

Gender Identity and Marriage: Justification for Adding a New Clause to CBC's Doctrinal Statement

Purpose:

The mission of Calvary Bible Church (CBC) is to be “committed to living out God’s Word and displaying it in our lives, both in word and in deed. We seek community that challenges, encourages, shows empathy and compassion, and cares for the needs of each other and our broader community.”¹ At the same time, CBC stands on the Bible as our guide for understanding God, ourselves, and the world we live in.

And so every now and then we have to compare our founding documents with the world we live in to be certain they can continue to guide the future generations of CBC.

That time has now arrived. On February 25, 2021, the House of Representatives passed/agreed to H.R. 5 An Act “To prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and for other purposes.” Known by its short hand as Equality Act.

The Equality Act can directly affect the corporate operations of CBC both now and in the future. The Equality Act has the potential to affect CBC in three ways: (1) it expands the definition of “public accommodations” in such a way CBC could be viewed as “public accommodations”; (2) it affects all of the non-ministerial staff of CBC; and (3) it trumps the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) taking away the possibility of arguing for a religious exemption (thereby also affecting point 2 and could potentially affect even ministerial staffing decisions).

The Equality Act seeks to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to explicitly prevent and criminalize discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

For this reason, the CBC Elder Board recommends adding a clause to the CBC Doctrinal Statement so that our corporation will be amended at the constitutional level to reflect the biblical definitions of sexual orientation and gender identity and marriage. This way, CBC will have demonstrated the core commitments of the corporation prior to any potential challenges; and, therefore, will, by God’s grace, continue living out God’s Word and displaying it in our lives both in word and deed for this generation and on into the future.

Summary of Issue:

The underlying biblical and apologetic issue relates to the question of how to understand sexual orientation, gender identity, and transgenderism. Inherent in this discussion is the concept of marriage. These questions have been increasingly explored in medical, psychological, philosophical, and now ideological or political currents within our society. The rise in gender incongruence (the feeling that one’s biology does not match their psychologically

¹ Quoted from “Calvary Bible Church Directory” updated 2020/2021.

perceived gender identity) has brought into the sociological spotlight the questions of how should the American society move forward in light of these new distinctions. Below will be a summary of important definitions, representative (not exhaustive) biblical engagement, and theological engagement.

Definitions:

1. *Biological Sex* - This refers to physical or physiological characteristics that differentiate between what is male and what is female. This includes the outward physical characteristics as well as the inward reproductive organs and the chromosomal characteristics. This is often referred to as **sex** or **sex (assigned at birth)**.
2. *Gender* - Historically, this word was used to classify grammatical distinctions between classes of nouns. It would, secondarily, be used related to human biological sex as male and female. But, since the 20th Century this word has been used to describe “the psychological, behavioral, social, and cultural aspects of being male or female.”²
3. *Gender Identity* - This refers to the way a person perceives themselves and would like to be associated as. Gender Identity is a subjective self-perception on how a person relates to society. A person’s gender identity can correspond to their biological sex and expression of it (*cisgender*), but it does not have to correspond to their biological sex or gender expression (*transgender*).
4. *Sexual Orientation* - This refers to the type of person one is romantically attracted to and desires. Traditionally this has referred to opposite sex attraction and same sex attraction. It now includes the full continuum of gendered attraction states.³
5. *Transgender* - This is an umbrella term describing people who are born male or female but their sex assigned at birth differs from their gender identity and gender expression. It is used to include aspects of gender expression from cross-dressing, to hormone therapy, to other medical interventions.
6. *Intersex* - is a general term related to a variety of conditions where a person is born with reproductive anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of male or female. Except for rare conditions, a person’s DNA is conclusive. Since intersex refers to biological conditions, it is usually acknowledged biologically and not psychologically like current gender definitions.
7. *Ontology* - essential nature of being. This is a branch of philosophy, of metaphysics, that seeks to describe the intended existence or stative nature of a thing or person.

