The Nashville Statement: A Critical Review

Jamin Hübner

It is not every day that a document about theology and gender makes national news. The “Nashville Statement,” however, accomplished this very thing in September of 2017. The document, issued by the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), is identified as “A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality” and intends to set the record straight with regard to human identity, transgenderism, homosexuality, and other related topics.

The initial response to the Statement was extensive, both in and outside the Christian community. Discussion about the Statement has since died down, but the debates surrounding ethics and gender/sociology certainly have not. In any case, there has been little interaction with the Statement beyond popular commentary. What follows is a more detailed analysis of the document in hopes of shining a brighter light on this controversial topic. The plan is to frame the debate, systematically examine the Statement itself, and conclude with final reflections.

The Deep Context of the Nashville Statement

A number of contextual layers stand behind the Nashville Statement (henceforth NS). For example, the socio-political context reveals that the NS came just two years after the landmark US Supreme Court decision favoring same-sex marriage. This event, viewed by many as emblematic of the decline of “Judeo-Christian values,” has left many evangelicals on edge, particularly after the landmark Danvers Statement (henceforth NS). For example, the socio-political context reveals that the NS came just two years after the landmark US Supreme Court decision favoring same-sex marriage. This event, viewed by many as emblematic of the decline of “Judeo-Christian values,” has left many evangelicals on edge, particularly after the landmark US Supreme Court decision favoring same-sex marriage. This event, viewed by many as emblematic of the decline of “Judeo-Christian values,” has left many evangelicals on edge, particularly after the landmark US Supreme Court decision favoring same-sex marriage. 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The historical-theological context is another important layer. The NS is essentially a sequel to the 1987 Danvers Statement on gender roles. Both were written by the same organization and endorsed by many of the same professors, pastors, and authors. The Danvers Statement provided the necessary framework for the NS, including specific content, such as Art. 1, 3, and 4 (which address the differences between man and woman). What, then, is CBMW?

CBMW was established to counteract the progress of secular feminism and Christian feminism and egalitarianism. CBMW refers to its own views on the subject as “complementarianism,” which asserts permanent, differentiating gender roles for each sex. The term itself has been shown to be misleading because the meaning of “role” has been misconstrued and because complementarianism amounts not to complementarity as much as hierarchy. Female subordination to male authority is considered the divine arrangement between the sexes. As a result, women are restricted from leadership positions in various spheres of society, though the extent of which remains debated by CBMW proponents. Additionally, discourse about God (which is primarily metaphorical/figurative) should be restricted to masculine language—even though the Christian Scriptures do not exhibit such monolithic descriptions.

This primacy of maleness is perhaps evident in the NS and its list of original signers. The document was written by men and endorsed mostly by men. Out of the handful of female signers, several include their “complementarian roles” (e.g., “homemaker,” “president’s wife”) above professional employment positions, whereas there is no equivalent for male signers (e.g., “breadwinner,” “husband of x”). And, as explained below, depictions of God and other topics are needlessly (and unhelpfully) gendered—and in masculine terms.

As a “Council,” CBMW’s members and participants see themselves not merely as providing an alternative to prevailing opinions, but as establishing the absolute, unquestionable, objective, timeless, biblical truth about manhood and womanhood. Just as the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) summarized the gospel story and defined basic Christology, so the CBMW has decreed what it means to be a man and a woman (1987) and, now, how that theological anthropology works out more specifically (2017). As Mohler comments, “The ‘Nashville Statement,’ like many other doctrinal declarations common to Christian history, seeks to summarize, clarify, and affirm what Holy Scripture reveals.”

A third layer is the historical-theological context. In brief, the NS is a product of religious fundamentalism. Found in versions of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism as well as Christianity, religious fundamentalism typically (though not always or exclusively) displays such characteristics as an unusually expansive concept of “orthodoxy,” simplistic or undeveloped binary thinking, an obsession with certainty, textual idolatry, apocalypticism or alarmism/extreme urgency, stigma towards broad learning, groupthink, pseudo-scholarship, cult-personalities or extreme admiration of assertive authority figures, proselytism/triumphalism, self-legitimization, an obsession with certainty, textual idolatry (e.g., biblicism and bibliolatry), and foundationalist epistemology.

The initial endorsements to the NS—supplemented by short comments of other proponents—demonstrate most of these features.

• Biblicist Foundationalist Epistemology: “[The NS] is built on the persuasion that the Christian Scriptures speak with clarity and authority for the good of humankind” (John Piper); “The Nashville Statement’s doctrinal affirmations are technically correct, in the way that a house built on sand might be architecturally correct” (First Things); “my prayer is that it will help anchor churches and Christians” (Russell Moore).
• **Apocalypticism/Urgency/Alarmism:** “In the present generation, confusion and perversion surrounding gender, marriage, and human sexuality continue to define our times” (Jason Allen); “It touches the most fundamental and urgent questions of the hour” (Piper); The NS “is an urgently needed moment of gospel clarity” (Moore); “In our day truth is being forsaken in this arena . . .” (Ligon Duncan); “This is one of those moments in which the church must stand and not fall . . . these are some of the most controversial issues of our time” (Mohler); “Gender confusion is rampant and lives are being damaged as a result” (Jeff Purswell); “believers must take a stand for the Word of God . . . in a time of cultural confusion over complex matters” (Thomas White); “We believe that human dignity, human flourishing, and true human freedom are at stake” (Mohler).28

• **Warfare/Fortress Mentality:** “To capitulate to the spirit of the age . . . would be to abandon the mission field . . . the church must stand ready” (Moore); “a torrid assault in the cultural climate of our day” (Daniel Akin); “We must stand our ground on the unchanging Word of God. . . . The Nashville Statement is courageous” (Burk Parsons); “calling us to stand faithfully for him” (Ray Ortlund); “The Nashville Statement . . . will equip believers to respond to such issues with courage . . .”

