



THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL  
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EDITORIAL

- 01 **Hope Lives Till We Have Faces**  
Jason G. Duesing

## ESSAYS & PERSPECTIVES

- 04 **Charles Ryrie (1925-2016) and  
The Role of Women in the Church**  
Dorothy Kelley Patterson
- 07 **Don't Play Travel Ball: Stay in the Rec League**  
Jim Hamilton
- 12 **David Bowie, Glam Rock, and Gender Rebellion**  
Candi Finch
- 15 **Gender Specific Blessings: Bolstering a Biblical  
Theology of Gender Roles**  
David Schrock
- 19 **"To Make Her Holy" (Ephesians 5:26): Are Husbands  
Responsible for the Spiritual Maturation of Their Wives?**  
David Croteau
- 26 **Marriage: A Portrait of the Gospel from the Beginning**  
Dale Johnson

## STUDIES

- 32 **God as Father, God the Father, and Human Fathers**  
Bruce A. Ware
- 40 **The New Household in Christ: How Wives and Husbands  
are to "Put on the New Self" in Colossians 3:18-19**  
William M. Marsh
- 58 **Confronting the Transgender Storm: New  
Covenant Reflections on Deuteronomy 22:5**  
Jason S. DeRouchie
- 70 **Virtually an Affair: Are Evangelicals Prepared  
to Face Pornography's VR Revolution?**  
Matthew C. Millsap
- 80 **Jesus and the Meaning of Marriage: A Close  
Reading of Mark 10:1-12**  
John DelHousaye

## FROM THE SACRED DESK

- 90 **Ordered Love: An Exposition of 1 Peter 3:1-7**  
Owen Strachan

## GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

- 99 **A Review of Wayne Braudrick.**  
*Whatever Happened to Manhood: A Return to Biblical  
Manhood.*  
Louis Markos
- 102 **A Review of Joe Rigney.** *The Things of Earth: Treasuring God  
by Enjoying His Gifts.*  
Jeremy M. Kimble
- 104 **A Review Jack Rogers.** *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality:  
Explode the Myths, Heal the Church.*  
Brian Neil Peterson
- 109 **A Review of Courtney Reissig.** *The Accidental Feminist:  
Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design.*  
Megan Hill



THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL  
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

- 112 A Review of Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schriener. *Women in the Church, Third Edition*. Scott Corbin
- 115 A Review of Robert L. Plummer and Matthew D. Haste. *Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage From Voices of the Past*. Craig Hurst



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# CONFRONTING THE TRANSGENDER STORM: NEW COVENANT REFLECTIONS ON DEUTERONOMY 22:5

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## 1. THE RISING STORM

A gender identity crisis is sweeping across our land. This study seeks to help the church assess biblically and confront lovingly yet truthfully the rising storm of transgender issues confronting our culture.<sup>1</sup> The American Psychological Association<sup>2</sup> defines “sex” as “a person’s biological status” that “is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex” and that is identified by “sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.” In contrast, the APA states that “gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex.” While one’s biological sex is fixed by nature, this definition treats gender as a culturally bound category, so that what is gender normative in one culture may legitimately stand against what is or was gender normative in another culture or age. With this, the APA further stresses the need to distinguish persons’ biological sex from their “gender identity,” which may be “male, female, or transgender.” And then we must account for persons’ “gender expression” through things like

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1 The author presented an earlier draft of this study as a sermon at Bethlehem College & Seminary, 15 November 2015. You can access a video of the message at <http://bcsmn.edu/index.php/bcs-media/chapel-messages/item/transgender>. Jason S. DeRouchie (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) serves as Associate Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, MN. His resource website is at [derouchie-meyer.org](http://derouchie-meyer.org), and he is the author and editor of numerous articles and books, including *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013) and the forthcoming *Understanding and Applying the Old Testament: 12 Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017). DeRouchie serves on the peer review board for *JBMW*.

2 “Definition of Terms,” an excerpt from “The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients,” adopted by the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives, February 18–20, 2011, <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>.

clothing, communication patterns, and interests, which may or may not reflect one's gender identity or biological sex.

