

God's Creation of Man and Woman: Wonderful News for Souls Hurting in a Gender-Confused World

We the undersigned, Pastors Luke Wolfram and Nikolla Bishka, were asked to work together to prepare a paper on God's creation of man and woman making special application to the transgender movement. From 22 February until 4 March 2025, Niko and I met and studied together in Durrës, Albania.

God blessed our in-person discussions and subsequent online meetings. The Lord not only led us to a fresh appreciation for His wonderful creation, but also to a reverent awe for our Savior's tender, zealous heart. During His ministry, the Lord Jesus constantly reached out to wounded souls – people dismissed as too dirty, too broken, and beyond redemption. The Gospels record numerous examples of how Christ transformed lives with His healing word, "I have come to restore God's perfect creation, to make things right between you and God. Your sins are forgiven."

Niko and I have taken turns writing sections of this paper. I am using Arial font and marking Niko's sections with (bold) Times New Roman. Niko will first share how the transgender movement is affecting society in Albania. (We hope his insights will prepare you to discuss challenges you are experiencing in your own ministry contexts.) Next, we will examine basic transgender theory. Finally, and most importantly, the Savior will encourage and equip us to continue His gospel ministry. Indeed, God's creation of man and woman is wonderful news for souls hurting in a gender-confused world!

Introduction

We start this part of our paper in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brothers in Christ, I am very happy and at the same time feel a big responsibility to write this paper with Pastor Luke because it is my first paper for a CELC meeting.

In earlier times I would never have thought that during my work as a pastor I would have to deal with a paper or have a discussion with members of the LGBTQ community or Gender-Confused. Up until a few years ago, this seemed very far from Albania and even further from our small churches in Durrës and Tirana. Perhaps in your more developed countries you have had more to do with members of this community in your social circles or in your group around the church. Perhaps you have had discussions or clashes with members of the community, and maybe you have more information than I do about this theme. But we always have to be prepared and stay awake as we do not know when the last day will be. And, in this case, we never know when God will put us in a situation in which we must be ready to give an answer based on the Gospel. "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

In Albania this community is small. It might be bigger, but due to the judgment of society many people do not appear openly. Our society is very conservative and pro-family. People do not tolerate having this community in their social or family circle.

However, on TV we are shown something different. Programs supported by various Western NGOs show the LGBTQ community as very successful with a lot of support from society. This is a problem for all of us because a new generation is growing up with a very wrong spirit. When children in school are asked for family information, they are asked for the names of “Parent 1 and Parent 2” and not “Mom and Dad”. This is a very big problem for all of us because in the family and in the church we preach Adam and Eve, Man and Woman, Mom and Dad. We believe and teach what is written in Genesis 1 and 2, about creation, God’s blessings, and that everything we need from birth to death is given to us from God.

God gives us these days here in this blessed meeting a great opportunity to share with each other as much information as we have about this topic and a way to support each other in understanding how we can reach out to these people, helping them with God’s Word and doing our work to share good news with all.

When Pastor Luke informed me that we were asked to write a paper about this topic, I, not having very extensive information and with a sinful and judgmental mind, immediately started reading. I said that we could very well base ourselves on some parts of the Bible such as Genesis or other chapters which first speak of the creation of man and woman and then of the birth of their descendants, as well as chapters about the family.

During our study in Durrës for about 10 days we started by reading parts of the Bible and some materials from WELS “Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman,”¹ which is very informative material and gives a lot of encouragement about the role of man and woman from creation to the present. Then we read and discussed parts of a book by Pastor Mike Novotny called “Taboo.”² At first I was shocked when I started to read that book, but after a while this book helped me to put myself in the place of that pastor and think about what I could do if I were in a similar situation.

One particular part of the book Taboo surprised me because I have never faced cases like this. It surprised me that a member of the LGBTQ community would ask the pastor if her future family would be welcomed in the church. I couldn’t imagine this happening. I do not know if I personally will ever be in such a situation in the church, but I really think that this could be the most difficult discussion I would ever have since my first day in the church as a pastor.

¹ WELS Instruction, Encouragement, and Guidance Regarding God’s Unchanging Truths as Presented in “Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles.” WELS Conference of Presidents, September 2024.
<https://synodadmin.welsrc.net/download-synodadmin/en-cristo/?wpdmdl=3422&refresh=670d7b43ec7b41728936771&ind=1728936748937&filename=Instruction,%20encouragement,%20and%20guidance%20on%20Scriptural%20Principles%20of%20Man%20and%20Woman%20Roles.pdf>

² Novotny, Mike. *Taboo: Topics Christians Should be Talking About But Don’t*. United States of America: Fedd Books, 2024.