• **Simplistic Binarism:** “In order to be truly for the world, when the world is going the wrong way, you must be against the world” (Jerry Johnson); “people who have a problem with the Nashville Statement have a problem with God and His Word. It’s that simple” (Michael Brown); “[NS] has incited those who would replace Christianity with a new religion teaching a new morality to be explicit in their rejection of the historic Christian faith” (Mohler); “two rival visions of what it means to be human are now fully apparent” (Mohler).

• **Expanded Orthodoxy:** “I am signing The Nashville Statement because I stand with Biblical orthodoxy” (Rosaria Butterfield); “on the most basic truth of what it means to be human” (Mohler); “It declares the very heart of Christianity” (Ortlund); “confusion reigns over some of the most basic questions of our humanity” (Denny Burk); “just the most basic of the basics” (Brown).31

• **Proselytism/Triumphalism:** “we have articulated what God’s Word says about issues of sexuality and gender” (Akin); “The Nashville Statement clearly articulates evangelical beliefs on biblical sexuality” (White); “Like so many other statements . . . we’ll look back on The Nashville Statement as a word that needed to be said, a message that needed to be sent. It is clarity in the midst of confusion that will stand the test of time and the test of truth” (Mohler).

• **Self-legitimization:** “the vitriol in response to our document showed why such clarification is necessary. . . . The backlash to the document shows why it is so needed. . . . The very fact that the statement made headlines and was greeted with shock and surprise in some quarters underlines why it was needed” (Mohler);32 “It is courageous” (Kevin DeYoung).

• **Biblicism:** “these other ‘Christian’ leaders have rejected the authority of the Word of God. . . . the statement only reaffirms what the Bible clearly teaches” (Brown); “summary of basic biblical categories, rooted in sound exegesis, and an over-all commitment to the consistency of Scripture as a divine revelation” (James White).33

All of this shows that the NS emerges out of a particular ideology and cultural ethos. It is not religiously, ideologically, or culturally neutral. It is not “mere Christianity.”

A fourth contextual lens—the most important in our case—is the context of systematic theology. American fundamentalism was forged out of a myriad of conflicts in the early 1900s surrounding evolution, higher biblical criticism, fracturing denominations, modern optimism about human reasoning, and a myriad of other developments. This “fundamentalist-modernist controversy” has deeper roots in earlier Enlightenment expressions of Christian thought such as English Puritanism and post-Reformation scholasticism.

These roots have a direct bearing on the contents and presentation of the NS. Some of the vocabulary is nearly copied-and-pasted from such documents as *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) or from contemporary proponents of such theologies (e.g., Piper, a CBMW leader and initial NS signer). The first paragraph of the NS, for instance, says “God created human beings for his glory,” and then later in the Preamble, “God’s design and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good.” This is essentially a restatement from *The Westminster Confession* (II.2–3, IV.1, V.1) and, more plainly, from the first part of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism:* “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” Whether these ideas and terminology are properly implemented in the context of CBMW’s views is debatable.

Less explicit implementation of Protestant thought includes phrases such as “God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption,” mentioned twice in Art. 7. The words “in creation” and “redemption,” of course, are not referring to verses from the Bible but pointing to conceptual categories in systematic theology. The same is true for “the Fall” in Art. 4 (oddly capitalized, since other terms such as covenant, church, creation, and redemption are lowercase).

These are but samples of specific vocabularies, theological categories, and models of theology from the past five hundred years that make an appearance in the NS. As one would expect, there is a particular theology to a theological document. But, contrary to the assumptions of the authors of the NS, not all
Christians agree with these theological constructs or with what their implementation would entail. Even the simple “creation-fall-redemption” schema (present, but not explicit, in the NS) has been critiqued in the past quarter century by a variety of theologians because it excises almost all of the OT and some of the NT. “Fall” is also fading out of use in order to better conform with a more biblical orientation (e.g., “alienation”).

There is much in the NS about Adam and Eve, creation, fall, redemption, and marriage as “covenant,” but little about Israel and Israel’s covenant, the New Covenant in the Messiah, peace, reconciliation, respect, or even love (except for a passing remark about speech in Art. 11, and a specific analogy for marriage in Art. 1). There is also little about pertinent topics like abuse and violence and their opposition to the gospel. Again, the theological orientation is peculiar. This is not simply due to the subject matter—as if homosexuality and transgenderism somehow require more talk about God’s glory, obedience, and Eph 5 than about God’s patience, faithfulness, or 1 Cor 7.

The NS did not emerge out of a timeless, theological vacuum. While it is supposed to be an objective, universally-binding, eternal re-presentation of unchanging divine truths, the NS remains best described as an American evangelical fundamentalist quasi-reformed perspective on gender written primarily by white American male Protestants. It would be unwise to use it as a reformed perspective on gender written primarily by white

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A fifth and final layer is the literary context of the NS. Just as “one does not simply walk into Mordor,” so one does not simply write a statement of faith. Documents like the NS are a specific literary phenomenon that can be traced back to ancient creeds and confessions. The purposes of each creed, confession, or formal “statement of faith” or “declaration” vary, but still entail a number of common features. There is an art and craft to creed-writing and constructing formal declarations, and genre determines the boundaries and rules of interpretation. These boundaries serve as the basis for communicative success, limiters of meaning, purpose, standards of accuracy, etc.

Authorial intent is also important, though few creeds, confessions, and statements are written by a single author. They tend to be composite documents. Some material is a synthetic or hybrid construction that cannot be easily traced to any single author at all. The origins of the NS’s various parts are likely never to be completely revealed, nor do they necessarily need to be. For if such source and redaction criticism was required to discern its content, this would nullify the belief of the authors themselves—that the NS is functionally prepared for mass consumption.

