ Ibid., 69.

³⁷ It is here, that we see a strong connection to homosexuality. Just as homosexuality was no longer treated as a disorder or labelled as such is not due to new scientific evidence, but from social pressure and threats of violence, so too has Gender Dysphoria been treated as a political issue rather than a medical one. See Matthew Rueger, *Sexual morality in a Christless world*, St. Louis 2016, 151.

³⁸ James Barrett, *Gender dysphoria: assessment and management for non-specialists*, in: British Medical Journal (2017), 1–5, at 1; DSM-5.

³⁹ That is to say, that there is nothing wrong with Gender Dysphoria as such, but rather with the emotional distress attached to Gender Dysphoria. See Stiegemeier, *Man or Woman*, 30.

⁴⁰ Wendland, *Transgender*, 3.

⁴¹ Ault/Brzuzy, *A Call for Action*, 187–188.

from mental health issues any justice. This negative labelling of treatment has had far ranging consequences, as any form of treatment is no longer seen as a help which comes in many different forms, but rather as invasion of that person's identity.⁴²

5.2 Treatment

In treating cases of Gender Dysphoria, there are two possible approaches seen by most therapists. One must either attempt to align the mind with the body or the body with the mind.⁴³ The problem with Gender Dysphoria is that we understand so little about it. It is still unclear why some people identify as the opposite sex, or why some people only suffer Transient Gender Dysphoria whereas some suffer Persistent Gender Dysphoria. Especially as talk therapy or psychotropic medication does not seem to dissipate or fully assuage the intense dysphoria felt by Transgender People. Add to this the fact that there has been meagre success at finding ways to align the mind with the body and also the fact that the Woke Ideology sees the mind as the true self, the second option, of aligning the body with the mind has become the more popular option or rather the only acceptable option.⁴⁴ Any type of therapy that wants to “prevent children and adolescents from identifying as transgender or to dissuade them from exhibiting gender-diverse expressions or which aims to change a youth's gender expression or identity is inappropriate...[and] outside the mainstream of traditional medical practice.”⁴⁵ Doctors are almost forced to affirm the gender of a Transgender Person to the point of prescribing puberty blockers and hormone therapies or even Sex re-assignment surgery.⁴⁶ But not only med-

⁴² Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 151.

⁴³ See Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 27 who provides an analysis of the differing hypothesis that underline these two methods.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁵ Wendland, *Transgender*, 16 goes in depth how the medical world is bending to the will of Woke Ideology.

⁴⁶ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 35–39 provides a comparison of Gender Dysphoria with Body Dysmorphic Disorder (People with BDD experience strong feelings that their bodies are ugly or incorrect in some manner. e.g., anorexia) and Body Integrity Identity Disorder (BIID), in which the patient feels that one or more of his limbs should not be there. What these disorders own in common is that the sufferers experience intense feelings that their bodies are not right in some way, even though all of their limbs and organs are fully functional. What differentiates these conditions, is that those suffering Gender Dysphoria

ical practitioners are being held to the Woke Ideology but parents who do not want to go this way are reprimanded and seen as part of the problem of why the child is suffering.⁴⁷

This is not only a problem because the Woke Ideology is forcing one form of treatment, the real problem, is that this affirmation treatment of Gender Dysphoria does not work.

When considering the extreme case of Sex re-assignment surgery, it is interesting that while there often seems to be some sort of initial reprieve from the Gender Dysphoria after the surgery, that this reprieve does not seem to be long lasting. Especially considering the irreversibleness of Sex re-assignment surgery (infertility being just one of the few side effects), The question is whether sex reassignment surgery truly alleviates the psychological suffering of Gender Dysphoria patients or may even cause more. It has also been found that the elevated risk for depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse found in people suffering Gender Dysphoria is not alleviated with Sex re-assignment surgery or for that matter hormonal treatment.⁴⁸

As Sex re-assignment surgery did not have the desired results in alleviating the significant distress of the patients, gender theorists were quick to point out that the problem was that most people who had undergone Sex re-assignment surgery had already gone through puberty and as such developed sexually according to their sex. All these developments needed then to be reversed. It is argued that it would be better for the person suffering Gender Dysphoria if the sexual development of puberty didn't need to be reversed, but rather be halted. As such it is argued that hormonal treatment should be used to not only better align the person to their gender, but ideally this treatment should begin before puberty together with puberty blockers.⁴⁹ It is argued, that such early transition-

are the only ones who can find medical professionals who will mutilate their bodies if they wish so. See Wendland, *Transgender*, 15.

⁴⁷ Wendland, *Transgender*, 19.

⁴⁸ Weise, *Transgender*, 190.

⁴⁹ Hruz/Mayer/McHugh, *Growing Pains*, 13.

ing will help alleviate the patients long term suffering and help her to better accept her gender as her identity.⁵⁰

While hormone treatment and puberty blockers are not as extreme as Sex re-assignment surgery, these options are in no way free from side effects. Hormonal treatment will need to be lifelong⁵¹ and the risks of using hormonal drugs are there, especially when Puberty blockers are use in early treatment. Next to the risks of using puberty blockers, puberty is integral in our development and to interfere with this process has long lasting consequences.⁵² Even proponents of using puberty blockers admit that this process is highly experimental and carries risks.⁵³ While something must be done to help these patients, it would not seem prudent to embrace hormonal treatments and Sex re-assignment surgery as the foremost therapeutic tools for treating Gender Dysphoria.⁵⁴ This does not even consider that most children or adolescents who suffer from Gender Dysphoria belong to the Transient Gender Dysphoria category and would have desisted if they did not undergo early transitioning.