Understanding Transgenderism

By His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus defeated the father of lies and rescued all people from Satan's gloomy dungeon of death. In order that everyone would hear His living, life-giving news, the Savior sends us believers out. "Go! Go and make disciples of all nations!" That little word "Go!" implies great effort. God's people do not wait for the wounded to find us, we actively seek them. We do not wait for hurting souls to identify and diagnose their spiritual needs, we listen. We stretch ourselves to become "all things to all people" so that we can understand hurts and properly care for souls with Law and Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19ff). We make this effort for one grand reason. St. Paul says, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might SAVE some." With Christ's mission in mind, let us investigate basic gender theory.

At the beginning of time, almighty God spoke His creation into existence. "Let there be light!" And there was. "Let the land produce vegetation!" And immediately trees and shrubs, fruit, grain, and vegetable plants sprang up out of the earth. "Let birds fly in the air! Let the land produce living creatures!" And so, it happened.

To finish His creation, God could have continued this pattern. He could have simply spoken a word and called our first parents into existence. Instead, He did something different, something wonderful. Like a skilled artisan, the Lord God carefully, intentionally formed a body from the dust of the earth. He got His hands dirty (as it were) for us – so close He desires to be with us! Then He breathed into the body He had crafted, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).

But God's work was not finished. "It is not good for the man to be alone." After leading the man to understand the need to complete His creation, the Lord God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took flesh from the man's side. And from the rib, just as carefully, just as intentionally, the Lord God made a woman.

"Dear Father, endless praise I render for soul and body strangely joined!"³ Humankind, the brilliant work of God Himself. Man and woman, the crown of creation. Male and female created in the image of God. "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). With these words, brothers and sisters, the Lord God created you and me – yes, all the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. God created two – only two – sexes. And it was very good!

Then tragedy struck.

Sin ruined God's good creation. Perversion. Decay. Sorrow. Pain. Death. We feel it in our bones. We see it in the mirror. And we groan. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-23).

³ Verse 6 of the hymn, "Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices," Accessed 6 May 2025
<https://www.lutheranchoragebook.com/texts/oh-that-i-had-a-thousand-voices/>.

In our fallen world, defect and disease mar the perfect human body which God originally created in the Garden of Eden. We observe consequences of the fall also in human sexual biology. The vast majority of children are born with physical traits that clearly mark them as either male or female. In other words, most children are born with male or female reproductive organs. Every cell of their bodies possesses either XY (male) or XX (female) chromosomes. These children grow to become sexually mature men and women with all the biological characteristics typical of male and female. Here we are speaking of “biological sex,” or simply, “sex.”

However, sometimes medical problems strike individuals even before birth. “[W]e freely affirm that there are some people who are born in such a way that their innate biology does not clearly indicate whether they are male or female.”⁴ Such a biological malady is called “intersex.”⁵ Intersex describes a wide spectrum of conditions affecting a person’s sexual capabilities and development. For instance, some individuals – about 1 out of 1,666 – are born with neither XY nor XX chromosome sets. Others – about 1 out of 1,000 – are born with Klinefelter syndrome, i.e. with XXY chromosomes. Some are born with ambiguous or irregular genitalia. Some must deal with abnormal hormone levels. Sometimes intersex issues are immediately apparent at birth. In other cases, problems appear only later in life.⁶ “With intersex, people are truly ‘born that way’⁷ and doctors and parents notice something unusual about [the affected person’s] bodies.”⁸

This leads us to the concept of “gender identity,” or simply, “gender.” “Gender Identity” is defined as an “individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.”⁹ “[A] person’s gender identity (a person’s consciousness of being a male or female, and appropriate behavior as such) can be affected a great deal by parental expectations, by social and cultural contexts, as well as by various emotional and physical traumas that can occur in life. To illustrate: conceptions of being a man in 21st century America may differ widely from that of 19th century England. Abuse and sexual violence can undoubtedly have life-altering impacts. In short, we see some value in the sex/gender distinction.”¹⁰

⁴ Wendland, Paul O. “A Pastoral Statement on the Transgender Movement,” 2019, p. 4.
<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4507/WendlandTransgender.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁵ *Intersex Society of North America (ISN), FAQ Sheet*, “What is Intersex,” Accessed 3 May 2025.
https://isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex/.

ISN FAQ Sheet, “How Common is Intersex,” Accessed 3 May 2025 <https://isna.org/faq/frequency/>.

