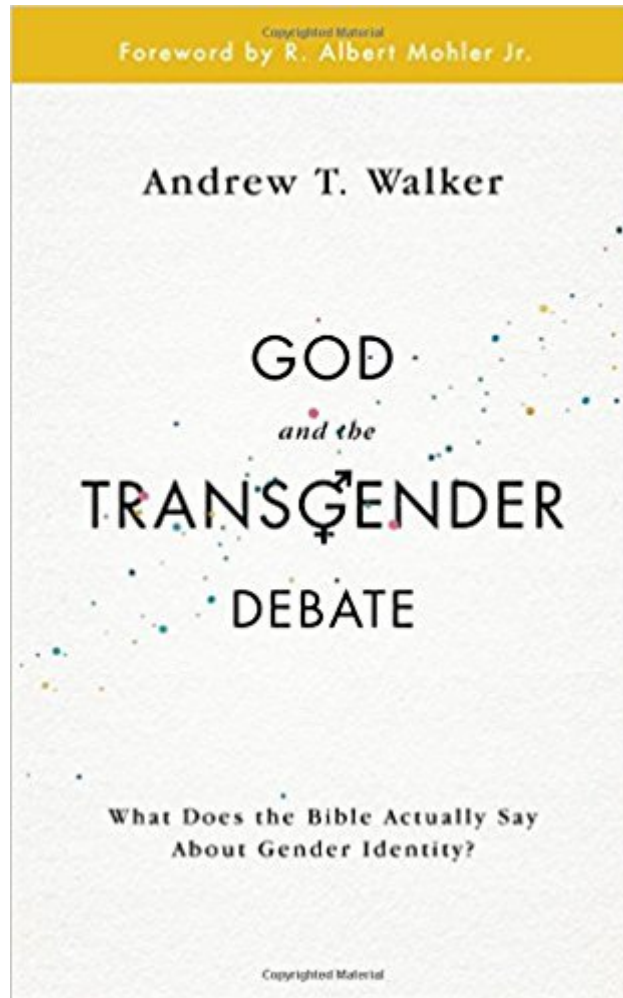




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God And The Transgender Debate



Synopsis

What is transgender and gender fluidity? What does God's Word actually say about these issues? How can the gospel be good news for someone experiencing gender dysphoria? How should churches respond? This warm, faithful and careful book helps Christians understand what the Bible says about gender identity. It will help us to engage lovingly, thoughtfully and faithfully with one of the most explosive cultural discussions of our day. If you want to learn more and love better, and are open to considering what God has to say about sex and gender, this hope-filled book is for you. Includes a section looking at practical questions including: - Can someone be transgender and Christian? - Should I mind if people who are biologically the other sex are in my restroom? - What should church leaders do if a congregation member asks for their child to be identified as the opposite gender? - Is it true that Christian teaching is harmful and can lead to depression and higher suicide rates? - What about people who are born intersex?

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Customer Reviews

This is an extremely important book, not just in Andrew Walker's practical treatment of the tricky and confusing topic of transgenderism, but in the very truthful and compassionate way he deals with it. This is really a book about how we love the gender-dysphoric person with the full grace and glorious truth of the gospel itself. It is a uniquely beautiful and very practical book. Absolutely 'Must-Read' material. --Glenn T. Stanton, Director of Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family Andrew Walker is one of the young bright lights in the Evangelical church. In God and the Transgender Debate he helps the church both understand and compassionately respond to today's challenges

on gender identity. --Ryan T. Anderson, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow at The Heritage Foundation and author of *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom* and *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* Gender-identity questions are among the most radical of our time and the church is not prepared. Andrew T. Walker has thought deeply about these things, and is an invaluable guide for faithful Christians walking through the heat and confusion of this debate. --Rod Dreher, Author of *The Benedict Option* This book resonates with gospel clarity and gospel compassion. It will empower you to share the good news of Jesus with those who grapple with gender-identity issues. The book is smart, wise, persuasive, and practical. --Russell Moore, President, The Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission Andrew Walker offers overdue clarity, compassion, and practical wisdom on one of the most difficult questions of our day. Along the way he demonstrates not only that we need not choose between truth and love, as we are often told, but that especially on these issues of human identity, we cannot. This is such an important book. --John Stonestreet, President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview I have been waiting for a resource that would provide me with a clear, loving, and gospel-centered analysis on the topic of gender dysphoria, and I have finally found it. This resource will be incredibly helpful in assisting the body of Christ to be a light in today's cultural climate. --Jackie Hill Perry, Writer and artist This book puts the hand of the suffering into the hands of the Savior, and therefore, this is the book that I will put into the hands of parents struggling to know how God's word speaks into loving a child who struggles with gender-identity issues. In addition to its loving pastoral care and biblical family guidance, this book models how to discern the times, and to respond with Christian hope. --Rosaria Butterfield, Author of *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* What should Christians think and say about those who feel their gender is out of line with their biological sex? Should we accept that or silently acquiesce? Andrew Walker rightly says no, but in a compassionate manner that recognizes the psychological struggles and the suffering of people who experience alienation from themselves as God made them. --Robert P. George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence, Princeton University Christians must begin to think and speak biblically, in truth and love, about this issue. Andrew Walker has provided a steady foundation from which the church can begin to grapple with this cultural shift. --Karen Swallow Prior, Author of *Fierce Convictions* The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist Andrew Walker writes on a tough subject with courage and compassion. This is the book Christians need to read to cut through the politically-correct noise and get to the heart of one of the most contentious issues of our time. --David French, Senior Fellow, National Review Institute The post-Christian West says that we are what we think we are, not what our bodies reveal us to be and