Nevertheless, literary origins can complicate specifics. Why, for instance, is “human identity” used in the Preamble and not “self-conception,” but in the Articles “self-conception” is used but not “human identity”? Was this reversal of vocabulary intentional, a failure of the final editor to ensure consistency, or are “human identity” and “self-conception” radically different concepts in the authors’ minds? And why is “people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex” used only to identify homosexuals in Art. 8 but not elsewhere where homosexuals are referenced? (To make room for bisexuals, perhaps?) And, why is there only one biblical quotation or citation in the entire document (Matt 19:12 in Art. 6)? Such questions point to some of the disadvantages of disembodied, corporately-authored public statements.

There are also different subsets under this broad genre. The NS tends towards “a standard, a battle cry, a testimony and witness to the world,” as opposed to a tool for liturgy, a guide for memorizing doctrine, or a basis for catechism. One should therefore not fault the NS for being difficult to memorize, inelegant, or failing as an effective pedagogical tool. Even here there are looming concerns because the signers do not all agree on why exactly the NS was written. Piper says, “The aim . . . is to shine a light into the darkness—to declare the goodness of God’s design in our sexuality and in creating us as male and female.” Mohler spreads the tent far wider: “The main goal . . . is to point all persons, regardless of the form of our struggles over sexuality or self-identity, to salvation and wholeness in Christ.” That is, the document is actually a call toward salvation. Russell Moore’s delineation, on the other hand, is much more complex.

These differences—even if minor—further complicate the task of interpretation. Because both author and reader want a clear statement of purpose, this pushes readers in the direction of caution when reading it—and even more caution when applying it. But this might nullify the entire project since it is meant to establish an official benchmark that requires minimal guesswork. The authors therefore appear overly-optimistic about what a single public statement can accomplish.

Just as important is the distinction between what is said and how it is said—between the content of something and its form (e.g., rhetoric, literary structure, tone, rhythm, etc.). This is particularly noteworthy since the effect of the NS has invoked the harshest criticism. For a document addressing gender in the twenty-first century, this aspect is particularly important. It goes without saying that the proponents of the NS believe that success has already been achieved on this mark. Before the NS was exposed to the global church, it was judged to have “compassion” and to be “gracious” (Piper), “compassionate,” “pastorally wise” (Grudem), a “loving statement” (DeYoung), a “compassionate affirmation” (Parsons), expressed “lovingly” (Duncan) and with “compassion” (Akin, White), and even “breathtakingly glorious” (Ortlund). However, we should note that these are not the kind of judgments the signers can accurately make before public release; they are judgments for others to make after its release.

This problem of perception is another challenge of such public-statements. It is impossible to ensure that the effect of any written document will be the same for all audiences, “When we make declarations like this,” writes one Southern Baptist, “we speak in the global language of sound bites, which leads to misunderstanding.” This is one of the biggest risks of attempting to speak for all people, once and for all—as opposed to, say, local pastors speaking in their own words for their own congregations, or simply writing a more modest declaration. As one professor and popular commentator notes,
To utter these public pronouncements without an enveloping pastoral context fails to provide pastors with a loving context to these views.\textsuperscript{44} In short, there is no “one size fits all” creed, confession, or statement that is immune from criticism or from the changes of time and language. This is why multiple translations and versions of the Nicene Creed (and others) exist. And if the Bible itself can be regularly updated in different translations to fix dead metaphors, odd renderings, implement new scholarship, and reflect changes in language and culture, this basic aspect of changeability should not be too much to ask for something like the NS.

It should be noted that this situatedness of (all) literature is inevitable and does not preclude the possibility of communicating localized truths, accurate propositions, or cross-cultural facts.\textsuperscript{45} But it is disturbing that there are no phrases like “this is but an attempt,” or “all statements like this are provisional,” or “our context limits our perspective,” or “this might have varying nuance in another culture.” There are not even caveats like “we are open to correction,” or “we hope to talk about this with others,” or “we surely have blind spots.” Perhaps, then, if there is any sin of omission in the NS, it is not so much a missing Article or two, but a humble recognition of basic human creatureliness.\textsuperscript{46} The authors do not squarely acknowledge the inherent limitations of sinful people drawing an immovable line in the sand, nor do they find it necessary to make such an acknowledgement.

**Preamble**

The Preamble to the NS is remarkably similar to the 2006 preface of the book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.\textsuperscript{47} The focus is on a cultural world-view shift, and reform is stressed. There are also a number of pressing concerns.

For example, we read, “It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual’s autonomous preferences.” This statement is likely a false dichotomy. As will be explored below, identifying as male or female is frequently part of God’s plan and design, not necessarily opposed to it. In fact, in the biblical narrative (given certain conditions) what God plans and what people choose are often one and the same.\textsuperscript{48} Additionally, the sheer number of ways in which femininity and masculinity can be expressed—both in and outside the human species—suggests that God loves variety in precisely this corner of creation. Whether there are limitations to such variety (either by ability or by ethical norms) is another debate. But to simply pit God’s plan against human free choice is framing the whole document as “humans vs. God,” which will likely limit the NS’s capacity to speak effectively.

A sort of pseudo-theological patriarchy, embedded in the Preamble, begins to emerge—“his glory,” “his creatures,” “to him alone,” “made us for himself,” etc. The church is “her,” “she,” and is meant to “bring him the greatest glory.” That this choice of gendered language (and metaphors) is stressed so persistently in such a short preface is peculiar—especially given the plain (and needlessly) patriarchal picture it portrays. Might there be a more helpful and sensitive depiction of God? Some readers of this preface might find gentle Jesus, “friend of sinners,” the oppressed slave who carries our burdens, much easier to relate to than the more distant “Creator and Lord of all” to whom “every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance.”\textsuperscript{49} This collection of metaphors and models (masculine, militaristic, unidirectional) is not illegitimate as much as misplaced—especially if the authors want to persuade their audience instead of pressuring them to surrender and worship. One recalls the words of two Reformed theologians: Daniel Migliore, who says, “God’s grace is not coercive but gives humanity time,”\textsuperscript{50} and Herman Bavinck, “covenant honors the fact that God created men and women as rational and moral beings. He treats us as such by not coercing us but using persuasion; he wants us freely and willingly to serve him in love (Ps. 100:3f.).”\textsuperscript{51} Perhaps the overall tone and choice of words might be different with these theological reflections in mind.