6 Back to the Basics, Christian identity

6.1 We are created

It may be strange that this paper has talked so much about the Woke Ideology if the aim of the purpose of this paper is to ground ourselves in our biblical identity. But it has been shown, that Woke Ideology is actually just a question of identity, by people who believe, that the person is just a soul and that this soul, not any outside factors, like the body or society, defines who that person is In contrast to this subjective truth of the individual, we as Christians have an objective truth ground in the bible: Just as the identity that has been constructed through the Woke Ideology has an impact on how we view

⁵⁰ Wendland, *Transgender*, 17 n. 72 provides multiple studies.

⁵¹ Barret, *Gender dysphoria*, 2.

⁵² Hruz/Mayer/McHugh, *Growing Pains*, 21–26.

⁵³ Dreger, *Advice to Parents*, 4.

⁵⁴ Hruz/Mayer/McHugh, *Growing Pains*, 36.

our bodies and how we treat them, just so our biblical identity shapes how we view ourselves and our bodies. But our Christian viewpoint is and has always been different to the world.⁵⁵ We as the church have the responsibility to be “a social alternative that the world cannot on its own terms know.”⁵⁶ We are called to be a light to the world, to share god’s truth that he has revealed to us in and through the bible. And while there is no explicit mention of people suffering Gender Dysphoria in the bible,⁵⁷ what the bible does provide us with gives us clear indications on how we can deal with Gender Dysphoria in a Christian manner.

6.1.1 Natural Law

Rather than just view the typical Commandments as Law, I would argue that Laws are God’s will for Creation.⁵⁸ God created this world and set certain rules, Laws, in place to make sure that all went according to his will. This natural law,⁵⁹ God’s will for creation, shows itself in many things that we would expect⁶⁰ but also includes our identity. Before the argument is made that Christians have been freed from the Law by the Gospel I would argue that this is a wrong understanding of Christian Freedom. While it is true that we as Christians have freedom this freedom is not only *from* something, but also *for* something⁶¹. We were freed so that we could do Gods will on earth, which is the Law, including the natural law.

⁵⁵ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 25–30.

⁵⁶ Stanley Hauerwas / William H. Willimon, *Resident aliens: life in the Christian colony: a provocative Christian assessment of culture and ministry for people who know that something is wrong*, Nashville 2014, 17.

⁵⁷ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 5 provides a list of texts, that while not mentioning Gender Dysphoria, could allude to it.

⁵⁸ It should be stressed, that we will not be saved by the law, but this fact does not nullify the law.

⁵⁹ Not to be confused with the natural law of K. Barth. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, Philadelphia 1983, 102–103 shows how Paul was often misunderstood to have a false natural theology.

⁶⁰ E.g. Gravity, physics.

⁶¹ Joel D Biermann, *A case for character: towards a Lutheran virtue ethics*, Minneapolis 2014, 41–42.

The great thing about the Christian Faith is that we do not need to go inside of us to find the answer to our identity, rather we already have an answer.⁶²

6.1.2 Creator and Creation

As with all things Christian, it is always a good idea to start with the question: How did Jesus view our sexuality? And Mt 19:1-9 shows us that Jesus finds our sexual morality not only in revelatory truth, but first and foremost in our created nature.⁶³

We confess in our churches that we “believe in God, the Father Almighty, *Maker* of heaven and earth.”⁶⁴ Which Luther expands with his explanation, that God “has given me my body and soul, eyes ears, and all my members my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.” He is the creator, and we are the created: that is who we are. He created us as either man or woman.⁶⁵ When Gen 1.26-27 says that we are created in the image God⁶⁶: it means that we get our definition of who we are from God. As the image of God, we are only able to understand who we are when we are in relationship with God. Be it as his creature, as a rebellious sinner or as one who has been saved by him. As such a humans very identity and being created in Gods image are one and the same.⁶⁷

6.1.3 We are embodied creatures

As the creator, God created us in a specific way. He created us with body and soul. The bible does not see us as either our bodies or our souls, that the body is a mere ‘meat-

⁶² Joshua Pauling, *Baptism and Human Identity* (Issues, Etc.) n.d. uses the philosophical terms Mimesis and Poiesis to show how we sadly often view the world as a raw material which we can and should define (Poiesis) versus seeing the world as an ordered creation given order and given meaning (Mimesis).

⁶³ Paul uses the same argument of our creation when he speaks of marriage in Eph 5:22-33. See *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 6.

⁶⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*²⁰¹⁷2017, 133.

⁶⁵ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: a commentary*, Minneapolis 1984, 146.

⁶⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, *The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward*, in: Wayne A. Grudem (ed.), *Biblical foundations for manhood and womanhood* (Foundations for the family series), Wheaton, Ill 2002, 19–59, at 19–23 provides an in-depth analysis of the image of God.