² American Psychological Association. (2015). *APA dictionary of psychology* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

³ For more information see American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists. (2015). *Resolution on gender and sexual orientation diversity in children and adolescents in schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/orientation-diversity.aspx>

Biblical Engagement:

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Some of the questions we must ask is what is humanity? How did humanity come about? What is the purpose of humanity? And what is the essential nature of humanity? The opening chapter of Genesis establishes that God created and ordered existence of the cosmos and everything in them. It is not enough to simply say that God created all there is. That is the minimum assertion being made in Genesis 1:1. There was nothing. God created everything. But the other piece of creation we need to understand is that God ordered existence when he created. Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” This description, according to the Ancient Near East (ANE) cosmologies describes chaos. To be “without form and void” is not simply a description of nothingness as we would understand it today as 20th and 21st Century people. For those in the ANE, “without form and void” directly connotes *chaos* or complete disorder and confusion.⁴ The unique aspect of the Genesis description is that God is not part of the chaos, nor does he have to battle to gain control. He simply vocalizes words and the chaos is bounded and order is established. So, from the very opening verses of Genesis, we see that the God of the Bible is both creator and orderer of existence.

In the same way, when humanity was created, God also ordered human existence. The first piece to consider is the image of God. The words “image” (*shelem* = statue) and “likeness” (*demut* = representation) synonymously refer to the same concept; the idea that persons are the unique representation of God. These words do not refer to a multiplicity of human components. The words “image” and “likeness” are used interchangeably in Genesis 5:1-2 and Genesis 9:6 when quoting the above passage. Additionally, there is no conjunction present between the two words: it is not “image...and...likeness” but “in our image, after our likeness”. So it is more of a hebraic parallelism than a statement of humanity having multiple components. The image of God refers to the idea that persons closely resemble their creator God.

An example of ordered human existence is that the biblical text describes the creation act as consisting of both male and female. Here in Genesis 1:27 there are two distinct words that are specific in definition, but uncommon in usage due to their specific definitions. The Hebrew word for male זָכָר (*zakar*) denotes male biological sex. The Hebrew word for female

⁴ For more information on ANE cosmologies, consider the *Enuma Elish*, a Babylonian origins myth/story.

נְקִיבָה (*neqebah*) denotes female biological sex.⁵ These words do not describe social relations like “man” and “woman” but specifically refer to the elements used to categorize biological sex. The initial creation account of humanity describes a person created as biologically male and as biologically female. Therefore, both biological males and biological females equally bear the image of God.

Genesis 1:28 carries the idea further to describe the purpose of the two created biological sexes: namely, that of reproduction and dominion. Both of which need the appropriate sexual orientation and integrated gender identity to fulfill the original, pre-fall mandate that is also then reissued in Gen. 9:1, thereby describing how this mandate and mission was never completely negated by the fall, just complicated as disorder was introduced into the creation.

Genesis 2:7

then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Genesis 2:4-25 describes the creation of civilization within the general creation of the cosmos. So these verses describe man (אָדָם or *adam*) and his home, work, and spouse. It also serves to emphasize a human focus of creation.⁶ This passage also describes the ordering of relations. Before moving to the ordering of relations, we should first pause to note the components of humanity. There are two: (1) dust from the ground, and (2) breath of God. The material and the immaterial. The material and immaterial are combined throughout a person’s life as a complex unity intended to operate as a whole: body and soul. Also noteworthy is that the Hebrew text identifies the man with words that indicate him being biologically male from the very beginning. And as a complete unit, his gender identity would have matched his biological sex.

Genesis 2:23-25

²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man

²³ Then the man said,

**“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”**

⁵ There are only a few uses in the OT of these more technical words denoting the biological sex of male and female (ex. Gen. 5:2; Num. 5:3). Often times, they are used in descriptions of sacrifices. So, when they appear, they are very intentional word choices by the author to more accurately describe the situation.

⁶ We see this by analyzing the grammatical sequence of chapter 1 where the logical order of creation is constructed by the use of “and” before creative acts, with the exception of the creation of humanity which starts with a “then” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14,20,24 vs. Gen. 1:26). The question is what does the “then” mean. It suggests that humanity was created as the central focus of creation when the created order was ready to sustain humanity.

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

In 2:21-22 we see the specific creation story of the woman. She too is made as a complex unity involving the material and immaterial. Therefore, the woman has equal value through creation as the man. There is not a valued hierarchy within the original statement of creation concerning the man and the woman. They both are needed to fulfill the God given mission of humanity, to be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion over the land in God's place as his vice-regents. It is a job for them both to fulfill.