⁶ “If you ask experts at medical centers how often a child is born so noticeably atypical in terms of genitalia that a specialist in sex differentiation is called in, the number comes out to about 1 in 1500 to 1 in 2000 births,” i.e. between 0.07% and 0.05% of births. *ISN FAQ Sheet*, “How Common is Intersex,” Accessed 6 May 2025. <https://isna.org/faq/frequency/>

⁷ A reference to a 2011 song by Lady Gaga, “Born This Way.” “In 2023, *Rolling Stone* named “Born This Way” the Most Inspirational LGBT Song of All Time ... “Born This Way” has sold 8.2 million copies worldwide, making it one of the best-selling singles of all time.”
Wikipedia “Born This Way (song),” Accessed 6 May 2025.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_This_Way_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_This_Way_(song)).

⁸ Wendland, p. 4.

⁹ Wordell, Nathan A. “Are Transgender People Sinning?” 2016, p. 5.

<http://essays.wls.edu:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/4250/Wordell.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹⁰ Wendland, p. 4.

“It was, in fact, from a biomedical examination of the intersex condition that the term ‘gender identity’ first began to be used.”¹¹ To assist parents in raising children born with intersex,¹² the Intersex Society of North America recommended “giving an intersex newborn a **‘gender assignment as boy or girl’** [emphasis added]. They did not want to involve surgery. Rather parents and diagnosticians would decide to treat the child as a boy or a girl based on what the child was likeliest to feel as his or her gender upon growing up. The ISN believed that marking an intersex child as a third gender would cause them to be discriminated against. They were also against sex re-assignment surgery on the very young, believing that it ought not to be considered until the child was mature enough to make an informed choice on his own.”¹³

Sin has ruined God’s perfect creation of the human body. Scripture and experience demonstrate that our bodies are subject to defect, disease, injury, deterioration, and finally death. Now we must speak of sin’s effects on the mind. Because of the fall, God’s wonderful creation of the human mind is also subject to defect and deterioration ending in death.

For the purposes of our study, we note a malady formerly called *gender identity disorder*.¹⁴ Simply put this is a condition where a man, despite his masculine biology, feels that he is really a woman. Or a woman, despite her feminine biology, feels that she is really a man. “This condition, to be diagnosed as such, had to be accompanied by persistent discomfort with regard to one’s physical sexuality or a sense of inappropriateness when one was urged to participate in the gender roles typically associated with their physical sex. In addition to these diagnostics, a person with gender identity disorder had to experience clinically significant distress and social impairment. **Of no small importance was the fact that this diagnosis specifically excluded those who had been born intersex** [emphasis added].”¹⁵

In March 2022, the American Psychological Association (APA) published the fifth edition of their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5). This edition includes an important change. No longer does the APA diagnose individuals with *gender identity disorder*, instead they speak of *gender dysphoria*. “Euphoria” is strong word defined as “a state of intense happiness.”¹⁶ “Dysphoria” is the opposite. Merriam-Webster defines *gender dysphoria* as, “a distressed state arising from conflict between a person’s gender identity and the sex the person was identified as having at birth.”¹⁷

¹¹ Wendland, footnote on p. 5. Here Wendland is citing information from a book. See Marina Cortez, Paula Gaudenzi, and Ivía Maksud, “Gender: pathways and dialogues between feminist and biomedical studies from the 1950s to 1970s,” in *Physis: Revista de Saúde Coletiva*, Vol.29 no.1 Rio de Janeiro (2019).

¹² Let us please take a moment to acknowledge the heartache and confusion such parents must feel as they wrestle to raise children with this kind of intensely personal medical issue.

¹³ Wendland, footnote on p. 5. Here Wendland is citing information from *ISN FAQ Sheet*, “What does ISNA recommend for children with intersex,” Accessed 28 September 2019. <https://isna.org/faq/patient-centered>.

¹⁴ This was the terminology used by the American Psychological Association in the fourth edition of their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV) published in 1994.

¹⁵ Wendland, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Dictionary.com*, entry under “euphoria.” Accessed 6 May 2025, from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/euphoria>

¹⁷ *Meriam-Webster*, entry under “gender dysphoria,” Accessed 6 May 2025, from

The updated diagnosis *gender dysphoria* avoids pronouncing moral or ethical judgments on patients.¹⁸ But there is more. Notice that the two diagnoses identify different targets for treatment. In the case of *gender identity disorder*, the problem is “the **mismatch** [emphasis added] between gender identity and biological sex ... [But in the case of *gender dysphoria*, the problem] is the **emotional distress itself** [emphasis added] – the anxiety, the restlessness, and depression – that one feels. The therapeutic solution is therefore not necessarily to work towards a realignment of ... feelings with ... bodies. It may rather be to align ... bodies with ... feelings.”¹⁹

And so, we have arrived at the topic of transgenderism itself. Transgenderism seeks to remedy an individual’s internal distress, i.e. *gender dysphoria*, by making his/her body “cross over” from male to female or female to male. Matching external physical presentation to internal gender perception is called “gender affirming care.”