⁶⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 14–156.

skeleton' and that what we feel defines our essence,⁶⁸ but rather, the human being should be understood as a psychosomatic unit.⁶⁹ God created us as humans with a body and soul whose physical being is just as intrinsic to our essential nature as our soul (Gen 2:7; Matt 10:28).⁷⁰

We are, quite simply, created as embodied creatures: as male and female.”⁷¹ Humans are their body, and this body just happens to be sexed. The very fact that we did not have a choice which sex we would receive is one of the reasons that some try to overrule this. It would make more sense to accept the fact that God created us in a certain way and to come to terms with the fact “that our maleness or our femaleness is not incidental to our humanness but constitutes its very essence.”⁷² Understanding that all that we do, we do as either men or as women⁷³ does not make men any more or less than woman.⁷⁴

This paper will not argue at length against the objections that Gal 3, 28, with the abolishment of all boundaries in Christ and Eph 5, with the mutual submission, should be used to negate Gender specific roles. It shall be stated however that even though something definitely new is being brought by the coming of Christ, that these passages do

⁶⁸ Wendland, *Transgender*, 22.

⁶⁹ Christian Frevel, *Anthropologie*, in: Angelika Berlejung / Christian Frevel (eds.), *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, Darmstadt 2015, 1–8, at 2; We must be careful how we as the church perpetuate this view that we are actually just our soul. It often happens that we overemphasize the differences between body and soul especially in the case of death, rather than treat them as a whole. Oscar Cullmann, *Unsterblichkeit der Seele oder Auferstehung der Toten?* Stuttgart 1962 takes a closer look at how we are supposed to think of distinction between body and soul when we die.

⁷⁰ Wendland, *Transgender*, 22.

⁷¹ *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective* 1981, 4.

⁷² Timothy Keller / Kathy Keller, *The meaning of marriage: facing the complexities of commitment with the wisdom of God* 2013, 194; Wendland, *Transgender*, 13 puts it very well: "we're different across all of our organs, from our brains to our hearts, our lungs, our joints."

⁷³ David L. Adams, *The Challenge of Homosexuality: What Is at Stake?* in: *Concordia Journal* (2005), 220–230, at 28.

⁷⁴ Grudem, *The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward*, 19–23.

emphasize the equality of sexes, but that this does not nullify the differences as stated above and that these should still be addressed.⁷⁵

God created male and female to unite us in marriage (Gen 2:20-24; Matt 19:6): A relationship which binds those who are different.⁷⁶ If we turn male and female into the same thing, the fundamental understanding of what a relationship is, of what marriage is distorted because we take away the bases of a relationship. When God said *It is not good that the man should be alone*(Gen 2:18)⁷⁷, This aspect of human relationship does not want humans to find an exact copy of themselves, but rather sees, that in a male-female relationship the couple can complement each other and so serve God better than when they are apart.⁷⁸ Gods command to *Be fruitful and multiply* (Gen 1:28) tells us very clearly, that for us humans to continue to exist we will always need a male and a female person.⁷⁹

It is actually very interesting that here the world (Woke Ideology) is moving away from science altogether. Biologically and psychologically, there are clear differences between men and women.⁸⁰ Biologically sexed Men and Woman are needed to reproduce. No amount of name changing, or surgery will ever allow a Man and a Man who had undergone Surgery to “be” a woman to have children.

While us being created as man and woman has its primary purpose in us reproducing, our embodiment goes further than that. We were not just created to have sex. We are

⁷⁵ For a critical analysis of these objections see *ibid.*, 23–48; Richard Hove, *Does Galatians 3:28 Negate Gender-Specific Roles*, in: Wayne A. Grudem (ed.), *Biblical foundations for manhood and womanhood* (Foundations for the family series), Wheaton, Ill 2002, 105–143.

⁷⁶ *CTCR-Human sexuality*, 4; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 160.

⁷⁷ All biblical citations *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)*, Wheaton, IL 2007.

⁷⁸ Daniel R. Heimbach, *The Unchangeable Difference: Sexual Identity for an Age of Plastic Sexuality*, in: Wayne Grudem (ed.), *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, Wheaton, IL 2002, 275–290, at 278.

⁷⁹ This command also carries with it, that the children should be raised in a most Christian way.

⁸⁰ That this is less clear for disorder of sex development, does not change the norm, that scientifically speaking we have either man or woman. As such Wendland, *Transgender*, 19 argues that even without the bible, the TM is one that should be questioned.

created as man and female⁸¹ and are such in whatever we do.⁸² Few characteristics so deeply stamp our selfhood as our maleness and femaleness. The man and the woman are free to do whatever they deem the most prudent, but they should strive to follow the example of Christian freedom: Man and woman are both free, not from responsibility but free to be as God wants them to be. God created man and woman differently and more suited to different tasks. Which is why Paul call us to serve in love in our unique callings as man or woman (1 Cor 11:11).⁸³

6.2 We are sinful

6.2.1 We rebel against God

But not only are we creatures, we are also creatures living in a fallen world. Humans do not want to be defined by God but want to be in control.⁸⁴ So rather than finding our identity where we should, in God, we look into ourselves (*Incurvatus in se*)⁸⁵. Sin as such defines who we are without God.⁸⁶ Even though we have a God-given identity that is either masculine or feminine,⁸⁷ sin goes against this and says we want to define who we are. We exchange our natural, God-given sexual function for what is contrary to nature (Rom 1:26-27).⁸⁸ By rebelling against nature we rebel against God's laws.⁸⁹

6.2.2 Creation is perfect but corrupted: All of it.

Even though nature and along with it humans have been corrupted completely by the Fall, we hold, that God continues his work of creation even after the fall (creatio contin-

⁸¹ CTCR-Human sexuality, 5.