For better or worse, a fuller black-and-white model takes shape in the Preamble: “Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life?” Christians who have not lost conviction and courage, but also have trouble living and proclaiming God’s way of life, are excluded from these either/or options. And what about those who simply need space to think about the complex topics of gender and homosexuality? Where might they fit in this dualism?

“We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female.” What is meant by “true story of the world” and “once again”? The church is, indeed, unanimous throughout history about the restriction of sexual activity to the bonds of heterosexual marriage.\textsuperscript{52} Yes, there are good biblical and theological reasons for continuing to uphold this perspective. But, this is not what the NS is truly about, as it also includes big theories of theological anthropology and psychology, gender (and transgender), biology, theology, ethics—and a specific relation among all of these. On this wide variety of topics, there is no single “true story” prior to the present age. For example, the topic of marriage itself was a loose-steering wheel throughout church history, some praising singleness and celibacy, others marriage and children.\textsuperscript{53} The same goes for sexual activity—in some Christian expressions, never in excess and only for procreation, while in other expressions it was viewed quite the opposite.\textsuperscript{54} There is even more lack of consensus about biology and gender, psychology, and anthropology.

Indeed, the majority of the views in the NS cannot be called “traditional”—anymore than all the views about gender in The Danvers Statement are “traditional.”\textsuperscript{55} This is partly because matters such as transgenderism, “self-conception” and/or “human identity,” and the relationship between biological sex
and gender have not been topics of discussion for most of church history. How, then, can the NS be relaying a tradition that did not exist? The claim “tradition” also does not hold because of the high-level of nuance associated with these topics, which cannot be identified with more than a handful of contemporary like-minded authors (many, ironically, who are signers of the NS). Some perspectives (or at least specific articulations) in the NS may, in fact, approach innovation. In a word, then, the NS is the result of doctrinal development and recent human innovation, not merely the repetition of some earlier Christian tradition.

Immediately following the theologically-selective call to allegiance, the Preamble says, “This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves.” The definite article (“the path”) is notable, because there seems to be little reason why the authors could not have said (to use one example), “God alone is Savior, Lover, and Friend of all who accept Jesus of Nazareth through personal trust; in this faithful Protector and Helper, we can become whole.” It is unclear why a different yet theologically-sound alternative like this would be unacceptable.

Other remarks in the Preamble approach incredulity. “God’s good plan provides us with the greatest freedom.” According to CBMW, we recall that this “freedom” means that half the global church is prohibited from teaching men on Sunday mornings, preaching sermons to their own congregations, or engaging in any number of (arbitrary) activities solely on the basis of sex. One therefore reads statements like these with as much seriousness as, for example, the Saudi Arabian government talking about the freedom of their female citizens (who were not even allowed to drive until 2017).

Readers are also reassured, “He [God] is for us and not against us.” One wonders who “us” refers to and why this reassurance is necessary if the tone and content of the NS are adequate to demonstrate this. Whatever the case, the fundamentalist subtext here is plain, though this does not make it less disturbing when made explicit: “If you’re for God, you’re for the NS; if you’re against the NS, you’re against God.”

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Following in the footsteps of the Danvers Statement (which followed in the footsteps of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy), the Articles are in an Affirmation-Denial format. Sometimes this approach adds clarity, while at other times it adds confusion.

This first Article contains several observations that any Christian might readily affirm. But three problems (and potential others) come to the surface: (a) defining marriage strictly as sexual and procreative (because many marriages may not be sexual, procreative, or either); (b) defining the essence of marriage according to a single analogy used rarely in the NT (which, ironically, could be misconstrued as promoting homosexuality, if pushed too far, since male Christians—as the “bride”—are marrying Christ); (c) the dualism of “mere contract” vs. “covenant made before God,” perhaps implying that a marriage between non-Christians is invalid. Depending on one’s perspective, the lack of qualifications here may appear careless.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God’s revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

This Article is one of the least controversial and least complicated. Its perspective does not appear substantially problematic, including implications for homosexuality; a theological or biblical case for ethical homoeroticism is very difficult to make. Potential issues might arise over the use of “ever” (definitiveness proclaimed by human beings is often doubtful) and the boundaries of “sexual immorality.”

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Sexual differentiation is, indeed, a blessing—as so much of creation’s variety is. One might also affirm the thrust of the Denial, were it not written from a female-subordinationist perspective. The differences between male and female are not defined in the NS, but in the Danvers Statement. Any criticism directed at the Danvers Statement on this particular issue would apply here. In fact, if one expanded the Denial, the irony of complementarian anthropology becomes apparent: “we deny that [permanent subordination of women] renders them unequal in dignity or worth.”

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God’s original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

The same concerns highlighted for Art. 3 can be raised here. Restated according to its internal hierarchical perspective, we read that “permanent female subordinationism of women to men… is meant for human good.” Readers of the NS—especially women—might legitimately be personally offended by such grotesqueries. Thoughtful readers may also find these tropes incredible, since they are claimed to be on par with divine truth, as well as “compassionate” and “careful” theological discourse.
**Article 5**

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God’s design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

This Article requires lengthy commentary beyond the scope of this review, so my remarks will be brief.

The thrust of the Affirmation seems to be that male/female organs should align with one’s identity as male or female, but that this identity (“self-conception”) must also be according to “God’s design.” The thrust of the Denial seems to be that intersexuality, bisexuality, or transgender phenomena does not trivialize the alignment between biological maleness/femaleness and gender (identifying as “male/female”)—which, again, is “God-appointed/designated.” In other words, those who are biologically male should always identify as men and behave like men according to complementarian standards, and those biologically female should always identify and behave as women according to complementarian standards.

