

WACMM Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

(from the *National Association of Evangelicals*)

The Danvers Statement

Biblical Distinctive Between Males and Females
by The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. The tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. The increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. The growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. The upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. The emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;

8. The increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. The consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Purposes

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby – to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood, – to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles, – and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Genesis 2:18, 21-24; I Corinthians 11:7-9; I Timothy 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Genesis 2:16-18, 21-24; 3:1-13; I Corinthians 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Genesis 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Genesis 1:21-27, 2:18; Galatians 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; I Timothy 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:2-5; I Peter 3:1-7).

– In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Genesis 3:28; I Corinthians 11:2-16; I Timothy 2:11-15).

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Daniel 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; I Peter 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (I Timothy 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (I Corinthians 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

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Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience

Released November 20, 2009

Preamble

Christians are heirs of a 2,000-year tradition of proclaiming God's word, seeking justice in our societies, resisting tyranny, and reaching out with compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering.

While fully acknowledging the imperfections and shortcomings of Christian institutions and communities in all ages, we claim the heritage of those Christians who defended innocent life by rescuing discarded babies from trash heaps in Roman cities and publicly denouncing the Empire's sanctioning of infanticide. We remember with reverence those believers who sacrificed their lives by remaining in Roman cities to tend the sick and dying during the plagues, and who died bravely in the coliseums rather than deny their Lord. After the barbarian tribes overran Europe, Christian monasteries preserved not only the Bible but also the literature and art of Western culture. It was Christians who combated the evil of slavery:

Papal edicts in the 16th and 17th centuries decried the practice of slavery and first excommunicated anyone involved in the slave trade; evangelical Christians in England, led by John Wesley and William Wilberforce, put an end to the slave trade in that country. Christians under Wilberforce's leadership also formed hundreds of societies for helping the poor, the imprisoned, and child laborers chained to machines.

In Europe, Christians challenged the divine claims of kings and successfully fought to establish the rule of law and balance of governmental powers, which made modern democracy possible.

And in America, Christian women stood at the vanguard of the suffrage movement. The great civil rights crusades of the 1950s and 60s were led by Christians claiming the Scriptures and asserting the glory of the image of God in every human being regardless of race, religion, age or class.

This same devotion to human dignity has led Christians in recent decades to work to end the dehumanizing scourge of human trafficking and sexual slavery, bring compassionate care to AIDS sufferers in Africa, and assist in a myriad of other human rights causes – from providing clean water in developing nations to providing homes for tens of thousands of children orphaned by war, disease and gender discrimination.

Like those who have gone before us in the faith, Christians today are called to proclaim the Gospel of costly grace, to protect the intrinsic dignity of the human person and to stand for the common good. In being true to its own calling, the call to discipleship, the church through service to others can make a profound contribution to the public good.

Declaration

We, as Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians, have gathered, beginning in New York on September 28, 2009, to make the following declaration, which we sign as individuals, not on behalf of our organizations, but speaking to and from our communities. We act together in obedience to the one true God, the triune God of holiness and love, who has laid total claim on our lives and by that claim calls us with believers in all ages and all nations to seek and defend the good of all who bear his image. We set forth this declaration in light of the truth that is grounded in Holy Scripture, in natural human reason (which is itself, in our view, the gift of a beneficent God), and in the very nature of the human person. We call upon all people of goodwill, believers and non-believers alike, to consider carefully and reflect critically on the issues we here address as we, with St. Paul, commend this appeal to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

While the whole scope of Christian moral concern, including a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, claims our attention, we are especially troubled that in our nation today the lives of the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly are severely threatened; that the institution of marriage, already buffeted by promiscuity, infidelity and divorce, is in jeopardy of being redefined to accommodate fashionable ideologies; that freedom of religion and the rights of conscience are gravely jeopardized by those who would use the instruments of coercion to compel persons of faith to compromise their deepest convictions.