⁸² Keller/Keller, *The meaning of marriage*, 194.

⁸³ CTCR-Human sexuality, 1.

⁸⁴ Charles P. Arand, *Back to the Beginning: Creation Shapes the Entire Story*, ed. by Travis J. Scholl, in: *Concordia Journal* 40 (2014), 132–147, at 135.

⁸⁵ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie*, 2004², 241.

⁸⁶ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 78.

⁸⁷ CTCR-Human sexuality.

⁸⁸ Wendland, *Transgender*, 23.

⁸⁹ Bayer, *Martin Luthers Theologie*, 230.

ua).⁹⁰ Which is why the essence of our humanity, us having been created wonderfully and well, with body and soul, and as male and female is God's work even after the Fall (Ps 139:13-16; Matt 19:4-8).⁹¹ This argument becomes important against those who want to claim that their Gender Dysphoria is how God has made them and as such it is part of who they really are. But if we were to see sin as part of our human essence, "then Jesus is no kin of ours, as he had no sin."⁹² Sin is never something we can accept as "OK" as Christians. Even if there is some biological reason for Gender Dysphoria, that does not let us change the God given norm: After the Fall, being born one way or another is no longer a standard of defining something as right or wrong.⁹³

6.2.3 We are *all* sinful

Stiegemeier argues, that we should not "imply that people who have the sense of incongruity between their mind and body are necessarily sinning. They are fallen sinners, yes, but is their confusion itself a sin or the result of their inherited sinful condition?"⁹⁴ Against this we can hold the clear confession that sinful desires, even those desires of those suffering from Gender Dysphoria are sin.⁹⁵

This is not to say, that those who are afflicted with Gender Dysphoria are in any way more sinful than those who do not: we are as humans completely corrupted, even those suffering Gender Dysphoria. Jesus came to heal all humans (Luke 5:31) that suffer from the same root malady of sin.⁹⁶ The only difference being, those who realize they are sick

⁹⁰ Arand, *Back to the Beginning: Creation Shapes the Entire Story*, 138; Irene Dingel et al. (eds.), *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Göttingen 2014, 1332, FC I.

⁹¹ Wendland, *Transgender*, 21.

⁹² Ibid., 24; See also Dingel et al. (eds.), *BSELK*, 1336, FC I.

⁹³ This is not to say, that a specific sin or sins caused Gender Dysphoria (John 9:1-2). See Wendland, *Transgender*, 27.

⁹⁴ Stiegemeier, *Man or Woman*, 46.

⁹⁵ Dingel et al. (eds.), *BSELK*, 1326, FC I; Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, ed. by John T. Mueller, St. Louis 1946, 262–290; While all humans deal with disordered sinful desires, some sins will have a bigger impact on our lives than others. We can therefore not treat every sinful desire the same way and with the same amount of pastoral care and external help. See Stiegemeier, *Man or Woman*, 45.

⁹⁶ "Everything man sees, everything he feels, everything he thinks, everything he wants, everything he does, everything he experiences is corrupted by death and serves as a reminder of his fallen state (Gen 3:16-19)." Wendland, *Transgender*, 26.

and in need of a doctor, and those who do not.⁹⁷ When “God commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). This is a command for all people to recognize the complete corruption of sin.⁹⁸

6.2.4 We should fight against our sinful way.

But as we are all sinners, does that mean we should continue in our sinful ways? *μὴ γένοιτο* (Rom. 6:2)! While we can never achieve our own salvation or even become less sinful, we are called to put aside our sinful behaviour. Even in our fallen humanity, our behaviour can be disciplined to some degree even when our sinful desires (including how those suffering Gender Dysphoria) often cannot be.⁹⁹ The problem is not that those who are afflicted with Gender Dysphoria are automatically excluded from heaven, the problem comes in when those who suffer from Gender Dysphoria live a life that says there is nothing wrong with them.¹⁰⁰

It is against such Hyper-tolerance, that we as the Church have to stand. The Woke Ideology says: “I am ok just as I am. You cannot judge me.” Even in many Christian circles we are afraid to say anything. Didn’t Jesus himself say: *Judge not, that you be not judged.* (Matt. 7:1)?

But we should not think this means that we have to remain silent. The Christian community is called to proclaim the law and the gospel in all situations.¹⁰¹ When Jesus warns us, that we should not judge, he means we should not decide what is good and what is evil. That is for God to decide. But God is very clear in what is right and what is wrong. Where God speaks clearly, we must speak clearly. When we admonish another person for their sins, it is not to say: *God, I thank you that I am not like other men* (Lk.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁹ CTCR-Gender Dysphoria, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (Concordia commentary), Saint Louis 2000, 200; Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 86–87.

¹⁰¹ George W. Forell, *The Importance of Law for Christian Sexual Ethics*, in: *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry* (1994), 253–255, at 254.

18:11). No, we speak out in love to help people. We want them to turn to God as the only form of salvation.¹⁰² Because we receive a very clear warning what will happen if they do not turn to God: *Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!*(Rom. 1:24-25)¹⁰³ Similarly in 1 Cor. 6 we hear harsh warnings that have the purpose to lead to Christ.¹⁰⁴ But rather than hearing this as a warning, humans wish to suppress the truth. We suppress the truth that God is the creator and as such worship the creation rather than him and because we worship the creation and not the Creator, we are also given to dishonouring our bodies rather than seeking the will of the Creator for their proper use.¹⁰⁵

We live in a society where we cannot criticize at all, where we cannot say: “Transgender People are sinners”. But we have to hold to the truth, even if the world hates us because of it.¹⁰⁶ Yes, they are Sinners, just as much as everyone else. And they, as everyone else, will remain an unrighteous sinner unless they repent and receive a new life through Christ Jesus.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 152–156.