The first problem is that “biologically” can have at least two meanings: genetic and reproductive. Genetic (chromosomal) sex is “permanent” after conception. But reproductive sex is not so fixed—as witnessed by the rare (but real) cases of intersexuality. The Affirmation explicitly refers to “reproductive structures,” so it would seem that the reference to “biological sex” in the Denial means the same. Thus the very existence of intersexuality renders the Denial—or at least its intended purpose—superfluous. That is, intersexual persons, given their dual reproductive structures (assuming this particular sense of intersexuality for the moment), have an obligation to behave in both masculine and feminine “roles.” But this approach is impossible (or at least heretical) in CBMW’s complementarian framework, which has no room for such people. Intersexual persons therefore are not capable of fulfilling “God’s design,” at least not without potentially dangerous surgery (among other changes). This raises questions about the meaning of “creation” and being “created” in general, since it no longer refers to the actual creation of individuals in the womb, but to a loaded theological construct.

Also, one might say that bisexual persons do not break the “link” between sex and gender but add a link to it (i.e., “two links,” though not parallel except in cases of intersexuality). How, then, is this statement meaningful for non-intersexual bisexuals?

It is here that we realize why public formal pronouncements on complex ethical topics with theology are so risky: the marginalized who are supposed to find help are instead rendered incapable of pleasing their own Maker. In the end, the attitude is not so much “come just as you are” as “come just as you are . . . post-op” or “come just as you are . . . if you can pretend to be more attracted to the opposite sex than your own.”

**Article 6**

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about “eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb.” With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person’s biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

The issue of implied readership and rhetorical effect is key in this Article. Imagine someone saying, “we affirm those born with only one leg are created in the image of God.” What is the desired response to this line of thought? As Preston Sprinkle puts it, “WE AFFIRM that Asian-Americans fully possess the image of God and can live joyful lives in Him.” Well sure, but do we need to say this as if it’s questionable?

The authors seem unaware of how these statements could be (and are) perceived. Such attempts to be affirming are actually patronizing. From what moral position do the authors feel inclined to allow the dignity of other persons and to assume others’ gratitude because of it? In this regard, the NS might actually be self-defeating. It is hoping to be a relevant engagement with the issues of the day, but instead fulfills precisely those contemporary fears of its own audience. Mohler’s disclaimer, “We have no right to face the world from a claim of moral superiority,” ameliorates little because this appears to be precisely the presupposition behind the NS and the attitude within it.

Perhaps the most insightful commentary on this Article is the reading of Christian intersexual persons themselves. Consider the story of “Lianne”:

“and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known” means that intersex people should embrace the sex assigned them by doctors and accept the medical treatment involved. This is the way I, as a Christian intersex person, understand their position. As do my intersex friends. We are castrated by doctors, undergo cosmetic sex assignment surgeries without our consent, are given hormones, lied to, have secrets kept from us, and made to live in shame. . . . That’s what their statement means to us.

Furthermore, what if the physicians were mistaken in their initial assignment (as it was for one of my wife’s counseling clients)? Does the NS require such a person to file for divorce, empty the bank account for surgery, and try to start a new life under a new name? Can this indeed be construed as “the path” to “human flourishing”?

The “clarity” of the NS seems to escape precisely those complex situations it was supposed to help. Warren Throckmorton, a Christian professor of psychology, accurately assesses the situation this way: “The real world of sexuality is not as neat and clean as portrayed by the signers of the Nashville Statement. I hope Lianne’s story provides a caution to those who marginalize those who have been dealt a hand they didn’t ask for.”
Article 7
WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption.

The first line appears to be a (third) re-assertion of CBMW’s complementarianism. But why should human identity (all the more, Christian identity) be defined solely in the categories of “creation and redemption” and not, for example, by the teachings of Jesus, or something else? Surely we cannot pass over the parables of Jesus or the Sermon on the Mount—with its Beatitudes, Lord’s Prayer, and Golden Rule. The same might be asked about Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit,” one of the earliest Christian summaries of Christlikeness.

The Denial is confusing as well, since it implies that simply identifying as “homosexual” or “transgender,” whether verbally or even in one’s own mind, is unacceptable.71 (This assertion was made explicit in Art. 10 of the 2018 “Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel” by John MacArthur et al.: “We reject ‘gay Christian’ as a legitimate biblical category.”)72) The authors might as well have said, “WE DENY that recognizing oneself to be a sinner is consistent with God’s holy purposes.” But recall that Abram and Sarai were not called to immediately abandon polygamy before God would make a covenant with them, nor did God abandon covenant promises when the people of Israel clung to a hopeless system of monarchy and bloody political maneuvering (1 Sam 8).73 The Apostle Paul also had a self-conception of being “the greatest of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15; cf. Rom 7:15–25). In this sense, it is no more sinful to call oneself gay, straight, or lesbian than to call oneself greedy, arrogant, or violent.

Of course, “homosexuality” (set aside transgenderism for a moment) does not always refer to homoeoriticism, anyway. “Homosexual” often refers to “those with same-sex attraction” (a psychological state) regardless of that person’s social actions and/or sexual behaviors (an embodied social and ethical state). In that case, saying “I’m gay” is like saying “I find contemporary folk music to be beautiful” (though same-sex orientation is obviously more permanent and central), and this is viewed as morally objectionable. But this is absurd. Are present-day disabled Christians to be charged with immorality for saying “I have MS?” or “I’m autistic?” Should they undergo “conversion therapy” and remain alienated from the local church in the meantime? I suggest that a genuinely Christian response to these questions is “no.”

In short, the whole paragraph runs the risk of pushing some Christians into denial or back “in the closet.” It does not see the church as a “hospital for sinners,” or provide sound direction for the complexities of local congregations.74

Article 8
WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

This Article has some of the same issues as Art. 7. The “us-them” mentality is more pronounced here. Regarding the last phrase of the Denial, one again wonders in what environment it would be required to say that those with same-sex attraction are not for this reason alone “going to hell” as it were.