Because the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage as a union of husband and wife, and the freedom of conscience and religion are foundational principles of justice and the common good, we are compelled by our Christian faith to speak and act in their defense. In this declaration we affirm:

- 1) the profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every human being as a creature fashioned in the very image of God, possessing inherent rights of equal dignity and life;
- 2) marriage as a conjugal union of man and woman, ordained by God from the creation, and historically understood by believers and non-believers alike, to be the most basic institution in society and;
- 3) religious liberty, which is grounded in the character of God, the example of Christ, and the inherent freedom and dignity of human beings created in the divine image.

We are Christians who have joined together across historic lines of ecclesial differences to affirm our right—and, more importantly, *to embrace our obligation*—to speak and act in defense of these truths. We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence. It is our duty to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in its fullness, both in season and out of season. May God help us not to fail in that duty.

Life

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

Although public sentiment has moved in a pro-life direction, we note with sadness that proabortion ideology prevails today in our government. Many in the present administration want to make abortions legal at any stage of fetal development, and want to provide abortions at taxpayer expense. Majorities in both houses of Congress hold pro-abortion views. The Supreme Court, whose infamous 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* stripped the unborn of legal protection, continues to treat elective abortion as a fundamental constitutional right, though it has upheld as constitutionally permissible some limited restrictions on abortion. The President says that he wants to reduce the “need” for abortion—a commendable goal. But he has also pledged to make abortion more easily and widely available by eliminating laws prohibiting government funding, requiring waiting periods for women seeking abortions, and parental notification for abortions performed on minors. The elimination of these important and effective pro-life laws cannot reasonably be expected to do other than significantly increase the number of elective abortions by which the lives of countless children are snuffed out prior to birth. Our commitment to the sanctity of life is not a matter of partisan loyalty, for we recognize that in the thirty-six years since *Roe v. Wade*, elected officials and appointees of both major political parties have been complicit in giving legal sanction to what Pope John Paul II described as “the culture of death.”

We call on all officials in our country, elected and appointed, to protect and serve every member of our society, including the most marginalized, voiceless, and vulnerable among us. A culture of death inevitably cheapens life in all its stages and conditions by promoting the belief that lives that are imperfect, immature or inconvenient are discardable. As predicted by many prescient persons, the cheapening of life that began with abortion has now metastasized. For example, human embryo-destructive research and its public funding are promoted in the name of science and in the cause of developing treatments and cures for diseases and injuries. The President and many in Congress favor the expansion of embryo-research to include the taxpayer funding of so-called “therapeutic cloning.” This would result in the industrial mass production of human embryos to be killed for the purpose of producing genetically customized stem cell lines and tissues. At the other end of life, an increasingly powerful movement to promote assisted suicide and “voluntary” euthanasia threatens the lives of vulnerable elderly and disabled persons. Eugenic notions such as the doctrine of *lebensunwertes Leben* (“life unworthy of life”) were first advanced in the 1920s by intellectuals in the elite salons of America and Europe. Long buried in ignominy after the horrors of the mid-20th century, they have returned from the grave. The only difference is that now the doctrines of the eugenicists are dressed up in the language of “liberty,” “autonomy,” and “choice.”

We will be united and untiring in our efforts to roll back the license to kill that began with the abandonment of the unborn to abortion. We will work, as we have always worked, to bring assistance, comfort, and care to pregnant women in need and to those who have been victimized by abortion, even as we stand resolutely against the corrupt and degrading notion that it can somehow be in the best interests of women to submit to the deliberate killing of their unborn children. Our message is, and ever shall be, that the just, humane, and truly Christian answer to problem pregnancies is for all of us to love and care for mother and child alike.

A truly prophetic Christian witness will insistently call on those who have been entrusted with temporal power to fulfill the first responsibility of government: to protect the weak and vulnerable against violent attack, and to do so with no favoritism, partiality, or discrimination.

The Bible enjoins us to defend those who cannot defend themselves, to speak for those who cannot themselves speak. And so we defend and speak for the unborn, the disabled, and the dependent. What the Bible and the light of reason make clear, we must make clear. We must be willing to defend, even at risk and cost to ourselves and our institutions, the lives of our brothers and sisters at every stage of development and in every condition.