¹⁰³ Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 95–112 points out, that these sins, do not lead us to abandon God, but because we live apart from god we live in these sins. Nygren emphasizes the polarity of either living with god (His righteousness) or apart from God (under his wrath), He further points out, that this text is not to be understood as human unrighteousness vs Gods righteousness. But rather as Gods wrath against unrighteousness vs the righteousness of God. Emphasising how we have our identity form God always either living under his wrath or under his righteousness. Our whole existence is characterized either that we stand under the wrath of God or under the righteousness of God. God’s wrath is not just Gods holy displeasure against sin as a passive discountenancing of sin but also active just as his righteousness is active. Where God’s revelation through Christ is just a theological sharing of knowledge, but Gods active intervention for the salvation of man, just so God’s Wrath is not just an intellectual disclosure of Gods displeasure of sin, but Gods active intervention, his divine power revealed, not unto salvation but destruction. When man does not turn to God, he punishes them by giving them onto sin. Not that God permits misfortune to overtake the wicked, rather that the sin itself disgraces man and disturbs human society.

¹⁰⁴ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 201.

¹⁰⁵ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Forell, *The Importance of Law for Christian Sexual Ethics*, 255.

¹⁰⁷ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 200.

6.3 We have an Overarching identity

6.3.1 sinful creature

We have shown how the Woke Ideology wants us to construct our own identity. Against this we have talked about how God gives us our identity in us being created as man and woman, but also how our identity was corrupted by the fall. Next to this established identity as a fallen creature, we will have many other identities that God allows us to carry, be it Teacher, CEO, Sports enthusiast etc. We can be these things without going against god's Word. But some identities which we want to impart on ourselves, or define ourselves by go against Gods truths, e.g., a man saying he is a not a man. The problem comes in when we not only want to define ourselves by these forbidden identities, but also if we prioritise the allowed identities above our established identity. We are God's creation who has fallen into the corruption of sin, and we require his help.¹⁰⁸

6.3.2 Saved sinner

As creatures we want to live according to God's plan for this world, but as sinners we do not succeed. But God does not leave it at that. Christ came into this broken world; he took on our identity as human beings and suffered the consequences of sin in this world. He came and gave us back our identity. When he died on the cross and was raised again, he gave changes to our identity. Being baptized doesn't just forgive our sins,¹⁰⁹ it changes who we are¹¹⁰: from a sinful creature to a saved sinner. Through baptism we are children of God, and in our baptism, we have been recreated through our saviour and have regained our true identity. Even though one may have understood oneself as homosexual, or transgender, one is no longer defined by the sin, one is now defined by the saviour; by the fact, that *you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor 6:11).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ David Thompson, *Christians and the Identity Movement* (Issues, Etc.) n.d.

¹⁰⁹ Dingel et al. (eds.), *BSELK*, 94–96 CA II.

¹¹⁰ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 78–79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

What Christ has done for us in baptism does not only change how we view ourselves, but also how we view others. Christians no longer live in a world of “us” vs. “them”¹¹² but rather they see the world just as “those for whom Christ offered himself as sacrifice”.

This is what we hold on to in our troubles: We are baptized. Our, bodies and souls are redeemed. And the wonderful thing is that in baptism I am not relying on my faith, but on God's Word, which says I am His child. In baptism we have received everything even the fact that we are made righteous is a gift from God.¹¹³ And as our baptismal identity is grounded completely outside of our sinful being, this identity is not corrupted by our sin. This baptism is a constant daily process, that kills the old and gives anew in the new life Christ attained for you. It is a sacrament we can daily use to be strengthened in the faith.¹¹⁴

6.3.3 Eschatological hope

It is a hope that goes beyond this time. A hope that an end is coming. That on the day of Judgment, we shall all be made new again. Our resurrected bodies, both the flesh and the soul, will be of a spiritual nature (1 Cor. 15:44) and thus incorruptible, glorious, full of vitality (1 Cor. 15:42-43; Phil. 3:21; Matt. 13:43). And all defects will be erased because these are only a consequence of sin (Dan 12,3).¹¹⁵ Therefore, since our sexual Identity is eternal¹¹⁶ and since our resurrection bodies will be absent every disease and disorder, “we can assume intersex people will be raised as men and women, even if, due to the fall, their sex was questioned during their earthly life. Transgender people will finally know a sense of congruity between their objective bodies and their mental expe-

¹¹² Reinstorf, *Synodical Report*, 5.

¹¹³ Dingel et al. (eds.), *BSELK*, 98–99 CA IV.

¹¹⁴ Pauling, *Baptism and Human Identity*.

¹¹⁵ Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 795–798.