The bigger issue is the internal tension: a person who experiences same-sex attraction can “live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God” and “walk in purity” even though this experience is fundamentally contrary to “the natural goodness of God’s original creation.” Whether this is genuinely contradictory, one wonders why same-sex attraction is such a catastrophic problem for the Christian—so much that one should not even use a self-identifying word for it, and that one cannot have an opinion about the subject without disassociating from Christianity (see Art. 10 below).

Article 9
WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality—a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

This Article appears to be a corollary of what has been said before, and needs little by way of review.

Article 10
WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

This is perhaps the most controversial Article, since it implies that those who digress from the NS are not truly Christian. Proponents of the NS have explicitly said as much.75 If this is the case, it is not entirely surprising since the same triumphalist claims have been made, by the same general constituency, about the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy76 and the Danvers Statement.77 If my narrative is correct, the NS essentially functions as the latest and greatest in a growing pile of lengthy fundamentalist theologically-correct documents—a litmus-test for orthodoxy and a knife to wield for heresy-hunts.

The Denial doubles down on this polarizing approach. The authors say that not only homosexuality and transgenderism, but also that the approval of such matters, are not matters of moral indifference. It is as if the authors are inspired by the canons of the Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553), where condemnation was based on what and who Christians
condemn (e.g., "If anyone does not anathematize Arius . . . Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches and Origen, together with their impious, godless writings, and all the other heretics . . . let him be anathema.""). Here, one falls under threat of church discipline or even excommunication for lacking or choosing not to voice an opinion about homosexuality or transgenderism. Granted, the NS will not be used for burning Christians at the stake. However, it cannot be said that this power play and the NS in general will not be used to hire and fire pastors, professors, and others.79

Another concern is that there are many types of transgenderism. Some intersexual persons might be categorized this way, or it might refer to others who have undergone surgery (whether intersexual or not), or to something less dramatic like prolonged cross-dressing. Paul’s instructions in 1 Cor 11 and elsewhere assert that visible differentiation between the sexes should be maintained, for such creational variety is to be embraced and not suppressed. To re-incarnate the spirit of this instruction would require significant atheological work, creativity, and wisdom. Christians in first-century Corinth (and elsewhere) were struggling with such issues as prostitution and prostitute converts to Christianity, marriages in which only one spouse becomes a Christian, and female slaves.80 Today, the challenges include the possibility of sex-changes, the posited variety of gender orientations, and what constitutes an appropriate expression of femininity or masculinity.

But in its anti-intellectual biblicism, the NS ignores the implications of these differences precisely because they would open the door to alternative solutions regarding male-female authority structures. Since there cannot be options other than those presented in the NS, there is no theological, creative, wise work to be done, in the academy or in local churches. The public is simply told, in effect, to obey the Bible, sign on to such creeds as the NS, and ask no further questions because the answers have been officially dispensed.

Again, as mentioned earlier, the NS does not present itself as limited, contextualized, in development, or willing to hear alternative points of view in or outside of the church. It is a direct extension of God’s mind; to question the NS is to question God.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image-bearers as male and female.

It is questionable whether the NS itself has fulfilled this article’s affirmation. In any case, the Denial is particularly baffling. In what situation has someone suggested that it is necessary to speak in a way that dishonors anything? The Denial seems hypothetical and disconnected without any clear context.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

This Article affirms that all Christians with same-sex attraction have the capacity to change. While this may be the case for some individuals, it tends to be the exception and not the rule. What, then, of those who cannot seem to “kick” their same-sex attraction?

Given the Article, there appear to be five possible conclusions:

a. They are not truly Christian (“a follower of Jesus”).

b. They are capable of changing their orientation but choose not to.

c. They are resisting the power and grace of God.

d. God has not given them power to overcome.

e. God’s power and grace are inadequate.

Given the Article, (d) and (e) are not real options. From here, the situation gets more sophisticated because the contingency not clearly addressed is under what conditions such “power” is given. The last phrase of the Denial alludes to this caveat: it is “to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.” But this may not be the same group addressed in the Affirmation. If it is the same group (which seems likely), then option (a), (b), or (c) would follow.

But each of these is problematic. If (a) is the case, every Christian with same-sex attraction who cannot ultimately overcome it is not truly a Christian. This is the same as saying that homosexuals cannot become Christians. The absurdity of this suggestion—especially given Christianity’s diverse range of converts—merits no further comment. If (b) is the case, one wonders why many more homosexual Christians do not change, since changing their orientation is merely a choice. Indeed, the debate about just how much one’s orientation is a choice continues to rage.83 It also seems overly simplistic and perhaps unjustly incriminating to reduce the entire state of affairs to the power of choice. If (c) is the case, then the failure to change one’s life in this way is resisting God’s power (see Art. 5). But it is not this simple, and it also conflicts with the enablement concept in the Article. Even if it were so simple, this would presumably result in grounds for some kind of admonishment (e.g., “I told you, stop being attracted to other people of the same sex; you’re resisting God’s power”), which would drive an unnecessary wedge into the person’s relational and spiritual life with God.84 Such a confrontation is counter-intuitive, insensitive, lacking in pastoral wisdom, and likely not to lead to change.

Perhaps there are other conclusions than these five. But, it would appear on first glance, that, no matter which way one cuts it, Art. 12 is not encouraging or hopeful for homosexual persons who wish they did not have the struggles that they do.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance
to accept the God-ordained link between one’s biological sex and one’s self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God’s revealed will.

The content of this Article has already been addressed above. There are different senses of “transgender,” “biological sex,” and (something we did not have time to explore) “link.” Suffice it to say that there is more opportunity here for confusion and discouragement than for clarity, understanding, and encouragement.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ’s death and resurrection the forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord’s arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

It is unfortunate for such a straightforward doxology to conclude a document like the NS. It is the rhetoric of hearty words and a tone of hope, all after an unusually convoluted series of propositions on theology and gender. More hopeful is that many in the church can see through such language and rhetoric into what actually amounts to contemporary abuse of theology and theological language.