Verses 23-25 speak to ordering of relations. The nature of the relationship between the man and the woman is first stated in Gen. 2:18 where God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." But, none of the animals could suffice as a suitable helper. And so there was a need in man for an equal, complementary person (Gen. 2:20). So God created the woman to be the suitable helper for the man. The only part of creation that can help fulfill the mandate of God for humanity is the woman. Primarily because of the ordering of relationships found in verse 24-25. The vocabulary also shifts at this point in the story. Starting in verse 23, the word for woman is *אִשָּׁה* (*issha*) the word used to describe a relational aspect of the human; perhaps in 21st Century America this word would describe the gender identity and sexual orientation of a person since it describes the relational aspect of the person instead of the purely biological aspect of the person. Similarly, starting in verse 24, the word for man *אִישׁ* (*ish*) is also changed to the word that describes the relational function of a man. Again, this word, being the relational word, describes the man in relationship order to the woman. So, the man is to join in relationship with, and thereby generating a new familial partnership with the woman, covenanting (the language of "hold fast"), and being completely honest and open and of equal standing without shame or guilt (Gen. 2:25).

Matthew 19:4-6

4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

In this passage, we see how Jesus interacts with the above Old Testament passages. This excerpt is part of a larger teaching on marriage and divorce. But what we specifically see here in verses 4-6 is Jesus' acknowledgement of the biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity of a person all being united in a complete whole. This statement of the unity of these elements in the psychosomatic whole was, according to Jesus, intended at the beginning of the creation of human persons. The intention in creating a person who has a unified biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity is seen the covenant of marriage described with the intention that the two become "one flesh" in such a way that they are never again separate entities. Therefore, separating these elements of a person are actually an undoing of God's intention and purpose in creating persons (v.6).

If we set these verses into their larger context, we notice the initial piece of context is that the pharisees are trying to trap Jesus in his words and teaching (v. 3) by asking if it is lawful to divorce (knowing that Moses made an allowance for it in Deut. 24:1). Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not actually approve of divorce. It simply acknowledges it as a social reality and then lays out a principle that describes the character of God. Jesus follows suit. He corrects the language of the pharisees — Moses did not command it — saying that it was allowed due

to the hardness of hearts, or the inability for sinful humanity to truly follow the will of God. Jesus then provides the interpretive and ethical principle in 19:8, “He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, *but from the beginning it was not so.*” The italics emphasize how the created order was at creation and also how it is still the intention for humanity.

Romans 1:24-27

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

The context for this verse is the preceding paragraph. There, Paul makes the case that humanity has exchanged the worship of God for the worship of just about everything else. And so, here in v. 24, we see the consequence of that. God “gives them up”. The Greek word, παραδίδωμι (paradidomi), has the definition of “to surrender”. It is used to in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) to describe how one army is given over to their conquerors (e.g. Gen. 14:20; Josh. 7:7; 1 Sam. 14:10). The implication, as the OT attests to, is that when a person wholeheartedly and repeatedly rejects God, therefore choosing to be like God themselves, then God gives them over to their conquerors. In this case here in Romans, that thing persons can be given over to is their own lustful desires that then have their own logical outworking. The commentary Paul provides is that they worshiped and served the creature instead of the creator. Humanity worships and serves its own lustful desires, replacing the need for God with human desire that fractures the person into competing identities.

This is the same thing as when the man and the woman exchanged the truth of God for the words of the Serpent in Gen. 3:5-6. And, the result was a fracturing of the human person: the man and the woman became ashamed of their person and so their union was divided (v. 7); their shame fractured their relationship with God as they hid (v.8); the nature of the world and the presence of spiritual evil was allowed on a large scale (v. 15); the man and the woman would begin to compete for control and authority over each other (v. 16); humanity’s relationship to the land and also work was fractured (vv. 17-19); and humanity’s relationship to the animal world was fractured (v. 20).