Before readying this study, I personally did not realize how serious the transgender issue is in our day. Yet now I see that it is massive, and I do not believe that the church can ignore it.<sup>3</sup> In 2013 California became the first state in the Union to require that public schools allow transgender students to use the bathrooms and play on the sports teams that correspond with their personal gender identities.<sup>4</sup> Since then there has been a growing wave of debate across the country, and at the last elections numerous states went to the polls to decide whether bath- and locker room access would be governed by biological sex or gender identity. A recent case in the Chicago area may actually make it to the federal courts.<sup>5</sup>

I remember as a youth standing in awe of Bruce Jenner's athletic ability as I watched replays of his decathlon gold medal at the Montreal 1976 Summer Olympics. Now he (or is it she?) and a subset of social media are calling upon me and my children to call him Cait and to even follow *Glamour* magazine in celebrating him as "woman of the year."<sup>6</sup>

In the fall of 2015 in Ontario, Canada, the sex-education curriculum began introducing 8th graders to six different genders and four options for sexual orientation.<sup>7</sup> As to gender, you can be male, female, two-spirited, transgender, transsexual, or intersex. Sexual orientation can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Similarly, since the fall of 2014, the Lincoln, NE, public school system began training its teachers

3 The Southern Baptist Convention is at the forefront of this response. In 2014 it passed a resolution "On Transgender Identity" that is filled with biblical conviction and Christian love: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2250/on-transgender-identity> (drafted by Denny Burk and Andrew T. Walker). With this, the website for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is loaded with helpful resources to help churches and individuals think and respond Christianly to this debacle (<http://erlc.com/>). Recently two leaders have written on this issue in helpful, bold, biblically grounded, culturally relevant, and loving ways: Denny Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), esp. 157–84; idem, "Training Our Kids in a Transgender World," in *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Owen Strachen and Jonathan Parnell (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2014), 87–102; R. Albert Mohler Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, & the Very Meaning of Right & Wrong* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2015), esp. 67–84.

4 See the California legislative counsel's digest, "AB-1266 Pupil Rights: Sex-Segregated School Programs and Activities," approved by the governor on 12 August 2013, [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB1266](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266). For a favorable response from a transgender advocate, see Parker Marie Molloy, "California's School Success and Opportunity Act (AB1266) Will Save Lives," *Huffington Post*, released 21 August 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/parker-marie-molloy/californias-school-success-and-opportunity-act-\\_b\\_3786798.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/parker-marie-molloy/californias-school-success-and-opportunity-act-_b_3786798.html).

5 Ed Payne and John Newsome, "U.S.: Illinois Transgender Student Must Get Full Locker Room Access," *Cable News Network* (CNN), 3 November 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-school-district-transgender-ruling/>; Mitch Smith and Monica Davey, "Illinois District Violated Transgender Student's Rights, U.S. Says," *The New York Times*, 2 November 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-district-violated-transgender-students-rights-us-says.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-district-violated-transgender-students-rights-us-says.html?_r=1). For Andrew T. Walker's solid evangelical response, see "The Transgender Movement and Government Overreach: Why It Matters," Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission blog, 5 November 2015, <http://erlc.com/article/the-transgender-movement-and-government-overreach-why-it-matters>.

6 Jenner's identification as a trans woman went public in an April 2015 interview with ABC's *20/20*: Diane Sawyer, "Bruce Jenner: The Interview," *20/20*, 25 April 2015, <http://abc.go.com/shows/2020/listing/2015-04/24-bruce-jenner-the-interview>. Jenner then formally announced the shift from Bruce to Caitlyn in an interview with *Vanity Fair*: Buzz Bissinger, "Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story," *Vanity Fair* July 2015, <http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/06/caitlyn-jenner-bruce-cover-annie-leibovitz>.

7 Arti Patel, "Ontario's New Sex Ed Curriculum: Exactly What Your Kids Will Learn," *Huffington Post* 25 February 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/ontario-sex-ed-curriculum\\_n\\_6754696.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/ontario-sex-ed-curriculum_n_6754696.html).

in how to create a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive environment in their classrooms.<sup>8</sup> They give every teacher a handout that includes 12 easy steps to gender inclusiveness, among which are: “Don’t use phrases such as ‘boys and girls,’” and “When you find it necessary to reference gender, say, ‘Boy, girl, both or neither.’”<sup>9</sup>

Sitting in my own home in Minneapolis, MN, I once found it easy to think that the transgender storm was only hitting nearby countries and states and that it was reaching me and my church only from a distance via social media. Now, however, I realize that this is not the case. Indeed, the storm is blowing right at our back door, and for some in my Bethlehem Baptist Church and Bethlehem College & Seminary family, it has entered into the living room. In December 2014, the Minnesota State High School League took up the issue and overwhelmingly approved to open girls’ sports to transgender student athletes in its 500 public schools.<sup>10</sup> As of fall 2015, students born male but who identify themselves as female can now compete as “girls” against girls in sports with no stated restrictions to women’s locker rooms, so long as they have approved written statements from their parents, guardians, or health-care professionals regarding their “consistent or sincerely held gender-related identity.” The lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT) movement quips that only this approach supplies “equal access to all students,” and they claim any other view is “bathroom bullying.”