Our concern is not confined to our own nation. Around the globe, we are witnessing cases of genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” the failure to assist those who are suffering as innocent victims of war, the neglect and abuse of children, the exploitation of vulnerable laborers, the sexual trafficking of girls and young women, the

abandonment of the aged, racial oppression and discrimination, the persecution of believers of all faiths, and the failure to take steps necessary to halt the spread of preventable diseases like AIDS. We see these travesties as flowing from the same loss of the sense of the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life that drives the abortion industry and the movements for assisted suicide, euthanasia, and human cloning for biomedical research. And so ours is, as it must be, a truly consistent ethic of love and life for all humans in all circumstances.

Marriage

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:23-24 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 5:32-33

In Scripture, the creation of man and woman, and their one-flesh union as husband and wife, is the crowning achievement of God's creation. In the transmission of life and the nurturing of children, men and women joined as spouses are given the great honor of being partners with God Himself. Marriage then, is the first institution of human society—indeed it is the institution on which all other human institutions have their foundation. In the Christian tradition we refer to marriage as “holy matrimony” to signal the fact that it is an institution ordained by God, and blessed by Christ in his participation at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. In the Bible, God Himself blesses and holds marriage in the highest esteem.

Vast human experience confirms that marriage is the original and most important institution for sustaining the health, education, and welfare of all persons in a society. Where marriage is honored, and where there is a flourishing marriage culture, everyone benefits—the spouses themselves, their children, the communities and societies in which they live. Where the marriage culture begins to erode, social pathologies of every sort quickly manifest themselves.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed over the course of the past several decades a serious erosion of the marriage culture in our own country. Perhaps the most telling—and alarming—indicator is the out-of-wedlock birth rate. Less than fifty years ago, it was under 5 percent. Today it is over 40 percent. Our society—and particularly its poorest and most vulnerable sectors, where the out-of-wedlock birth rate is much higher even than the national average—is paying a huge price in delinquency, drug abuse, crime, incarceration, hopelessness, and despair. Other indicators are widespread non-marital sexual cohabitation and a devastatingly high rate of divorce.

We confess with sadness that Christians and our institutions have too often scandalously failed to uphold the institution of marriage and to model for the world the true meaning of marriage. Insofar as we have too easily embraced the culture of divorce and remained silent about social practices that undermine the dignity of marriage we repent, and call upon all Christians to do the same.

To strengthen families, we must stop glamorizing promiscuity and infidelity and restore among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful marital love. We must reform ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce. We must work in the legal, cultural, and religious domains to instill in young people a sound understanding of what marriage is, what it requires, and why it is worth the commitment and sacrifices that faithful spouses make.

The impulse to redefine marriage in order to recognize same-sex and multiple partner relationships is a symptom, rather than the cause, of the erosion of the marriage culture. It reflects a loss of understanding of the meaning of marriage as embodied in our civil and religious law and in the philosophical tradition that

contributed to shaping the law. Yet it is critical that the impulse be resisted, for yielding to it would mean abandoning the possibility of restoring a sound understanding of marriage and, with it, the hope of rebuilding a healthy marriage culture.

It would lock into place the false and destructive belief that marriage is all about romance and other adult satisfactions, and not, in any intrinsic way, about procreation and the unique character and value of acts and relationships whose meaning is shaped by their aptness for the generation, promotion and protection of life. In spousal communion and the rearing of children (who, as gifts of God, are the fruit of their parents' marital love), we discover the profound reasons for and benefits of the marriage covenant.

We acknowledge that there are those who are disposed towards homosexual and polyamorous conduct and relationships, just as there are those who are disposed towards other forms of immoral conduct. We have compassion for those so disposed; we respect them as human beings possessing profound, inherent, and equal dignity; and we pay tribute to the men and women who strive, often with little assistance, to resist the temptation to yield to desires that they, no less than we, regard as wayward. We stand with them, even when they falter. We, no less than they, are sinners who have fallen short of God's intention for our lives. We, no less than they, are in constant need of God's patience, love and forgiveness. We call on the entire Christian community to resist sexual immorality, and at the same time refrain from disdainful condemnation of those who yield to it. Our rejection of sin, though resolute, must never become the rejection of sinners. For every sinner, regardless of the sin, is loved by God, who seeks not our destruction but rather the conversion of our hearts. Jesus calls all who wander from the path of virtue to "a more excellent way." As his disciples we will reach out in love to assist all who hear the call and wish to answer it.