Paul notes how both males and females are treated equally in this. They both exchange the truth about God for a lie and then worship their own lusts and desires allowing those to be thing they search for in order to feel whole. Yet, the great irony of sin is that a fractured person can never become whole by feeding the fractures. It is only through returning to the truth of God that a person can gain a unified identity and feeling of wholeness.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

At the time of the fall in Gen. 3, not only was human person fractured, human relationships fractured, but, disorder and chaos was also brought into creation. Many of the same verses above describing the fracturing of the human person, also illustrate the disorder and chaos. Here Paul is discussing the disorder that emerged from that first decision of the man and the woman. The first thing to note is the word “submit.” It is technically not in this sentence, but pulls from the participle in v. 21. There we see the word ὑποτάσσω (hupotasso) often translated as *submit*. And, while the word *submit* often has a negative connotation in our 20th and 21st Century context, in the First Century, it simply referred to ordered relationships within an ordered society. It was often used to describe the ordering of military personnel into their various ranks, or to describe political jurisdictions. Therefore, this word does not have a negative connotation to it. Additionally, it is not the same word as *obey*. And, in the middle voice, it means Paul is asking wives (specifically) to volunteer to join this depiction of ordered relationships within an ordered household.

This idea of ordered relationships within an ordered household is not intended as some sort of chauvinistic/paternalistic form of control. Instead, it is here to describe the nature of God and his desire for relationships seen within the family. Paul explains this by appealing directly to the nature and relationship of Christ with the church. And he grounds it in Gen. 2:24. And, he specifically mentions how this ordered relationship is typologically representative of Christ and the church. So the theological implication is much greater than simply a set ordered relationships, but it is there as an example of how God, through his Son, relates to the people of God, the church. There is more at stake in these passages describing family, marriage, biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity than we often like to admit. This passage is not about how a man and woman should act at home and who the “real head of the house” is. Instead, it is an object lesson of the very nature of God as rooted in his original intention for human persons in relation with each other and with him.

Theological/Apologetic Engagement:

If we try to summarize the essential questions about the nature of humanity we see first that humans are real. They are distinct from God and each other. The created nature of humanity describes a person. A person is not an illusion of greater and lesser desires or mixture of various impressions and influences. A person, as created, has many dimensions to their person that make up a whole substance. There is a cognitive part, a moral part, a physical part, and all of these parts are integrated into the whole person. Therefore a person can not, ontologically, be fractured into separate parts all with their own representations in this world. A person is not divided as a mind that thinks, a heart that feels, and physical body that acts. We are more than what we do. We are more than what we think. We are more than what we feel. Instead, the mind, heart, and body all are integrated into an ontological whole.

As an ontological whole, persons are also distinct from God. When God created humanity he did so out of two components: the land and his own breath. The land, by itself, was/is not a self-animated conscious being. It is dirt. But, it is the unique combination of the land and the breath of God that made humanity, not as pieces of God, but as a psychosomatic whole person who closely resembles their Creator.

As distinct persons, God created humanity as male and female. God's intention through human biology was that one's biological sex would be integrated with their sexual orientation and their gender identity. And, God created human to represent binary distinctions so that they could then also demonstrate and participate in male/female union in a unique way. The relationship of a male to a female is representative of the very nature of God.

Both male and female are needed to fulfill the mandate God gave to humanity. After he finished his creative act, God provided humanity with a mission to represent him here on earth as his vice-regents and so instilled in them a mandate to be fruitful and multiply and exercise dominion over the earth. To fulfill that, the image of God is needed. Both male and female in a covenantal relationship.

This then also was intended to reflect the ordered nature of God. In the creation story we see that God brought order to where there was chaos — to those things that were formless and void. As God establishes order in terms of the cosmos, he does too in terms of civilization. The ordering of covenantal marriage relationships is seen as a representative of God and the voluntary giving-up of control and authority within the relationship is also a reflection of God's character as can be seen in the relationship of the Trinity.

This summary describes a reality of God creating humanity — from the beginning — as distinct male and female persons. These male and female persons both equally bear the image of God and both are needed to fulfill the mandate and mission given to humanity. In the expression of covenantal marriage and the relational structure of humanity, there is the practical implication of God's ordered creation also extending to an ordered society.

Proposed Doctrinal Formation:

We believe that humanity is created ontologically as being biologically male or biologically female (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4). And that the Bible defines marriage as between a male and a female (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6). In this way it is a type and reference to a believer's relationship with the Triune God (Eph. 5:22-33). Therefore the biblical end of sexual and romantic desires is appropriately located solely in marriage (1 Cor. 6:15-20).