“When gender dysphoria happens, there are a number of options that vary in effort, visibility, and reversibility. You could just deal with it and hope it goes away, which it does for many kids as they grow older. Or you could change your outfit to experiment with clothing normally worn by the other gender, hoping that what you see in the mirror feels better to your brain. Or you could change your ID and ask others to use a new name that lines up with your felt gender. Or you could change your hormones, taking puberty blockers or testosterone boosters that would alter your body in various ways. Or you could go all the way and surgically change your body, your facial structure, your voice, your private parts, etc., so that your body would match your brain.”²⁰

Transgender theory is harmful because it contradicts Scripture’s beautiful teaching of creation in at least four ways.²¹ First, transgenderism presupposes that our world came into existence merely by chance through a random, meaningless process of evolution. Transgenderism rejects God’s good purpose in creation, especially His wise, intentional design of creating individuals as male and female.

Second, transgenderism flows from extreme postmodern philosophy which dismisses the concept of objective truth. “It is simply not true to say that people are radically free to re-shape their world in any way they please, based upon their thoughts, feelings, and desires ... There can be no compromise with a philosophy that rejects the objectivity of God’s purpose and design for the world he has made.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gender%20dysphoria>.

The entry defining *gender dysphoria* includes this example: “I am a 24-year-old transgender woman, and I know *gender dysphoria* very well. My distress over my physical body, my feeling that it doesn’t always match up with my gender identity, often lurks in some far corner of my mind. It doesn’t matter how well I’m dressed, how much I brush my hair, how many compliments I receive, or how well my hormone therapy treatment is working. When *gender dysphoria* hits, it packs a punch. – Serena Sonoma”

¹⁸ “This same argument was made regarding the removal of homosexuality from the DSM in 1973.” Wordell, footnote on p. 10.

¹⁹ Wendland, p. 3.

²⁰ Novotny, pp. 109-110.

²¹ Here I am relying on the WELS *Statement on Human Sexuality, Personhood, Identity, and the Historic Christian Faith*. Approved by the Conference of Presidents, October 21, 2019.

<https://synodadmin.welsrc.net/download-synodadmin/en-cristo/?wpdmdl=3422&ind=1574366466395>

Our words do not make the world; God's Word does (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Ps 33:6-9; Heb 11:3).²²

Third, transgenderism is a modern version of Gnostic heresy. Like the ancient Greeks, transgenderism teaches that "the body is a mere 'meat-skeleton' and that what you feel defines your essence ... that people are free to discard, reshape, and transform [their bodies] in any way that best pleases their minds. ... To believe these untruths is to reject the goodness of our Creator and to despise the gifts of body and soul he has given us (Rom 1:21; 9:20). ... Matter matters."²³

Finally, it is neither right nor possible to change one's God-given sex or gender.²⁴ Although it may be possible to distinguish the concept of "gender" from "biological sex," nevertheless, "it is morally wrong to assert that one's sex can be *separated* from gender identity so radically that one's 'true' gender is derived from what one feels without reference to body."²⁵ "While we reject the false ideology of transgender theory as contrary to natural law and Scripture, we retain every sympathy for individuals whose sinful natures are adversely influenced by the powerful voices of their peers and their culture. We pledge to express our love to them in every way possible that remains consistent with our biblical confession."²⁶

There are many useful questions and topics which we cannot explore now in this paper. We cannot investigate the causes of transgenderism. Is there a biological or genetic disposition that leads to *gender dysphoria*? Are psychological or social causes at work? We cannot present rational, apologetic arguments against transgenderism.²⁷ We cannot expound the dangers transgenderism poses to society. Nor is our purpose to advocate political reform to defend society.

Suffice it to say that transgender philosophy threatens individual perception of self, the institution of marriage, the legitimacy of the family, and even the nature of truth. "The overall goal for many in this movement is to destroy a blinkered binary worldview that holds people captive to rigid categories such as male and female. Binary language like this is seen as oppressive, an attempt to lasso free spirits and to keep [them] from expressing their true identities in a preferred multi-valent, gender-fluid universe."²⁸ We are "dealing with an ideology that changes perceptions of reality and that creates entirely new cultural norms for society which have no precedents in human history."²⁹

Instead of focusing broadly on the transgender movement, let us turn our attention to bringing God's good news to wounded individuals.

²² *Statement on Human Sexuality*. p. 3.

²³ *Statement on Human Sexuality*. p. 3. The phrase "meat-skeleton" comes from a BBC interview with a young woman as quoted in Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019, p. 197.

²⁴ Please note that the discussion here is not directed toward individuals with intersex.

²⁵ Wendland, p. 8. He later adds that transgender advocates claim "one's gender identity ... is more determinative of one's personhood than one's biological sex." p. 11.