We further acknowledge that there are sincere people who disagree with us, and with the teaching of the Bible and Christian tradition, on questions of sexual morality and the nature of marriage. Some who enter into same-sex and polyamorous relationships no doubt regard their unions as truly marital. They fail to understand, however, that marriage is made possible by the sexual complementarity of man and woman, and that the comprehensive, multi-level sharing of life that marriage includes bodily unity of the sort that unites husband and wife biologically as a reproductive unit. This is because the body is no mere extrinsic instrument of the human person, but truly part of the personal reality of the human being. Human beings are not merely centers of consciousness or emotion, or minds, or spirits, inhabiting non-personal bodies. The human person is a dynamic unity of body, mind, and spirit. Marriage is what one man and one woman establish when, forsaking all others and pledging lifelong commitment, they found a sharing of life at every level of being—the biological, the emotional, the dispositional, the rational, the spiritual—on a commitment that is sealed, completed and actualized by loving sexual intercourse in which the spouses become one flesh, not in some merely metaphorical sense, but by fulfilling together the behavioral conditions of procreation. That is why in the Christian tradition, and historically in Western law, consummated marriages are not dissoluble or annulable on the ground of infertility, even though the nature of the marital relationship is shaped and structured by its intrinsic orientation to the great good of procreation.

We understand that many of our fellow citizens, including some Christians, believe that the historic definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is a denial of equality or civil rights. They wonder what to say in reply to the argument that asserts that no harm would be done to them or to anyone if the law of the community were to confer upon two men or two women who are living together in a sexual partnership the status of being "married." It would not, after all, affect their own marriages, would it? On inspection, however, the argument that laws governing one kind of marriage will not affect another cannot stand. Were it to prove anything, it would prove far too much: the assumption that the legal status of one set of marriage relationships affects no other would not only argue for same sex partnerships; it could be asserted with equal validity for polyamorous partnerships, polygamous households, even adult brothers, sisters, or brothers and sisters living in incestuous relationships. Should these, as a matter of equality or civil rights, be recognized as lawful marriages,

and would they have no effects on other relationships? No. The truth is that marriage is not something abstract or neutral that the law may legitimately define and re-define to please those who are powerful and influential.

No one has a civil right to have a non-marital relationship treated as a marriage. Marriage is an objective reality—a covenantal union of husband and wife—that it is the duty of the law to recognize and support for the sake of justice and the common good. If it fails to do so, genuine social harms follow.

First, the religious liberty of those for whom this is a matter of conscience is jeopardized.

Second, the rights of parents are abused as family life and sex education programs in schools are used to teach children that an enlightened understanding recognizes as “marriages” sexual partnerships that many parents believe are intrinsically nonmarital and immoral. Third, the common good of civil society is damaged when the law itself, in its critical pedagogical function, becomes a tool for eroding a sound understanding of marriage on which the flourishing of the marriage culture in any society vitally depends.

Sadly, we are today far from having a thriving marriage culture. But if we are to begin the critically important process of reforming our laws and mores to rebuild such a culture, the last thing we can afford to do is to re-define marriage in such a way as to embody in our laws a false proclamation about what marriage is. And so it is out of *love* (not “animus”) and prudent *concern for the common good* (not “prejudice”), that we pledge to labor ceaselessly to preserve the legal definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman and to rebuild the marriage culture. How could we, as Christians, do otherwise? The Bible teaches us that marriage is a central part of God’s creation covenant. Indeed, the union of husband and wife mirrors the bond between Christ and his church. And so just as Christ was willing, out of love, to give Himself up for the church in a complete sacrifice, we are willing, lovingly, to make whatever sacrifices are required of us for the sake of the inestimable treasure that is marriage.