¹¹⁶ See Heimbach, *The Unchangeable Difference: Sexual Identity for an Age of Plastic Sexuality*, 282–289.

riences of their sex.”¹¹⁷ It would therefore be prudent to respect our bodies, not as something disposable but rather to treat it in such a way, that we believe it shall be raised again.¹¹⁸

6.3.4 Our identity in Christ shapes all other identities

When Gal 3,28 argues that we are neither man nor woman but all one in Christ. It is a dramatic statement, that we have a new identity that overarches even our established identities. No matter our allowed identity or even our established identity; those who are baptized are all in Christ. We are defined by these soteriological and eschatological identities: that we have been saved by Christ and that he is coming again. These Identities are paramount. Ideally our soteriological and eschatological identity should guide and shape all of our other identities.¹¹⁹ Because we are not only freed from sin’s guilt, we are also freed from its absolute power to control and determine our lives and conduct (Rom 8:9; Rom 6:14, 18, 23). We are people dedicated to God and what we are by faith we should also become in practice and living.¹²⁰

6.3.5 Our Bodies serve God: to thank and praise, to serve and obey him

For all this we are *thank and praise, to serve and obey him*,¹²¹ to use the gift of our bodies including our sexuality in ways pleasing to our Creator.¹²² Not because we are forced to, but rather we live the way we do because Christ has made us his own.¹²³ And also we do so, because our bodies are not our own to do with as we please (1 Cor 6.19-20) but they belong to God.¹²⁴ Through baptism our body has been consecrated as the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁵ Our entire Life should magnify Christ, and also our bodies and what we do with them. *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God,*

¹¹⁷ Stiegemeier, *Man or Woman*, 48.

¹¹⁸ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 216.

¹¹⁹ Hempelmann, *Gender-Mainstreaming*, 75.

¹²⁰ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

¹²¹ Luther, *SC*.

¹²² *CTCR-Human sexuality*, 2.

¹²³ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 77.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*; Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 221.

¹²⁵ Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 220.

*to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Rom. 12:1)*¹²⁶

It is our duty as Christians to share this message of truth with love so that this wonderful truth can reach all corners of the world. So that the whole world has an answer to "political correctness" in this social media driven culture. We want them to realise that their identity is not something fragile that they have made up for themselves: Be it transgender, cisgender or whatever, but that they are defined as children of God.

7 Pastoral Guidelines

7.1 Use the guidelines with love but also “tough love”

In approaching those afflicted with Gender Dysphoria, it will not help to condemn them straight away,¹²⁷ but rather we are called to help those struggling with their sexual identity to understand the biblical view of human sexuality. The Christian faith provides the perfect balance of loving the sinner even as it discourages sins.¹²⁸ While we should approach all those afflicted with Gender Dysphoria with love, we would be misguided to rely only on compassion. Where there is a wilful disregard for God’s purpose for our bodies, this must be reproofed when necessary.¹²⁹ As a source of comfort and hope for reproof and correction it goes without saying that we should not neglect the Word of God.¹³⁰

First and foremost, we must treat Gender Dysphoria as a disorder. By viewing Gender Dysphoria as a disorder, we accept that the person requires help. Transgender People

¹²⁶ Ibid., 222.

¹²⁷ We should never assume to know the heart of the afflicted, or that we are dealing with a wilful sin. “The sense of being the wrong gender may be so deeply set as to be unable to attribute to a conscious choice,” which makes them no different than any other Christian who are affected by their sinful nature. Wendland, *Transgender*, 28.

¹²⁸ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 8.

¹²⁹ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 43.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 44 shows how the *christus victor* motif provide tremendous consolation for those who battle the flesh, the world, and the devil.

need help, even those suffering Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria will require help in some way. Even though people often do not want to talk about their Gender Dysphoria, because of fear of being ridiculed, labelled mentally unwell or judged,¹³¹ having a pastor walk alongside with the gospel comfort and guidance of the Word is vital.¹³²

7.2 Church of sinners

The Woke Ideology has a point when it says, that “Gender Dysphoria is something a child can't control and it is society that needs to change.”¹³³ But rather than saying gender is just a construct or not seeing Gender Dysphoria as a problem, society needs to change by providing lasting help to Transgender People. But not only society needs to change, we as a church need to emphasize that we are a place made for the broken people of the world. Sadly, when people, even those who belong to the church, think of the church, they often see it as a place for the morally pure saints who look down in disdain at all those outside.¹³⁴ We need to emphasize, that the church is the place for the sick. That Transgender People need the church just as much as every human needs the church.¹³⁵ A church of sinners, while not accepting sin, is open to everyone especially to that in need.

Transgender People should be running to our Churches, as who better understands the pain of not fitting in than those who live as exiles, as those who are a haven for the troubled, the lost, and the estranged.¹³⁶ A church of sinners for sinners.¹³⁷ All those people struggling are those for whom Christ died on the cross, for whom he gave the Church.¹³⁸ A church offers a world that is losing its identity the one and only identity:

¹³¹ Barret, *Gender dysphoria*, 1.

¹³² Wendland, *Transgender*, 30.

¹³³ Dreger, *Advice to Parents*, 27.

¹³⁴ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 9.

¹³⁵ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 103.

¹³⁶ Wendland, *Transgender*, 2.

¹³⁷ Rueger, *Sexual Morality*, 102.

¹³⁸ Weise, *Transgender*, 198–200.