²⁶ *Statement on Human Sexuality*. pp. 3-4.

²⁷ Logical arguments based on human reason are useful for exposing weaknesses in transgender thinking. See pp. 7-19 of Prof. Em. Wendland's "Pastoral Statement."

²⁸ Wendland, pp. 5-6.

²⁹ Wendland, p. 1.

God Prepares Us to Be His Witnesses in a Gender-Confused World

I have heard conservative Bible commentators say something like this: “Homosexuality is the lowest rung on the ladder. It is a sin against nature, open rebellion against God. It is not only a sin, but the punishment for sin.” Preparation for this paper has led me to see that these statements are incomplete. In fact, such thinking may cloak anti-evangelical arrogance.

In her book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into the Christian Faith*, Rosaria Butterfield describes her life as an atheist, lesbian, social activist. Before she came to faith, Rosaria viewed Christians as ignorant bigots. “The closest I ever got to Christians during these times were students who refused to read material in university classrooms on the grounds that ‘knowing Jesus’ meant never needing to know anything else; people who sent me hate mail; or people who carried signs at gay pride marches that read ‘God Hates Fags’. ... The lesbian community was home and home felt safe and secure; the people that I knew the best and cared about were in that community; and finally, the lesbian community was accepting and welcoming while the Christian community appeared (and too often is) exclusive, judgmental, scornful, and afraid of diversity.”³⁰

Even worse for Rosaria was a later experience:

“Shortly after becoming a Christian, I counseled a woman who was in a closeted lesbian relationship and a member of a Bible-believing church. No one in her church knew. Therefore, no one in her church was praying for her. Therefore, she sought and received no counsel. There was no ‘bearing one with the other’ for her. No confession. No repentance. No healing. No joy in Christ. Just isolation. And shame. And pretense. Someone had sold her the pack of lies that said that God can heal your lying tongue or your broken heart, even your cancer if he chooses, but he can’t transform your sexuality. I told her that my heart breaks for her isolation and shame and asked her why she didn’t share her struggle with anyone in her church. She said: ‘Rosaria, if people in my church really believed that gay people could be transformed by Christ, they wouldn’t talk about us or pray about us in the hateful way that they do.’

Christian reader, is this what people say about you when they hear you talk and pray? Do your prayers rise no higher than your prejudice?”³¹

Rosaria’s question hits hard. I have come to apply her question to myself this way: If one of my children was struggling with a sexual sin,³² would he or she find courage to share their burden with me? Or have I unintentionally signaled that I am dangerous, that I will only add to their hurt and shame?³³ “Don’t tell Dad!” God forbid

³⁰ Butterfield, Rosaria Champagne. *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into the Christian Faith*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012, pp. 4-5.

³¹ Butterfield, p. 24.

³² The sin need not be sexual. Mike Novotny’s book, *Taboo*, provides good food for thought.

³³ How might struggling souls interpret our comments about politics and social issues? What do the collective social media postings of church members contribute to congregational reputations? How well are we balancing left-hand and right-hand kingdom issues? Is the gospel predominating?

that I would lead my children to seek support from the world – friends, teachers, or counselors – instead of Christ!

Self-righteous arrogance erects barriers against evangelism. The cure for arrogance is humility, and the Lord Jesus provides that cure. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

“But, Lord, we’re talking about transgenderism! These people insist men can become pregnant!³⁴ They demand that I affirm their delusion, that I call him, “her,” and her, “sir”! I confess I still have a speck or two in my eyes, but transgenderism must be the plank in this discussion!”

Besides, doesn’t St. Paul point out homosexuality (let alone transgenderism!) as the lowest of sins? “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error” (Romans 1:26-27).

If St. Paul were with us today, he would encourage us to keep reading. Yes, God delivered sinners over to homosexuality. But because of their “depraved minds” fallen people commit other, more familiar sins – sins like greed, envy, strife, deceit, gossip, slander, arrogance, boasting, and disobedience to parents (see Romans 1:28-30). We don’t often equate greed and gossip with homosexuality. We don’t often label those sins as “depravity.” But God does.

There is more. The Apostle Paul springs his trap and catches all of us with the first words of Romans 2. “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ... So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?” (Romans 2:1, 3). Can it really be? By judging homosexuals and transgender individuals as the worst sinners, am I only condemning myself? That’s hard to accept. My head knows, “We are all sinners.” But it is difficult (at least for me) to acknowledge the full evil of my heart.

That is why the Lord Jesus preached about Sodom in Matthew 11.³⁵ “And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you” (Matthew 11:23-24). Of course, Jesus is not

³⁴ “Can Men Become Pregnant” 18 December 2023. *Medical News Today*, Accessed 13 May 2025. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/can-men-become-pregnant>.