I know that some of you reading this study have yourselves wrestled with gender identity or have been the victim of another’s gender identity crisis. I ache for you, and I long for you to know the healing and wholeness that only Jesus can bring. These matters are deeply personal and often very difficult to talk about, but know that you are not alone. Our God knows your pain and struggle, and I encourage you to find a faithful, Christian leader who can help you find hope in the life-transforming, grace-saturated, pain-overcoming, mercy-filled love and power of God to heal.

8 Margaret Reist, “LPS Staff’s Transgender Training Concerns Parents,” *Lincoln Journal Star* 1 October 2014, [http://journalstar.com/news/local/education/lps-staff-s-transgender-training-concerns-parents/article\\_0b37dd75-758d-50c1-9deb-16901059bc5a.html](http://journalstar.com/news/local/education/lps-staff-s-transgender-training-concerns-parents/article_0b37dd75-758d-50c1-9deb-16901059bc5a.html); cf. Tim Wright, “The New Utopia: A Genderless Society?” *Search for Tom Wright* (a blog), 15 October 2014, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/searchingfortomsawyer/2014/10/the-new-utopia-a-genderless-society/>. The Lincoln Public Schools used guidelines set forth by the Gender Spectrum, a liberal southern California non-profit organization that seeks to create more gender-sensitive and -inclusive environments for all people, especially gender non-conforming and transgender youth: [www.genderspectrum.com](http://www.genderspectrum.com).

9 As would be expected, in world where the God-established binary distinctions of male and female become non-existent, people are forced to reconsider language patterns like personal pronoun use that have stood the test of centuries. R. Albert Mohler Jr. (*We Cannot Be Silent*, 78) has recently noted the way the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools has offered fresh options for your *preferred gender pronoun*. They write: “Some people prefer that you use gender neutral or gender inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. In English, the most commonly used singular gender neutral pronouns are *ze* (sometimes spelled *zie*) and *hir*. ‘Ze’ is the subject pronoun and is pronounced /zee/, and ‘hir’ is the object and possessive pronoun and is pronounced /heer/. This is how they are used: ‘Chris is the tallest person in class, and ze is also the fastest runner.’ ‘Tanzen is going to Hawaii over break with hir parents. I’m so jealous of hir.’” (“What the heck is a ‘PGP’?” <http://www.gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/What-the-heck-is-a-PGP1.pdf>)

10 The Minnesota State High School League details their new policy in two areas of their guidelines: “Gender Identity Participation in MSHSL Activities” (<http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/ParticipationInMSHSLActivities.pdf>) and “Transgender Eligibility Appeal Procedures for a Male and Female (MTF) Student” ([http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/Participation-InMSHSLActivities12\\_4\\_14.pdf](http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/Participation-InMSHSLActivities12_4_14.pdf)). For the local news update, see David La Vaque, “High School League Overwhelmingly Approves Transgender Policy,” *Star Tribune* 9 March 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/dec-4-high-school-league-approves-transgender-policy/284783781/>. The Minnesota Family Council has delineated the impact of this ruling for MN families: “MSHSL Transgender Policy,” Minnesota Family Council, <http://www.mfc.org/mshsl-transgender-policy/>. The transgender advocate Gender Spectrum (<https://www.genderspectrum.org/explore-topics/education/#more-239>) points approvingly to the “Guidelines for Creating Policies for Transgender Children in Recreational Sports,” *Transgender Law & Policy Institute*, September 2009, [https://www.dropbox.com/s/czdivxw8d9jpgjr/trans\\_children\\_in\\_sports.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/czdivxw8d9jpgjr/trans_children_in_sports.pdf?dl=0)ldren-in-Recreational-Sports.



I know of one who has had to bear the burden of a parents' divorce due to a father's struggle with cross-dressing and female gender identity. May the Lord care for the broken hearts of all involved, lead this father to repentance and healing from his gender identity crisis, and grant this son great wisdom as he seeks to operate as both child and parent. I know of another lady who, at the young age of 16, was seduced into a long-standing relationship by a woman claiming to be a man. Today this lady bears the scars of this past relationship, while also celebrating the redemptive, healing work of Christ in her own life. In Jesus we gain a new identity and freedom to live in God's world God's way for God's glory.