Apologetic Engagement

Was humanity created androgynously (without biological sex identifiers/gender identity) and so gender identity is a later product? Similarly, did Adam and Eve contain all perceived genders today, and so were originally gender fluid in identity and therefore engage the full range of sexual orientation?

The creation accounts use very specific vocabulary in their descriptions of the creation of the man and the woman. The words used define biological sex markers upon a person. So the original man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created from the beginning as purposed and ordered as male and female (Gen. 1:27-28). Even though there is a specific start for the man and a specific start for the woman, there is an overarching purpose and intention in their creation as complimentary sexes and genders. And, considering the ordered nature of creation, it too speaks to God's character to have created binary sexes and genders who each have a sexual orientation to desire the other without fear, shame, harm or guilt (Gen. 2:24-25). This is witnessed in the mandate and mission to be fruitful and multiply and fulfill the earth (Gen. 1:28).

Gender fluidity indicates a lack of order in creation. If Adam and Eve contained all of the genders that are noted today, then it would indicate that Adam and Eve were not created with purpose and intention, but instead were created with an identity crisis and were often found to be identity switching based on their perceived state of being. This self-autonomy in one's person is not a product of the Biblical God who created an ordered existence; but suits, instead, a foundation in the Fall. The theological and historical time when Adam and Eve first disobeyed God by choosing to follow their own will and desire over and against God's instruction and covenant with them (Gen. 3). This exchanged the covenant and trusting relationship humanity with each other, with God, and with the rest of creation. Thereby replacing objectivity with subjectivity in the mind and heart of humanity as humanity seeks to manifest its own answers to life in the fallen world (Gen. 4:1-2a).

We can see our culture actually attest to this through the diagnostic and treatment language prescribed by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the groups whom have adopted APA language. The wording, both diagnostic and treatment related, is that of *affirming*, where the role of the psychologist and associated clinical community is to affirm the gender preferences of the individual person.⁷ This description of *affirmation* is representative of the self-autonomy and subjectivity introduced into the world after the Fall. A person can be separated into constitutive parts: the mind, the body, the emotions, the perceptions, and the social projections. This breaks down the person into many parts. So instead of being a complex unity of material and immaterial, the modern person is now considered to be an interactive collection of various different complete parts. And each part is subject to clinical forms of treatment and identification. Therefore, reinforcing the disunity of the person.

As Christians, we should understand the complex unity and ordered creation that is presented in the biblical account of humanity. Not in a practice of discrimination towards those who believe something different, but always with love, mercy, and grace as we hold to the biblical truth and proclaim God's own love, mercy, and grace towards his creation (Eph. 4:15; 1 Peter 3:15).

⁷ For more on APA guidelines for psychologists see, <https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/transgender.pdf>

The Bible speaks of eunuchs, so doesn't this imply more than one gender?

While it is correct that the Bible references eunuchs in places such as Deuteronomy 23:1, Matthew 19:12; Acts 8:26-40, it does not indicate a biblically named third gender.

Deut. 23:1 indicates a biological mutilation. It describes the situation where a biological male is somehow physically disfigured. It does not indicate this person is then a different gender. His essential biology — his DNA — is still indicative of male.

Matt. 19:12 is set in the overall context of marriage. It therefore indicates that marriage between a man and a woman is a calling. And some are called to marriage. But there are also some who are unable to fulfill the mandates of marriage due to physical characteristics. And there are those who have a calling to singleness. And that the calling of God on an individual's life should be carried out by that person; whether that is a calling to marriage, a calling to singleness, or the calling to bear a medical condition preventing a person from fulfilling the mandate of marriage. This last piece acknowledges that, after the fall, there are those who are born intersex. They are genetically, or chromosomally, male or female, but their reproductive anatomy displays physical variations to the defined norm.

Acts 8:26-40 describes the historical reality and practice of the class of eunuch. Those either born intersex or those whom are victims of physical mutilation were often placed in court positions attending to the royal family to prevent inappropriate relations while attending to those in power.

Since all of these passages still refer to biological males who have been the subject of physical mutilation, born intersex, or the ministry calling to singleness, the Bible does not speak of a third gender.