³⁵ There are more passages where God compares the sins of Sodom with the sins of His people. Consider Ezekiel 16:48-50. That passage starts this way, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done.”

excusing Sodom; He is making a comparison. In a way, the sins of those who know Him are more offensive than the sins of the godless. Believers sin against better knowledge. How might the Lord Jesus preach this truth to me today? Might He first point out the incredible spiritual blessings He has given me? Might He then say, “Luke, do you see those godless transgender activists? If they had enjoyed your spiritual privileges, they would have repented. They would be more dedicated, more fruitful believers than you!”³⁶

I notice that all of us are wearing clothes. Things were different in the perfection of Eden. “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). Sin changed our concept of sex. Immediately after the fall, the man and woman felt shame. They felt guilt. They were confused about their bodies and their sexuality. They couldn’t even look at each other anymore. They sewed fig-leaf clothing in a ridiculous attempt to cover themselves. God recognized this new reality and provided our first parents with more durable leather garments.

The lesson is clear: We – all of us – are fallen creatures. Because of sin it is difficult even to imagine God’s pure design in creating us male and female.³⁷ When we compare our present state to our original perfection now lost, the difference between us and others fades. Yes, each of us has unique weaknesses, temptations, histories, and sins, but we are all equally confused sexually. Without Christ our ideas about sex become grotesque and selfish. Lust displaces love. This is perversion, the opposite of God’s design. And so, we wear clothes. And Jesus asks, “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” “Ah, Lord, I’m starting to understand. Have mercy on me.”

What does the Lord Jesus say to fallen sinners like us? At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was teaching inside a crowded house (Mark 2). Four men lowered their paralyzed friend through the roof. To this helpless man, the Savior said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Then He restored the man’s broken body, “Get up and walk!”

On another occasion a man fell at Jesus’ feet. The man’s flesh was ugly with decay that refused to wait for the grave (Luke 5:12). (No wonder the Bible uses leprosy to illustrate the horror of sin!) “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus touched the man. (*He touched him!*) “I am willing. Be clean!”

Another day Jesus was tired and thirsty – and He had work to do. As He rested by the well, a Samaritan woman came out to draw water (John 4). “Could you please give Me a drink? If you knew Me, you would ask Me for My living water, and you would never thirst again. Go call your husband. You are right to say you have no husband. In fact, you have had five husbands and the man you are with now is not your husband. Oh yes, what you say is entirely true ... I am He! I have come for you.”

On still another day Jesus stood looking up at a rich man perched in a fig tree (Luke 19). “Zacchaeus, come down! I must stay at your house today.” “But Lord, why eat with a sinner? This man is living in open rebellion against God!” “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

³⁶ St. Paul also reserves his sharpest preaching for lifelong believers, “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Romans 2:24).

³⁷ Have you been tempted (like me) to omit Genesis 2:25 when telling how God instituted marriage?

For each of these individuals, the Son of God forsook the infinite euphoria of heaven. For you, for me, He took on flesh and embraced the dark dysphoria of sin – every shameful sin we have committed with our bodies and against our bodies. In your place, in place of everyone who has ever lived in defiance against God, the Lord Jesus offered His body to be broken on the cross. And His work was a success. It is finished. All things are new. Our bodies are redeemed and whole, washed and restored. He lives. His promise is true. By faith in Him who cannot lie, we grasp Christ's victory already today. Clinging to His promise, we defy deformity and injury, disease and old age, the grave and every physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual scar.

We are children of the resurrection. We live to do Christ's great mission.

God Sends Us as His Witnesses into a Gender-Confused World

Several weeks ago, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary – Grow in Grace posted the April edition of "The Four Branches Review." This newsletter contains the final installment of a four-part series written by Pastor Steven Lange on God's creation.³⁸ I had been paying special attention to these articles since I was preparing for this paper, and Steve was my classmate in college (1993) and seminary (1997).³⁹

In his concluding article, my dear, gifted brother shared a personal revelation. He was the victim of childhood sexual abuse. As a result of this abuse, Steve had suffered for years from *profound body dysmorphia*. (Note this condition is not *gender dysphoria*.) Steve explains, "For decades, I hated my body, saw it as defective and deficient, and wished I could have any body other than the body God gave me."

He wants us to know that he is not the only one struggling.

"[The] survivors of sexual trauma ... are sitting in your pews. They are there, brothers, in shocking numbers. Some of you are among those survivors. Not every survivor of sexual trauma develops body dysmorphia as I did. But my conversations with many fellow survivors have shown me that sexual trauma has a way of making a person feel separate from and antagonistic toward the body God has given them. Sometimes this sexual trauma can lead a person to want to abandon their God-given sex and reshape their body so that it resembles the opposite sex. Multiple studies have shown that a substantial number of adolescents who struggle with their gender identity have experienced childhood sexual trauma. These people are sitting in your pews as well.