## 2. THE OT LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN

We begin our confrontation of the transgender storm in Deuteronomy 22:5. As Christians today, we are not under the old covenant law (Rom 6:14; 1 Cor 9:20–21; Gal 5:18), which means in part that the Mosaic law is no longer the direct and immediate guide or judge of the conduct of God's people.<sup>11</sup> The age of the Mosaic law covenant has come to an end in Christ, so that the law itself has ceased from having a central and determinative role among God's people (Rom 10:4; 2 Cor 3:4–18; Gal 3:15–4:7).<sup>12</sup> Yet the law of Moses still serves Christians by providing a prophetic witness to Christ and by clarifying the character of God and how deep and wide love for God and neighbor goes.<sup>13</sup>

While Christians are not legally bound to the Mosaic law, we do not throw out the law itself. Indeed, Moses himself predicted that in the day when God would circumcise hearts and empower love (Deut 30:6), God's people would hear YHWH's voice and keep all the commands Moses gave in Deuteronomy (Deut 30:8). But as Jesus declared in Matthew 5:17–19, while all the commanding parts of the Mosaic law still matter for Christ-followers, we only appropriate them through Christ's law-fulfillment. Only when we consider the impact Christ's work has on any given law can we begin to consider the lasting significance of that law for believers.

With this, Paul asserts that through our love for others Christians fulfill the law and that all the commandments—not just moral laws or civil laws but all the laws—are fulfilled in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom 13:8–10). Paul told Timothy that “all Scripture [including the OT] is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). The OT still speaks to Christians. It was Jesus and Paul's only Bible, and these “sacred writings . . . are able to make you [and me] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). In this vein, this study draws from an OT law, which I will interpret in order to address the transgender questions that are in fresh ways confronting the church of Christ Jesus.

I follow a three-step process in establishing the lasting significance of any OT law for Christians:<sup>14</sup>

11 So too Douglas J. Moo, “A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on the Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 343; cf. 375.

12 Ibid., 359.

13 For more on this approach to a Christian's relationship to OT law, see David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise,” *JETS* 34.3 (1991): 321–34; Moo, “A Modified Lutheran View,” 317–76; Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 77–160, esp. 126–27, 157–60; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); Brian S. Rosner, *Keeping the Commandments of God*, NSBT 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); William W. Combs, “Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 19–39.

14 I have adapted some of these guidelines from Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 314–24 and Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian,” 332–33.

1. I first determine the law's type and original meaning, significance, and purpose, including all implications.
  2. Next, I determine the theological significance of the law, which includes (a) clarifying what the law tells us about God and his ways, (b) assessing how Christ's law-fulfillment impacts the law, and (c) stating in a single sentence the love principle behind the law.
  3. Finally, I preserve both the portrait of God and the love principle behind the law but change the context, all in light of Christ's new covenant work.
- Let us walk through this process with Deuteronomy 22:5.

### 3. DEUTERONOMY 22:5 IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

This verse comes in the second movement of Moses' second Deuteronomic sermon. In chapters 5–11 he tells Israel *what* they are to do—love God and neighbor. Now in chapters 12–26 the detailed “statutes and rules” (12:1; 26:16) clarify *how* they are to do it. Deuteronomy 16:20 summarizes the thrust of the unit: “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue” (author's translation). 12:1–16:17 addresses righteousness in community worship; 16:18–18:22 talks about righteousness in community oversight, and 19:1–26:15 gives instruction on righteousness in daily community life. This first part of chapter 22 simply overviews various, unrelated laws that consider the right way to live. Into this context, we read in Deuteronomy 22:5: *“A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.”*

### 4. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—THE LAW'S TYPE AND ORIGINAL MEANING, SIGNIFICANCE, AND PURPOSE

God gave Deuteronomy 22:5 for the benefit of all Christians, but he did not originally give it to us. There is a distance between the church and this command in that it was originally revealed to Israel under a different covenant and time in redemptive history. As such, as Christians we must seek first to determine the law's type and original meaning, significance, and purpose in the Mosaic covenant.

Formally this law is more like the ones in vv. 9–12 than the ones in vv. 1–4 and vv. 6–8. Specifically, it is an apodictic rather than casuistic law, stating a general principle to guide life rather than supplying an “if or when-then” scenario in which the prohibition becomes operative. The principle itself seems less a core truth like “you shall never commit adultery” and more a secondary application of a core truth. On the surface, the prohibition relates to what the APA terms “gender expression”—“the way a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture” through things like dress.<sup>15</sup> At a deeper level, however, the law assumes a more fundamental rule—that there are only two biological sexes—male and female—and that what is gender normative in God's world is that one's biological sex should govern both one's gender identity and expression. Before divine wrath is poured out, this text provides a kind corrective to gender confusion and transgender identity.