Christ, shifting the identity from being Gender Dysphoria, to being Christian who carries the cross of Gender Dysphoria.¹³⁹

7.3 We are called to suffer with Christ

What we offer as a church is not a quick fix or a removal of the cross, but rather comfort in Jesus.¹⁴⁰ It is not our Job to fix the world, because that has already been taken care of by Christ and will find its fruition on the last day. We will ultimately not fix ourselves (or people suffering Gender Dysphoria) or creation,¹⁴¹ but rather are called to care for those who are suffering in this broken “world of wounds.”¹⁴²

We do not offer those who come to the church a life free from suffering. But especially when dealing with people who will have to live with something that they may not seem to have the strength to endure, we offer the surety, *that God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* (1 Cor. 10:13). But for them to be able to endure this cross they need to be in a relationship with God. Neither does this mean that they can handle their cross alone. We as the church provide a place that helps those afflicted to bear their burden, rather than merely exhorting them to struggle nobly against their inclinations.¹⁴³ It is a struggle that defies our understanding and whose only solution is not to rely upon our own powers, but to find comfort in Christ whose power is made perfect not only despite our weakness but in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9).¹⁴⁴

The best thing we as pastors can offer those who are struggling under their cross, be it Gender Dysphoria or whatever, is the sure knowledge, that there is nothing wrong with their essential humanity as they are God’s good creation just as every other human be-

¹³⁹ Reinstorf, *Synodical Report*, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Weise, *Transgender*, 195.

¹⁴¹ Arand, *Back to the Beginning: Creation Shapes the Entire Story*, 140.

¹⁴² Ibid. quotes Aldo Leopold, *Round River: From the Journals of Aldo Leopold*, ed. Luna B. Leopold (New York: Oxford University press, 1993) 165.

¹⁴³ *CTCR-Human sexuality*, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Wendland, *Transgender*, 26.

ing. They are loved by God and that no matter what is wrong with them, we can always point to the cleansing power of Jesus' blood.¹⁴⁵ "Nothing is more powerful in the life of every person—for all of us fallen people—than the forgiveness that is given through the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus."¹⁴⁶

Next to the forgiveness given in absolution the church also has the cleansing nature of Christ's blood to offer which can in the right context, provide healing and comfort as a foretaste of the world to come.¹⁴⁷ Along with this, the pastoral blessing should not be scorned. Especially if a person is broken and exhausted from trying to navigate the complicated waters of his condition, he might need something other than advice or instruction from his pastor. The blessing is a performative word in which God is present to comfort and strengthen.¹⁴⁸

But those who do not want to accept the truth of God's Word and his call to repentance as a chance for new life and rather persist in expressing their desires in this life it will maybe be necessary to put them under Christian discipline, hoping and praying that this will lead them to repentance to trust in God's promise of deliverance and to order their life in accord with the Creator's intent. Pastors will require patience in both staying true to Gods Will and to provide loving support to those who are reluctant to accept it.¹⁴⁹

7.4 Teach

Another big part of pastoral care will be teaching one's congregation, by providing clear teaching of human sexuality according to Gods word. It will be too late if one only starts teaching about identity when a problem arises. It will be far easier to deal with someone who is suffering Gender Dysphoria who is already sure in their Christian identity.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁶ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴⁹ *CTCR-Human sexuality*, 38.

If we do not provide a clear positive teaching of what it means to be male or female, “children will find other ways to announce their gender identity-ways that may lead down the wrong road.”¹⁵⁰ How we form gender identity positively in churches is not only something that should be taught, but also lived, e.g. Men’s Bible study, or a woman’s circles, anything to help strengthen and teach gender identity.

We should also teach that for almost all human beings (except those suffering disorder of sex development), their sex is clear, binary, and stable, reflecting an underlying biological reality and that this cannot be altered by surgery or hormonal conditioning.¹⁵¹ Rather these treatments often seem to do more damage than good and often leave permanent damage. As such hormonal and surgical treatment is to be discouraged in cases of Persistent Gender Dysphoria, Transient Gender Dysphoria and especially Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria. If an individual has already undergone Sex re-assignment surgery and then come to the conviction that their actions were mistakes, these will require long lasting pastoral care, as these Sex re-assignment surgeries mostly leave permanent damage.

This sort of education is not just meant for children but should always continue. As Pastors we should be catechistically teaching the basics of creation of male and female, sin, marriage, procreation, etc. continuously. Especially as what being male and female is, changes during one’s lifetime it would be prudent to provide different classes for different age groups.¹⁵²

As parents provide a first-hand example of what it means to be male and female it is necessary that they provide their children with good examples and as such it is neces-

¹⁵⁰ Leonard Sax, *Why gender matters: what parents and teachers need to know about the emerging science of sex differences*, New York 2006, 240. If children don’t have clear guidelines set by the church, they will follow the guidelines of what it means to be male or female from society. Not only does this lead to the oversexualisation of the youth, but a complete misunderstanding of what it should mean to be a man (now seen as being irresponsible rather than using one’s strength in the service of others) or a woman (Girls have changed from looking to be a better person, to looking to improve their appearance).

¹⁵¹ Wendland, *Transgender*, 13.