Religious Liberty

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. Isaiah 61:1

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matthew 22:21

The struggle for religious liberty across the centuries has been long and arduous, but it is not a novel idea or recent development. The nature of religious liberty is grounded in the character of God Himself, the God who is most fully known in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Determined to follow Jesus faithfully in life and death, the early Christians appealed to the manner in which the Incarnation had taken place: “Did God send Christ, as some suppose, as a tyrant brandishing fear and terror? Not so, but in gentleness and meekness..., for compulsion is no attribute of God” (Epistle to Diognetus 7.3-4). Thus the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the example of Christ Himself and in the very dignity of the human person created in the image of God—a dignity, as our founders proclaimed, inherent in every human, and knowable by all in the exercise of right reason.

Christians confess that God alone is Lord of the conscience. Immunity from religious coercion is the cornerstone of an unconstrained conscience. No one should be compelled to embrace any religion against his will, nor should persons of faith be forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of conscience or to express freely and publicly their deeply held religious convictions. What is true for individuals applies to religious communities as well.

It is ironic that those who today assert a right to kill the unborn, aged and disabled and also a right to engage in immoral sexual practices, and even a right to have relationships integrated around these practices be recognized and blessed by law—such persons claiming these “rights” are very often in the vanguard of those who would trample upon the freedom of others to express their religious and moral commitments to the sanctity of life and to the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife.

We see this, for example, in the effort to weaken or eliminate conscience clauses, and therefore to compel pro-life institutions (including religiously affiliated hospitals and clinics), and pro-life physicians, surgeons, nurses, and other health care professionals, to refer for abortions and, in certain cases, even to perform or participate in abortions. We see it in the use of antidiscrimination statutes to force religious institutions, businesses, and service providers of various sorts to comply with activities they judge to be deeply immoral or go out of business. After the judicial imposition of “same-sex marriage” in Massachusetts, for example, Catholic Charities chose with great reluctance to end its century-long work of helping to place orphaned children in good homes rather than comply with a legal mandate that it place children in same-sex households in violation of Catholic moral teaching. In New Jersey, after the establishment of a quasi-marital “civil unions” scheme, a Methodist institution was stripped of its tax exempt status when it declined, as a matter of religious conscience, to permit a facility it owned and operated to be used for ceremonies blessing homosexual unions. In Canada and some European nations,

Christian clergy have been prosecuted for preaching Biblical norms against the practice of homosexuality. New hate-crime laws in America raise the specter of the same practice here.

In recent decades a growing body of case law has paralleled the decline in respect for religious values in the media, the academy and political leadership, resulting in restrictions on the free exercise of religion. We view this as an ominous development, not only because of its threat to the individual liberty guaranteed to every person, regardless of his or her faith, but because the trend also threatens the common welfare and the culture of freedom on which our system of republican government is founded. Restrictions on the freedom of conscience or the ability to hire people of one’s own faith or conscientious moral convictions for religious institutions, for example, undermines the viability of the intermediate structures of society, the essential buffer against the overweening authority of the state, resulting in the soft despotism Tocqueville so prophetically warned of.* Disintegration of civil society is a prelude to tyranny.

As Christians, we take seriously the Biblical admonition to respect and obey those in authority. We believe in law and in the rule of law. We recognize the duty to comply with laws whether we happen to like them or not, unless the laws are gravely unjust or require those subject to them to do something unjust or otherwise immoral. The biblical purpose of law is to preserve order and serve justice and the common good; yet laws that are unjust—and especially laws that purport to compel citizens to do what is unjust—undermine the common good, rather than serve it.