Deuteronomy 22:5 stands independent of its context and simply comes to us as two prohibitions followed by a single motivation clause. In Hebrew, there are two types of negative commands—imme-

<sup>15</sup> APA, “Definition of Terms,” <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>.

diate (*al*) and durative (*lō*), and God chose to frame these prohibitions as durative, so that we should read the “not” as a “never”: “A woman shall *never* wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man *ever* put on a woman’s cloak.” From God’s perspective, there is never a permissible time for the type of cross-dressing addressed in this passage.

Digging deeper into this law, we should note that the term translated “man” is *geber* (“strong man”) and not the more common *’ish*. Some have suggested that *geber* means “warrior” here (cf. 1 Sam 1:27; Ezek 32:27),<sup>16</sup> but this meaning is more associated with the adjective *gibbôr* (“mighty one,” cf. Gen 10:8–9; Deut 10:17). Furthermore, within the Pentateuch all other instances of *geber* simply overlap in meaning with *’ish*, showing up in contexts that distinguish the men from the young (Exod 10:7, 11) or from women and children (12:37).<sup>17</sup> The clear difference between *geber* and *’ish* is that, when paralleled with “woman,” *’ish* can often mean “husband,” whereas *geber* never does in any of its twenty-four OT uses. At the very least, then, this law concerning male-female relationships is not restricted to husbands and wives and thus family law but speaks to the broader society and community. *From God’s perspective, maleness and femaleness bears implications beyond the home or gathered worshiping community. It also impacts daily life in society.*

The term used here for the woman’s “cloak” (*šimlāh*) is restrictive, pointing specifically to the outer wrapper or mantle that a female would wear.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the term rendered “garment” (*kēlī*) in relation to a man is broader and suggests any object associated with men—whether clothing (1 Sam 21:6), vessel (1 Kgs 10:21), ornament (Gen 24:53), or piece of equipment (Num 19:18) that was specifically associated with men.<sup>19</sup> This could even include weapons of war (Gen 49:5; Deut 1:41; Judg 9:54), but it was in no way limited here. Within Israelite culture, then, there were certain styles of dress, ornaments, or items that distinguished men and women. As such, two things appear to be at stake in this law:

1. Everyone needed to let their gender expression align with their biological sex, and
2. Everyone needed to guard against gender confusion, wherein others could wrongly perceive a man to be a woman and a woman to be a man based on dress.

Whether due to pagan religious activity or to a desire to engage in roles restricted to the opposite sex, such practices opposed any form of Godliness.<sup>20</sup>

Note now the motivation for heeding the command (= *kī* clause). God calls the type of cross-dressing, transvestite practice, and role confusion addressed here an “abomination to the LORD.”<sup>21</sup> This

16 E.g., J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, AOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 336–37.

17 “גִּבּוֹר” HALOT, 1:175. which I will interpret in order to address the ehind of the law, has let his new covenant mercy move in both of our hearts. ok forwar

18 “שִׁמְלָה” HALOT, 3:1337.

19 “כֵּלִי” HALOT, 2:478.

20 H. A. Hoffner Jr. argues that the transgender practices evidenced here were potentially connected to the pagan religious rites or magical practices of Israel’s neighbors (“Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity,” *JBL* 85 [1966]: 326–34). While possible, nothing in Deuteronomy 22 explicitly links the text to cultic ritual (so too P. J. Harland, “Menswear and Womenswear: A Study of Deuteronomy 22:5,” *ExpTim* 110 [1998]: 74–75). For further reflections on ancient Israel’s problem of cross-dressing, see N. S. Fox, “Gender Transformation and Transgression: Contextualizing the Prohibition of Cross-Dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5,” in *Mishneh Today: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. N. S. Fox, D. A. Glat-Gilad, and M. J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 49–71.

21 Similarly, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 treat homosexuality as an abomination to the YHWH, and this sin is clearly associated with the gender crisis that Deuteronomy 22:5 addresses (cf. the use of *malakos* [“effeminate”] in 1 Cor 6:9 for the passive or receiving party in a same sex relationship).



statement highlights the gravity of the offense. Within Deuteronomy sins tagged abominable include the crimes of idolatry (Deut 7:25–26; 12:31; 13:14; 17:1, 4; 20:18; 27:15; 32:16) and witchcraft (18:9, 12) and the offense of dishonest gain whether at the criminal, civil, or family level (25:16). What is it about idolatry, witchcraft, and dishonesty that make them abominable to the Lord? Idolatry gives glory to someone other than YHWH; witchcraft looks to means other than God’s word to discern his will or what will happen in the future, and dishonest gain diminishes the value of God’s image in others.<sup>22</sup> We must conclude, therefore, that something about transgender expression and gender confusion directly counters the very nature of God.