Conclusion

In 2006, a thirty-one year old Navy specialist underwent sex re-assignment surgery to become a woman; Fox Fallon then enrolled in women’s cage fighting. In 2014, she brutalized a female opponent, leaving her with a concussion and a damaged orbital bone—attributable (in part) to a clear physiological advantage. More recently, a man-to-woman transgender charged with rape sexually assaulted four women after being sent to an all-female prison.

Is this, to borrow language from the NS, what it looks like for human beings to rebel against God’s ordained design for man and woman in the twenty-first century? Is this what Abraham Kuyper meant by “Modernism, which denies and abolishes every difference, [and] cannot rest until it has made woman man and man woman”? Perhaps it is. But if CBMW’s Nashville Statement is supposed to provide an effective, persuasive, and decisive Christian response to such rare spectacles, it has a long way to go.

This assessment is even more true for the common situations involving homosexuality, bisexuality, and patriarchalism. Despite a handful of agreeable propositions, the NS generally confuses, patronizes, and exhibits an attitude of unidirectional power and control. There is not even a mention of the well-known abuses and mistreatment of girls, women, and LGBTQ persons by professing Christians and their leaders. Nor is there any concession that “complementarian” or “traditional” gender roles simply do not fulfill their promises (i.e., self-identified evangelicals are as abusive and adulterous as those in secular culture). Instead, there is a polarizing morass of seemingly contradictory assertions, perplexing terms, simplistic assertions and above all, a morally disturbing subtext.

Now more than ever, the church should remember that actions speak louder than words. People feel loved when they are loved, not when they are simply told that they are loved. Positive change happens by authentic relationships embodying the Spirit of Christ, not by official documents passed down from a theologically narrow subset of primarily white American evangelicals. When the church is being Christ’s body, onlookers will say as they did centuries ago: “Look . . . how they love one another . . . and how they are ready to die for each other.”

Notes

3. See https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/the-danvers-statement/.
11. The list of “essentials” or “core doctrines” grows ever larger to include a variety of nuanced opinions. See Art. 10 below.
12. This includes a consistent “black and white” attitude and misunderstanding towards ideas that cannot be slated into a dualism of opposing sides.
13. Believing communities lack social integration, and hermeticism is validated by attempts not to be “stained by the world.” There is pride in exclusion (e.g., “our church is smaller than all those more popular ones—and this proves we are right; narrow is the gate”), and fear of...
building relationships across social, ethnic, sexual, linguistic, and religious boundaries (e.g., homophobia, xenophobia, etc.).

14. States of affairs are regularly described by war-time metaphors and analogies (e.g., “battle,” “conquer,” “win,” “war,” “soldier,” “fight”). All conflict or difference of opinion is reduced to a set of competing propositions, as “those who are not for us are against us.” This also includes defensive postures (e.g., forbidding all inter-religious dialogue).

15. “Now” is always the most desperate hour for the recovery of society. Hesitation in action is a sign of either weakness, moral culpability, or compromise. (Cf. Art. 10 below.)

16. Bible colleges are preferred over liberal arts colleges and public universities. Some entire fields (e.g., sociology, philosophy, religion) are viewed as generally threatening, as are historical and literary criticism of the Bible.

17. The desire for unity and harmony leads to irrational thinking and/or coercive attitudes, and constant re-affirmation of the same slogans, metaphors, models, or descriptors is needed to “protect the flock from wolves.” Independent thinking apart from group consent, participation, or official approval is viewed with anxious concern.

18. Fake or faulty credentials are typical, as well as general or emphasized suspicion about mainstream academia and excessive appeal to anecdotes in argumentation. There is also a fundamental incapacity to distinguish non-binary categories and different types of data and arguments, an over-reliance on secondary sources and opinion, and an uncritical awareness of linguistic, social, and cultural situatedness.

19. Fundamentalist organizations tend to center around hierarchical leadership and monopolized channels of information, often leading to abuses of power and a domineering spirit.

20. Calls to tribal allegiance are equivocated as calls to more and spiritual faithfulness. Fear tactics are often used to induce shame and/or coercive attitudes, and constant re-affirmation of the same slogans, metaphors, models, or descriptors is needed to “protect the flock from wolves.” Independent thinking apart from group consent, participation, or official approval is viewed with anxious concern.

21. Polemics is central and not peripheral; being the object of external criticism is twisted into proof of being right (galvanization). This category would also include cases of playing the victim/oppressed.

22. A variety of opinions obtain the same level of conviction and epistemological weight regardless of differences in intellectual support. Certainty is a general indicator of truth while doubt is a general indicator of falsehood. The refusal to possess conviction or certainty in certain areas is evidence of ideological/theological compromise and those who ask forbidden questions are viewed as potentially malevolent dissenters. Note that this topic was recently tackled by Gregory Boyd, *Benefit of the Doubt* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013) and Peter Enns, *The Sin of Certainty* (New York: HarperOne, 2016).


24. What one believes is regularly equivocated with “what the Bible says.” Sacred texts are viewed as a storehouse of inerrant propositions and facts, where all genres are collapsed into “teaching” (hence the phrase, “what the Bible teaches”). Furthermore, societal woes—including sexual immorality and ethical dysfunction—are automatically attributed to a “low view of the Bible.” The words and text of scriptures become more important than what they actually communicate. See Carlos Bovell, *Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007); idem, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011); idem, *Rehabilitating Inerrancy in a Culture of Fear* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012); James Dunn, *The Living Word* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicalism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012), and James Barr, *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Louisville: WJK, 1984).

25. In addition to a naïve realist perspective, propositional language is privileged and all truths are considered linear extensions of certain “foundational” truths.

26. Unless noted, these quotations come from the CBMW website.


30. Mohler, “I Signed the Nashville Statement.”


32. Mohler, “I Signed the Nashville Statement.”


35. As noted by Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 148, in the perspective of fundamentalism, “When Christian leaders start talking about love or the limits of our knowledge, heresy cannot be far behind.”