¹⁵² Weise, *Transgender*, 198–200.

sary that the church provide the parents with clear guidance of what Christian parents should look like. While everything is allowed not everything will be good for the Family. “If our gender is at the heart of our nature, however, we risk losing a key part of ourselves if we abandon our distinctive male and female roles.”¹⁵³ We need to teach that each sex has a role to play. By accepting our gender roles, and operating within them, we are able to demonstrate to the world concepts that are so counterintuitive as to be completely unintelligible unless they are lived out by Christian men and woman.¹⁵⁴

If parents end up dealing with a child afflicted with Gender Dysphoria, it will be important to deal with these difficulties, as the social shame attributed to these children also gets onto the parent, which will often cause parents to overreact.¹⁵⁵ Parents should also avoid trying to reinforce unhelpful male and female stereotypes as these can counterintuitively estrange children from their birth sex.¹⁵⁶ While it is normal for young children to be interested in and experiment with their sexuality, Pastors should equip parents with a clear testimony of God’s Word.¹⁵⁷

Those going through puberty are the ones most deeply impacted by the current culture, and those most exposed to the Woke Ideology. Sometimes the best a parent can hope for is simply to hang on in the face of hard accusations and bitter hostility especially as the adolescents afflicted with Gender Dysphoria themselves do not understand what is happening to them. Their pain is real and can cause them to lash out. Love them enough to be silent. Love them enough to speak the hard truth even if they don’t want to hear it and pray for discernment to know when silence or speech is called for, knowing that we are not perfect parents nor are they perfect children.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Keller/Keller, *The meaning of marriage*, 194.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 201–202.

¹⁵⁵ Dreger, *Advice to Parents*, 27.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 29 shows e.g., how forcing a boy to play specific rough sports or forcing a girl to wear pink is not only detrimental to the child but also to the inter familial relations.

¹⁵⁷ Wendland, *Transgender*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 30.

We should not neglect smaller children in this matter, as society is already teaching them a false anthropology from a very young age. We need to teach them the truth about their body in a responsible way.

7.5 Therapy

While Baptism, Absolution, preaching, and the Eucharist are effectual to heal us, both in time and for eternity, we should not ignore psychologists and psychiatrists in our pastoral care.¹⁵⁹ But as Pastors are no clinical therapist such professionals should be found and used.¹⁶⁰ This does not mean one just hands them over but would be working with the therapist. Ideally the therapist would belong to our synod, as he would then have the same understanding of identity as we do. If this is not possible a Christian therapist would be the next course of action, but if that is not possible it will be necessary to find a therapist who does not go against the Christian teachings. In all cases it will be necessary to work closely with the therapist, and if the member allows to discuss the case with the individual's therapist.¹⁶¹ As such one's pastoral care would be complimented by a therapy that would ideally include the whole family and not just the individual.¹⁶²

8 How do we respond to these 4 categories?

Using the above pastoral guidelines will help us to deal with the specific categories of disorder of sex development, Persistent Gender Dysphoria, Transient Gender Dysphoria and Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria. It is therefore paramount to find out with which category one is dealing with, even though this is easier said than done.

For those suffering Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria it would be best to treat this as a phase that will most likely be grown out of. It is however important, that this Gender Dysphoria is not dismissed as unproblematic, as it could also very easily end in an irre-

¹⁵⁹ Stiegemeyer, *Man or Woman*, 45.

¹⁶⁰ Ideally before a situation arises, so that one can get to know them before referring a congregation member

¹⁶¹ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 8.

¹⁶² Dreger, *Advice to Parents*, 28.

versible Sex re-assignment surgery. It would be advisable to still provide pastoral counselling to the effected family as there may be other issues causing the Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria to surface as a cry for attention.

A worthy goal, when dealing with an all adolescent suffering Gender Dysphoria even those suffering Rapid-onset Gender Dysphoria, should always be to agree to wait, pointing out that most who suffer Gender Dysphoria in fact suffer Transient Gender Dysphoria, and to provide support and counselling in this waiting time.¹⁶³ The idea here is to diagnose and treat functional problems (such as separation anxiety, dis organized parenting, and depression) if they exist, so that the family is well.¹⁶⁴

For those suffering disorder of sex development we are not only dealing with a broken mind, but also a dysfunctional body. Here it would be good to encourage treatment of the condition in a way that allows the greatest possible fullness of service to Christ and others by the individual.¹⁶⁵ As such this person will most likely require some sort of invasive medical treatment to deal most effectively with the biological sexual ambiguity which is present.¹⁶⁶ A Sexual assignment Surgery, if ever, should only be recommended, if the body clearly tended to one sex, never thinking, that this surgery will be the solve-all of the persons problems, but that extensive spiritual and therapeutic care should also be provided to this person. It may even be preferable to not do extensive medical treatment, but rather to make the person come to terms with their body.¹⁶⁷

Especially for those suffering disorder of sex development and Persistent Gender Dysphoria, we may have to remind them that we are called to bear our cross. It is not always

¹⁶³ Wendland, *Transgender*, 17.

¹⁶⁴ Dreger, *Advice to Parents*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ *CTCR-Gender Dysphoria*, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Wendland, *Transgender*, 3.

¹⁶⁷ The model of accepting one's body plays a huge role when dealing with all forms of Gender Dysphoria. Especially if one considers how many adults regretted their Sex re-assignment surgery and that it seems that the most beneficial therapies focus on helping people accept themselves and live in harmony with their bodies. See Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry became Sally: responding to the transgender moment*, New York 2018.

a matter of possessing insufficient theological information, rather Gender Dysphoria is an enormous burden that may have little remedy this side of our resurrection. It is a burden that some must carry as a general result of the fall.

It should be noted that a person affected by Gender Dysphoria will most likely never be normal and require lifelong pastoral care. It is therefore necessary to constantly remind such a person of their overarching identity in Christ. Even if we cannot be clear about a lot in their life that will remain an unchangeable fact: They are baptized.

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I, Werner Wilhelm Straeuli, declare that this entire paper is the work of my own doing.

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