This raises the likelihood that what makes transgenderism abominable is that it maligns humanity’s ability to reflect, resemble, and represent God rightly in this world. In Genesis 1 we are told that God created both males and females equal in their opportunity to relate to God, equal in their call to rule over God’s world; equal in their responsibility to image God in ever-increasing ways on a global scale, and equal in their dependence on God to fulfil the mission. Nevertheless, already in Genesis 1, there are two distinct biological sexes—male and female, and each plays different roles in being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth with God’s image. From the beginning the Bible understands that men and women display God in ways that are at times different but that are always complementary.

When we get to Genesis 2, these role distinctions are developed further. God portrays the paradigm kingdom family to be made of a head and a helper—the male head serving as the primary protector and provider and the leader in servant-hearted love and the female helper supporting, following, and complementing his lead (esp. Gen 2:7, 23 with 2:18). This family structure provides not only the paradigm for marriage but the building block for both the covenant community and the world’s societies. Just as God stands as head over his creation at large and his people in particular, so also the chief creatures—humans as male and female, who alone image God—will distinctively reflect, resemble, and represent this right order in their complementary roles and relationships. It is not just Hosea and Ephesians 5 that highlight the symbolic and doxological nature of gender roles. The Pentateuch itself explicitly identifies the parabolic nature of human marriage and of male-female interpersonal relations when it portrays Israel, God’s covenant partner, as “whoring after” and “committing fornication with” other gods (Exod 34:11–16; Lev 20:4–6; Num 15:38–40; Deut 31:16).

Gender identity and gender expression is about God’s glory and about maintaining the God-created distinctions on earth that in turn point to the ultimate distinction between God and his bride. Just as husbands and wives in the human household and men and women in the collective household of God bear distinct roles and, by this, uniquely display God’s image, so too the creator and Lord of all things is rightly magnified in the lives of males and females when our gender identity and gender expression align perfectly with our God-ordained biological sex. Those born boys are to live and thrive as boys, and those born girls are to live and thrive as girls. When corrupt desires want to alter this course, one must choose with God’s help the path that magnifies the majesty of God best, and that

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22 Other “abominable” acts in Deuteronomy include eating unclean food (14:3), defective sacrifices or offerings acquired by corruption (17:1; 23:18[19]), and remarrying an ex-wife after she was married to another man (24:4). Why are these abominable to God? (1) All unclean animals appear to have had some association with the behavior or punishment of the serpent in the garden, so eating unclean food identified one with the original God-hostility. (2) Defective sacrifices and offerings gained through corruption meant one was either failing to honor God directly and/or to respect his image in others. (3) As a parable of God’s relationship (ultimately through Christ) with his people, human marriage is extremely significant, and the type of remarriage proposed appears to be so excessively broken that it would hardly depict rightly God’s unrelenting love for his bride.

path is defined in Deuteronomy 22:5.

Let me summarize the purpose of Deuteronomy 22:5 in its original context. God's law against transgender expression sought to maintain divinely-created biological and gender distinctions within the community. The goal of this pursuit was to nurture an environment that properly displays the supremacy of God and the ever-present head-helper distinction between God and the people he is creating for himself.

## 5. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—THE LAW'S THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

I now want to consider this law's lasting theological significance for the church. Here we consider what the law tells us about God, how Christ's law-fulfillment influences this law, and what love-principle is behind the law.

Deuteronomy 22:5 is the fruit of this truth: YHWH is ever passionate to preserve and display right order in his world. This is the essence of his righteousness, and maintaining gender distinctions is an important part of this order. The stress in Genesis 1–2 on the way males and females image God and the Pentateuch's depiction of YHWH's relationship with Israel as a marriage pushes the reader to view one's biological sex and gender identity and expression as first and foremost about God. The rest of the OT highlights this parabolic purpose of sex and gender distinctions in books like Hosea (chs. 1–3; cf. Judg 2:16–17; Isa 1:21; 57:3; Jer 2:2, 20; 3:1; 3:8–11; 31:31–32), and then the same is carried into the NT (see Matt 9:15; 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Mark 2:19; 8:38; Luke 5:34), most clearly where Paul portrays the church as Christ's bride (Eph 5:22–27; cf. Rev 19:7–9; 21:9). *To the level that we flatten the inborn distinctions between maleness and femaleness we flatten the distinctions between the sovereign savior and the saved, between the exalted and the needy, between the blameless one and the sinner.* We take glory away from God and his Christ when we act as though distinctions between men and women are non-existent. And we hurt the entire community both in the way we fail to point them to gospel righteousness and in the way we open them up for God's just wrath.