³⁸ Lange, Steven. "Systematic Theology: The Value of Valuing Our God-Given Bodies," Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary – Grow in Grace, *The Four Branches Review*, April 2025. Accessed 24 April 2025. Pastor Lange's four articles are posted at the following sites:
<https://www.wisluthsem.org/four-branches-jan-25/#systematic>.
<https://www.wisluthsem.org/four-branches-feb-25/#systematic>.
<https://www.wisluthsem.org/four-branches-mar-25/#systematic>.
<https://www.wisluthsem.org/four-branches-apr-25/#systematic>.

³⁹ Steve was our only class president. We consistently elected him by unanimous vote.

Then there are the young men and women who haven't experienced sexual trauma but are in the middle of that difficult phase of life we call puberty. Their bodies are changing, often in ways that they don't like. The culture we live in tells them that the discomfort they're feeling toward their body means that they must have been born in the wrong body. These young people may not go down the path of trying to change their bodies. But that doesn't mean they're not struggling."

People inside our congregations – children, adolescents, parents, and adults – desperately need God's good news.⁴⁰ And there are many more suffering outside the Savior's flock. The Bible describes their pain: "[T]he agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them"⁴¹ (Revelation 9:5-6). Certainly, this end-time prophecy includes the pain of *gender dysphoria*.

"It is agonizing to feel out of sorts with one's biological gender, to be a stranger in one's own body, to feel alienated from one's own natal gender, and to identify with a sex not yours by birth. To feel the shame and stigma of not meeting the behavioral expectations of peers, parents, and society. This psycho-social pain is not to be minimized, much less disdained or mocked by caring Christians. Add to this the greater incidence of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse within the transgender community.⁴² One benchmark figure alone is deeply sobering: 'The rate of **lifetime suicide attempts** across all ages of transgender individuals is estimated at **41%** [emphasis added], compared to under 5% in the overall U.S. population.'"⁴³

In the face of such pain, Jesus' Church must act. We must act. We have wonderful news – the only news – that relieves the world's pain.

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). The Lord God carefully, intentionally formed Adam from dust. In the same way (Jeremiah uses the same verb), our Creator carefully formed you in your mother's womb. He gave you the exact body needed to make you, you.

And take a moment to enjoy Psalm 139:13-17. "You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!"

⁴⁰ Because of the personal nature of their hurts, our people might be slow to disclose their needs.

⁴¹ Pastor Jonathan P. Bauer has written an excellent article on bringing Christ's relief to modern anxiety. See "Bringing Christ into the World of the Scream: Communicating the Gospel to Products of a Post-Christian World," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Summer 2019).

⁴² Not to be overlooked are those who obtained irreversible "gender affirming care" and now regret their decisions. (Imagine their pain.) How can we seek and welcome these hurting souls? How can we introduce them to the Good Shepherd? How can we love and encourage them?

⁴³ Wendland, pp. 6-7.

Do not underestimate the power of these words! Keep preaching the wonderful news of God's creation.

Finally, we suggest two practical ways that Christian congregations can serve as witnesses in our gender-confused world: Celebration and Safety. Let's publicly celebrate God's creation of man and woman. And let's work to make our churches welcoming refuges where all of us sinners rejoice together in Jesus' mercy.

Celebration: Jesus' Church Celebrates God's Creation of Man and Woman

In Genesis 1 and 2, we see how in the beginning God created everything perfect starting with the earth, the sky, the sun and the moon. He then created the seas and rivers and the places where we live. Then he made sure that we had food, so he created the trees, the fruits, and the different animals. He created everything perfectly so that when he created man, everything that he consumed would be something perfect that God had created for him. So God created Man. Then he gave him a helper and life partner – Woman. The two together could continue to create life under the blessing of God.

Although God created them and gave them everything good so that the whole world was under their feet, the first man sinned. Every man after him sinned as well. Our sinful flesh is present with us in every action we do. When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised to punish them and also their descendants because of their sin.

But besides all the punishments and evils that God told them would happen because of the fall into sin, God promised them that even though they would die because of their sin, he would still bring a Savior to forgive the sins of all. When we have the opportunity to talk with transgender people or Gender-Confused who have doubts about whether or not they can be saved from their sins, we can remind them that God sent the Savior to die for all people, to forgive the sins of all people.

The WELS doctrinal statement “Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles” shows how God created us as human beings. He created our biological sex and he gave us different responsibilities, but he designed us to be Better Together, Different and Equal at the same time. He designed Man as the head and Woman as his helper. And he designed Marriage for us.