40. Moore’s delineation is more complex: “The Sexual Revolution cannot keep its promises, and the church must stand ready to receive with compassion the many who are in need of a better hope. The Nashville Statement is part of that mission, and my prayer is that it will help anchor churches and Christians to the gospel of Jesus Christ for years to come.” Cited in Denny Burk, “Nashville Statement Endorsements,” CBMW (Aug 29, 2017), https://cbmw.org/topics/news-and-announcements/nashville-statement-endorsements/.
41. Cf. “location” vs. “illocution.”
42. Burke, “Nashville Statement Endorsements.”
45. NS signer John Frame is well aware of this epistemological issue: “theology is not ‘purely objective truth’; as we saw earlier, there is no such thing as purely objective truth, or ‘brute fact.’ Our theologies are not even the best formulations of truth-for-people for all times and places; Scripture is that. Our theologies are merely attempts to help people, generally and in specific times and places, to use Scripture better.” John Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1987), 80.
49. See Kaufman, In Face of Mystery; Sallie McFague, Models of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987), idem, Metaphorical Theology; Joerg Rieger, Christ and Empire (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007).
51. Migliore, Faith Seeking Understanding, 332.
52. See Preston Sprinkle, ed., Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).
55. Complementarianism proper—the idea that men and women are ontologically equal but functionally (teleologically) unequal in (permanent) authority roles—is a theological innovation of the 1970s and not a long-held tradition of the church (which in past centuries generally asserted women’s inferiority).
56. Mohler indicates as much when saying, “we find ourselves clarifying what no previous generation of Christians has been called upon to clarify.” Mohler, “I Signed the Nashville Statement.”
57. This would not be unusual, as American fundamentalism has always been doctrinally innovative. Cf. George Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 5; and Kevin Giles, Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).
59. For a full delineation of this modern Pharisaism, see Wayne Grudem, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012, orig. 2004 by Multnomah), 2.7.
60. On the general issue of homosexuality, the Bible, and Christianity, see Robert Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002); Nate Collins, All But Invisible: Exploring Identity Questions at the Intersection of Faith, Gender, and Sexuality (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017); Preston Sprinkle, People to be Loved: Homosexuality is Not Just an Issue (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).
62. “Intersexuality: the condition (such as that occurring in congenital adrenal hyperplasia or androgen insensitivity syndrome) of either having both male and female gonadal tissue in one individual or of having the gonads of one sex and external genitalia that is of the other sex or is ambiguous” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary), “Bisexual: 1b: of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to members of both sexes; also: engaging in sexual activity with partners of more than one gender” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary). These categories do not necessarily exist binarily (yes/no), but in degrees. (E.g., someone can be strongly or mildly bisexual or homosexual.)
63. The substance of this “link” is not clear in the NS and could have a variety of meanings. On a related issue, it seems obvious that the ways in which sex/biology affects gender are numerous—as are the ways in which other variables (e.g., upbringing, social construction, cultural trends, mass advertising, theological ethics) affect gender. If it is the goal of the NS to address how much sex should determine/ affect gender, that is not clear since the sex/gender distinction is not clearly established. In fact, the Statement seems intent on collapsing it altogether.
64. Preston Sprinkle, “My Nashville Statement.”
65. More poignantly, is the global LGBTQ community significantly benefited by a group of white American male evangelicals publicly telling them that they have dignity and worth?
67. The proof-text is noticeably awkward. It is the only such case in the NS and is unnecessary at that (as if without these words of Jesus it would be questionable whether eunuchs, intersexual persons, and others are human beings).
69. By “mistaken” in this situation and similar ones, I mean (a) the physician mistook the infant for (say) a male instead of intersex and/or (b) mistook the infant for a genetic male when the infant was genetically female.
70. Throckmorton, “A Real Reason.”
71. It also (oddly) excludes bisexuals from the topic. It is unclear whether this was intentional.
74. E.g., how to deal with a married gay couple who converted to Christianity. It does not work and is not wise for the pastors of that church to simply say, “You’re Christians now, so get divorced, turn over your children to a heterosexual family, and stop being attracted to those of the same sex.”

75. See Brown, “Why the Rejection of the Nashville Statement is a Rejection of the Bible.”

76. See the original publications of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.

77. See the works of Wayne Grudem on this subject.

78. Leith, Creeds, 50.

79. According to Mohler, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary plans to add the NS to its required documents of consent. See Kate Shellnut, “Has Christian Psychology Lost Its Place at Southern Seminary?,” CT (Sept 18, 2017).

80. See Cynthia Long Westfall, Paul and Gender (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

81. This is particularly true within the first and second centuries—where Christianity saw growth among eunuchs, homosexuals, prostitutes, Roman soldiers, and other minorities and unexpected groups.

82. In my view, it is difficult to argue that one’s choice of sexual attractiveness is much different from what one finds attractive and beautiful outside human sexuality (art, music, etc.), and that such attraction can be changed by will-power.

83. Note also that 1 Cor 6:9 refers to homoeroticism, not homosexual orientation/attraction.

84. This admonishment would not be surprising given the nouthetic (admonishment) counseling methodology of the NS authors.

85. My own opinion is that both gender (masculinity, femininity, and everything in between) and gender orientation (gay, straight, bisexual, etc.) are jointly determined by social, ideological, psychological, and biological (i.e., sexual and hormonal) factors.

86. Martin Evans, Kate McCann, and Olivia Rudgard, “Transgender Person Accused of Rape is Remanded into Female Prison and Sexually Assaults Inmates within Days,” The Telegraph (Sept 6, 2018).


88. Mohler, in The Washington Times, tried to briefly compensate for this glaring omission in his op-ed: “We know and confess that Christians have often failed to speak the truth in love.”

89. Tertullian, cited in Krieder, Patient Ferment, 58.