How does Christ's law-fulfillment impact this law? We can first say that Christ and his followers continued to distinguish men from women. Indeed, Jesus perfectly exemplified maleness in the way that he deeply respected femaleness, standing as the ultimate provider and protector and leader in servant-hearted love. Jesus . . .

1. Respected his mother (Luke 2:41–52; John 2:1–11),
2. Had female disciples (Luke 8:1–3),
3. Sought to protect women from male abuses (Matt 5:27–30, 31–32; 19:3–12; Luke 7:36–50),
4. Portrayed women as models of faith (Matt 25:1–13; Mark 7:24–30; Luke 4:24–26; 11:31; 18:1–8; 21:1–4),
5. Extended care and healing to seemingly insignificant female sufferers (Mark 1:30–31; 5:25–34, 35–43; 7:24–30; Luke 7:11–17; 13:10–17; John 4:1–42; 11:1–44; cf. John 7:53–8:11),
6. Received anointing from women (Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8), and
7. Disclosed himself first to women after his resurrection (Matt 28:9; John 20:14–18).

Christ is the substance to which all biblical symbols point, but unlike some pictures such as the

temple and clean and unclean laws, which have reached their terminus in Christ's first appearing, the distinction between males and females will continue at least to the consummation (cf. Eph 5:22–33; 1 Tim 3:4–5). And even then, while earthly marriage will apparently be no more—the picture being overcome by the reality (Matt 22:30), there is no reason to think that the distinction between men and women, heads and helpers within the community of faith, will alter in the new heavens and earth (cf. Rev 21:24, where “kings” are distinguished). Maleness and femaleness will most likely provide an eternal reminder of God's order in reality, wherein he is supreme over all.

Along with this, new covenant teaching maintains role distinctions between men and women, most explicitly in its instructions to husbands and wives (e.g., Eph 5:22–32; 1 Pet 3:1–7) and to local churches regarding their corporate worship, teaching, and leadership (1 Cor 11:1–16; 14:33–35; 1 Tim 2–3; Tit 1:5–16). It also calls for men to live as men, women to live as women, and for the young to be trained to live out the gender role related to their God-given sex (Tit 2:2–6). Paul exhorted Timothy to respect and encourage older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, in all purity (1 Tim 5:1–2). All this instruction assumes that we can rightly identify those who are men and those who are women.

Paul asserted that every OT commandment is summarized in the call to love our neighbor (Rom 13:8, 10). Jesus too said that “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12). With every law in the OT, we should, therefore, be able to boil it down into a single principle of love. In Deuteronomy 22:5, loving others and God means that people will maintain a gender identity that aligns with their biological sex and will express this gender in a way that never leads to gender confusion in the eyes of others. We should always be able to distinguish boys from boys and girls from girls. When our biological sex aligns with our gender identity and our gender expression, we express love for both God and our neighbor.

## **6. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—MAINTAINING THE PORTRAIT OF GOD AND THE LOVE PRINCIPLE BUT CHANGING THE CONTEXT IN LIGHT OF CHRIST'S WORK**

Deuteronomy 22:5 was not originally given to the church, but it contains a portrait of God and a principle of love that can guide the church today when read in light of the finished work of Christ. In Jesus we have a perfect pattern for maleness in relation to femaleness. With this, in Jesus we are supplied unmatched power for our pursuit of rightly-ordered living. The power comes through the pardon Jesus secured at the cross and the promises that he purchased at the cross. The gender identity crisis that we are facing today can only be confronted rightly in the context of past and future grace.

We have already noted that God's passion for right order has not changed in the new covenant, for it is part of his very being. With this, the physical and role distinctions between men and women do not appear to have changed this side of the cross. God's righteousness is unswerving, and we must be ever-concerned to display the magnificence of Christ's love for his church in every situation of life.

This affirmed, Deuteronomy 22:5 becomes instructive for the church in helping us recognize the appropriate path for gender expression and the sinfulness of gender confusion, which includes cross-dressing and transgender practice. As I conclude this study, I want to give some practical steps for the church in confronting the transgender storm, and as I do I will mix in explicit words of hope both to those struggling with transgender identity and to the victims of another's gender identity crisis.

### **6.1. Grieve**

Grieve deeply over the brokenness of our culture and the debased makeup of all who sin against nature by supporting transgender identity and expression. In Ezekiel 9, before sending in executioners to destroy all in Jerusalem who failed to look upon and savor the beauty of the Lord, God declared to a messenger, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ezek 9:4). Only those who grieve over sin will be saved. Church, grieve deeply over the way so many in our country are profaning the very nature of God by confusing maleness and femaleness through transgender.