In the marriage section of Ephesians 5 we see very clearly in all the verses how God describes marriage. He divides the work of the husband and wife in marriage and in the family. Here we also see the comparisons that God gives to the husband as Christ and the wife as the church.

In Albania in previous years even though people did not have knowledge about the Bible they were more devout in marriage. The husband and wife respected each other and before living together they performed a marriage. Although it was not a church marriage, it was an official marriage. In today's times many young couples live together and create families without getting married. After a few years they might get divorced. This is not good because it affects both children and people in society who follow this wrong example.

Living a Christian life is a blessing in sinful society. Nowadays it is so easy to fall into sin. We Christians know it is very important to be a light in our neighborhood, in our group of friends, in our workplace, etc., so we can make a way as the people of God to share his Good News.

We Christians have a lot of good news in our lives to share with others, starting with the creation of man and woman and continuing with marriage. Here in Albania we have a specific word that is very significant “Te Trashëgoheni,” which means to be fruitful and have descendants. God’s creation of the family and its continuation with descendants is more good news. But that’s not all. We even have a place where we can all gather and thank our God who created us, gave us life, forgives us, and protects us every day. That is the Church. Best of all, we have a Savior who came for us, and not just for us here in this meeting, but for all the people he created in the world. Our Savior was born as a man, lived a life without sin, suffered on the cross, died, and was resurrected just to save us from our sins so that we would have eternal life. So we no longer have to fear the day of judgment, because we know that Jesus was resurrected for us and will take us to be with him. This is a free gift.

How can we as a church celebrate God’s creation of man and woman in Albania? We can celebrate marriage. In our church we have couples who have been married a long time. They can live their lives according to Ephesians 5. Husbands can love their wives and sacrifice for them, just like Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her. Wives can submit to their husbands and show them respect, just like the Church submits to Christ. Also we can show young people the blessings of marriage and encourage them to get married instead of living together without being married.

If we live a life according to God’s will and also the members of our church live a life where they show Jesus first in their lives, this can be a way to help others come closer to Jesus. Let society see that we are different. Our lives are like “sermons without words” that open doors to share God’s good news. “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Safety: Jesus’ Church is a Hospital for Sinners Not a Museum of “Saints”

Do you remember Rosaria? Are you wondering how the Lord Jesus won that militant atheist? Rosaria was a well-known figure in her town. As an outspoken activist for the LGBT community, Rosaria got two kinds of letters. She dutifully sorted those letters into two piles: fan-mail and hate-mail.

Then one day she got a letter that didn’t fit. It sat on her desk unsorted for a week. The letter came from a conservative Presbyterian pastor. Pastor Ken’s letter was not fan-mail, but it was not hate-mail either. Without condoning her sin, Pastor Ken demonstrated respect and concern. He was courteous. He and his wife invited Rosaria for supper at their home. Rosaria accepted the invitation. She talked, and Pastor Ken listened. And so began an unlikely dialogue that eventually led to repentance, faith, and new life in Christ.

Do you remember how the Lord Jesus spoke with the woman at Jacob’s well? In a conversation charged with (one-sided) racial prejudice, the Savior didn’t fit. He refused to condone the woman’s sins (“Go call your husband”) or her bad Samaritan

theology (“Salvation is from the Jews”). But He did not attack the woman. Everyone knew that Jews don’t associate with Samaritans, nevertheless, He initiated a friendly conversation (“Can you please give Me a drink?”). He spoke winsomely. (“If only you knew Me! I would give you living water.”) And He reaped a great harvest. The concluding words of the men of Sychar astound us, “We know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). *The Savior of the world?!*

Jesus didn’t only die for the world. He speaks to the world – the whole world. He wants to speak through us.

Perhaps Jesus’ perfectly balanced reputation is a miracle that deserves more attention. How did He do it? Everyone knew that the Rabbi opposed prostitution, but the prostitutes knew He would welcome them and share good news. And they loved Him. They clung to His words. And He transformed their lives.

In a world polarized politically, socially, racially, etc. let’s (with God’s help) be the church that doesn’t fit. No, we aren’t the church that condones sin. Nor are we the judgmental church of hate. Instead, we gladly, humbly, earnestly seek and welcome sinners – all sinners. Jesus’ mercy is our great love, our treasure, our boast.

Conclusion

Our study has application beyond serving people who identify as transgender. We have explored the heart of our evangelical mission. Brothers and sisters, rest in Christ’s promises. Enjoy His grace. We have a real Savior who welcomes, forgives, and heals real sinners. And may the risen Christ give you joy to proclaim His good news to all people.

Pastor Luke Wolfgramm (Leipzig, Germany)
Pastor Nikolla Bishka (Durrës, Albania)