Going back to the earliest days of the church, Christians have refused to compromise their proclamation of the gospel. In Acts 4, Peter and John were ordered to stop preaching. Their answer was, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Through the centuries, Christianity has taught that civil disobedience is not only permitted, but sometimes required. There is no more eloquent defense of the rights and duties of religious conscience than the one offered by Martin Luther King, Jr., in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Writing from an explicitly Christian perspective, and citing Christian writers such as Augustine and Aquinas, King taught that just laws elevate and ennoble human beings because they are rooted in the moral law whose ultimate source is God Himself. Unjust laws degrade human beings. Inasmuch as they can claim no authority beyond sheer human will, they lack any power to bind in conscience. King’s willingness to go to jail, rather than comply with legal injustice, was exemplary and inspiring.

Because we honor justice and the common good, we will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's.

Here We Stand: An Evangelical Declaration on Marriage

As evangelical Christians, we dissent from the court's ruling that redefines marriage. The state did not create the family, and should not try to recreate the family in its own image. We will not capitulate on marriage because biblical authority requires that we cannot. The outcome of the Supreme Court's ruling to redefine marriage represents what seems like the result of a half-century of witnessing marriage's decline through divorce, cohabitation, and a worldview of almost limitless sexual freedom. The Supreme Court's actions pose incalculable risks to an already volatile social fabric by alienating those whose beliefs about marriage are motivated by deep biblical convictions and concern for the common good.

The Bible clearly teaches the enduring truth that marriage consists of one man and one woman. From Genesis to Revelation, the authority of Scripture witnesses to the nature of biblical marriage as uniquely bound to the complementarity of man and woman. This truth is not negotiable. The Lord Jesus himself said that marriage is from the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6), so no human institution has the authority to redefine marriage any more than a human institution has the authority to redefine the gospel, which marriage mysteriously reflects (Eph. 5:32). The Supreme Court's ruling to redefine marriage demonstrates mistaken judgment by disregarding what history and countless civilizations have passed on to us, but it also represents an aftermath that evangelicals themselves, sadly, are not guiltless in contributing to. Too often, professing evangelicals have failed to model the ideals we so dearly cherish and believe are central to gospel proclamation.

Evangelical churches must be faithful to the biblical witness on marriage regardless of the cultural shift. Evangelical churches in America now find themselves in a new moral landscape that calls us to minister in a context growing more hostile to a biblical sexual ethic. This is not new in the history of the church. From its earliest beginnings, whether on the margins of society or in a place of influence, the church is defined by the gospel. We insist that the gospel brings good news to all people, regardless of whether the culture considers the news good or not.

The gospel must inform our approach to public witness. As evangelicals animated by the good news that God offers reconciliation through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus, we commit to:

- Respect and pray for our governing authorities even as we work through the democratic process to rebuild a culture of marriage (Rom. 13:1-7);
- teach the truth about biblical marriage in a way that brings healing to a sexually broken culture;
- affirm the biblical mandate that all persons, including LGBT persons, are created in the image of God and deserve dignity and respect;
- love our neighbors regardless of whatever disagreements arise as a result of conflicting beliefs about marriage;
- live respectfully and civilly alongside those who may disagree with us for the sake of the common good;

- cultivate a common culture of religious liberty that allows the freedom to live and believe differently to prosper.

The redefinition of marriage should not entail the erosion of religious liberty. In the coming years, evangelical institutions could be pressed to sacrifice their sacred beliefs about marriage and sexuality in order to accommodate whatever demands the culture and law require. We do not have the option to meet those demands without violating our consciences and surrendering the gospel. We will not allow the government to coerce or infringe upon the rights of institutions to live by the sacred belief that only men and women can enter into marriage.

The gospel of Jesus Christ determines the shape and tone of our ministry. Christian theology considers its teachings about marriage both timeless and unchanging, and therefore we must stand firm in this belief. Outrage and panic are not the responses of those confident in the promises of a reigning Christ Jesus. While we believe the Supreme Court has erred in its ruling, we pledge to stand steadfastly, faithfully witnessing to the biblical teaching that marriage is the chief cornerstone of society, designed to unite men, women, and children. We promise to proclaim and live this truth at all costs, with convictions that are communicated with kindness and love.

The Nashville Statement

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. 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. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. 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? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

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. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance.

This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

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 covenantlove 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 imagebearers as male and female.

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.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender selfconceptions 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.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection 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.