### **6.2. Pray**

Don’t be anxious, but pray to our sovereign God that he will soon make right all wrongs and overcome all abominations to his holiness. Pray that God will awaken sleepers and open blind eyes. Pray that God will preserve his church, even as the sheep are increasingly distinguished from the goats. Pray for persevering grace to maintain our trust in his bigness, his faithfulness, and his care, even in the wake of rising tribulation. Pray that we will “not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” but “rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). Pray, church. Pray!

### **6.3. Remember**

Remember that the creation was subjected to futility *in hope* (Rom 8:20), and remember that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Remember that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22) and that, as God’s children, we are “heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). And as you confront those with broken perspectives on gender, remember that you yourselves were once separated from Christ, but God saved you by grace through faith (Eph 2:12). Remember also that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

### **6.4. Be Mindful, and Care**

Be mindful of those broken in this transgender identity crisis, and care deeply for the violators and the violated. One’s self-identity will be forever maligned so long as we are looking at a mirror and not into the face of Jesus. We need to help those struggling with transgender identity find a new identity in Christ, and we need to help those who have been hurt by others find the healing and relief that only Jesus brings. He alone is the savior. He alone is the healer.

If any of you today are struggling with transgender identity, I exhort you to realize that your sin is a direct affront against God and to repent. But not only this, know that the gospel of Jesus is the power of God for your salvation *because* in it the righteousness of God is revealed (Rom 1:16–17). What I mean is that the gospel contains all you need to find your personal identity realigned with God’s definition of right order. *In your present state there is much grief, but in the face of Jesus there is relief*—relief from condemnation, relief from the fear of man, and relief of inability in accordance with your biological sex. The gospel is power because through the cross God becomes one hundred percent

for us in Christ, filling our pursuit of rightly-ordered living with all authority in heaven and earth. He can make you a new creation with new right standing and a new direction in life that properly displays his greatness to the world. The gospel is power . . . not only because the cross secures past pardon and transformed desires but also because it purchases future promises that help motivate our pursuit of God. The promise that the pure in heart will see God (Matt 5:8) can generate new hope, new hunger, new identity.

Now, if you today find yourself the victim of another's transgender identity crisis, know that Jesus heals and Jesus helps. He can make you feel clean again and set you on a new course that moves through healing to growth. He can give you a sense of purpose. He can restructure a proper vision of maleness and femaleness, and he can grant you wisdom for moving ahead. Come to Jesus and be saved from the torment of your past.

Church, I exhort you again. . . . Be mindful of the broken, and care.

### ***6.5. Nurture God-honoring Views of Maleness and Femaleness***

As Christians we need to be extremely intentional to build a deep-seated God-esteem into ourselves and others. We need to train our kids that everything we do should be for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31). The transgender crisis who be overcome if people became more passionate about God's authentic right to our surrender and less about an individual's self-claimed right to personal autonomy.

As believers, we should be among those who celebrate men being masculine and women being feminine, both in the way we act and in the way we dress. Because God has ordained males to take on the primary role of provision and protection, I encourage my sons to be risk takers, to do dirty work, and to be defenders, hunters, and builders. And because God has ordained females to help rule and serve, I rejoice if one of my daughters also wants to engage in any of these activities. But I also encourage them to nurture inward godliness, to master homemaking, and to ever carry themselves as women who fear the Lord. With this, I want to encourage my children and my congregants to ever carry themselves so that there is never any question as to whether their gender identity or expression stands in distinction from their God-given biological sex as male or female. Deuteronomy 22:5 wants us to know that things like hair cuts, dress, communication patterns, and interests matter when it comes to God's glory.

We must be balanced here though. At least right now—spring 2016—clothing stores in the US still distinguish men and women's clothing, and there are certainly styles that are more masculine or more feminine than others. But not all clothing is gender-specific. For example, though not always the case, in our present culture ladies can wear slacks, collars, and even ties with none questioning their femaleness. The church needs to account for this. Guys too could have ear rings or long hair with none question their maleness. What was at stake in Moses' law was gender identity and expression and gender confusion, and it is from this perspective that our outward apparel matters.

As I close this study, I ask you to pray with me:

Father we say together, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory" (Ps 115:1). There is an onslaught of demonic forces shaping idols of the heart all over our country. You are greater. We pray that you would let us shine as lights, not being anxious but praying to you—you who are greater, you who are more beautiful, you who actually create the way you do because it fits best; it works; it is right. Help us



embrace right order in your world. May it impact our dress . . . our speech . . . our preferences. Give us wisdom for mediating this very difficult gender storm. But we praise you that in Christ you have already overcome. To his glory we pray. Amen.