this is one of the chief challenges to Christianity today. That is why God and the Transgender Debate is so important. It is a countercultural, compassionate, must-read book. --Denny Burk, President, the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood The Bible says to love your neighbor and to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. How can Christians love our transgender neighbors compassionately, without compromising our faith? Andrew Walker puts us on the right path. --Erick Erickson, Editor of The Resurgent Andrew Walker has given us a much-needed resource for understanding the questions around transgender issues. With clarity and gentleness, he calls us back to a biblical vision of humanity, creation, and gender, and invites us to see fidelity to that vision as the most loving way we can engage with a confused world. --Mike Cospers, Founder of Harbor Media; Author of The Stories we Tell Walker has done what many could not. He has not only given the church a tool for greater understanding of this area, but has done so with grace, conviction, careful study and thought, and deep love for others. This is not only a timely book; it's a timeless resource for anyone desiring to serve and love their neighbor as themselves. --Trillia Newbell, Author of Enjoy and Fear and Faith Andrew Walker brings a sharp mind and pastoral heart to a complex and often painful issue, and the result is a hugely helpful resource for the church today, full of wisdom, grace and truth. I recommend it highly. --Sam Allberry, Speaker with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries; Editor at The Gospel Coalition One of evangelicalism's brightest young stars helps us understand how the gospel can be good news, and how the church can be a faithful community, for somebody experiencing gender dysphoria. If you are looking for a one-stop resource for responding biblically to questions about transgender and gender fluidity, look no further. --Bruce Riley Ashford, Provost and Professor of Theology and Culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Author of Every Square Inch Christians will need an extra measure of wisdom and an extra measure of compassion in walking with people who struggle with their gender identity. Andrew Walker demonstrates the kind of wisdom and compassion we will need in the days ahead. God and the Transgender Debate sets current debates over identity within a biblical worldview and offers counsel on tough questions. --Trevin Wax, Bible and Reference Publisher for B&H, author of This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths In Light of the Gospel

Andrew T. Walker (@andrewtwalk) is Director of Policy Studies for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A helpful book focusing on the pastoral and practical aspects of dealing with the transgender issue. Chapters 5 and 6 contain the core argument for why transgenderism is contrary to Biblical teaching

and, hence, wrong. The earlier chapters provide the background for that argument and the following chapters focus on practical issues: the "What now?" aspect. I will try to summarize Walker's argument in chapters five:

1. God designed humans as male and female.
2. God's design establishes authoritative boundaries for our sex.
3. If God has designed us with a male body, we have a duty to live according to our maleness (and vice versa for being designed with a female body).

Chapter six addresses the issue of the results of sin upon our psychology. Gender dysphoria is a non-sinful result of the fall. Transgenderism (choosing to live according to one's disordered desires or feelings) is a sinful response to gender dysphoria. One obvious response to this argument that Walker never really addresses is this: just as our psychology can be disordered as a result of the fall, so too can our bodies be disordered. So maybe it's not my psychology that is disordered, but my body. Walker does touch on this, or on a related point, briefly in chapter six. He addresses the "brain-sex theory" (the idea that people with gender dysphoria have a "female" brain or a brain that has female characteristics) by saying that (1) there is no good evidence for this theory and (2) our bodies are broken. Point (1) is good, but point (2) doesn't really address the issue that the person's body is wrong rather than their brain. Nevertheless, Walker does give us the seeds for how we might respond. At one point in the same chapter Walker quotes psychiatrist Paul McHugh, who notes that gender dysphoria is similar to other "disordered assumptions about the body" like anorexia or body dysmorphic disorder. We could apply a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* to the person who takes this line of argument: if your assumption is that the body is wrong rather than the psychology, then on what basis do we decide that the anorexic's psychology is wrong rather than the body having the wrong weight? Our answer to the anorexic is that it is a matter of empirical fact that the body is a perfectly healthy and normal weight (sans the effects of anorexia). Likewise, it's a matter of empirical fact that the body of the transgender person is perfectly healthy and normal in regards to its sex. We already know that humans sometimes suffer from psychological disorders in which they believe their body is somehow wrong (either having the wrong limb, the wrong weight, the wrong color (Rachel Dolezal) or the wrong species (Dennis Avner)). It seems much more plausible, given the health or normalcy of the body, that gender dysphoria is just another one of these types of psychological problems. Furthermore, the claims of the transgender person (that it is their body that is wrong, not their psychology) has no empirical parallel. Some people are born with bodily defects (a missing or deformed hand, for instance). But in these cases it's obvious that the limb is not healthy or whole. It's never been the case that a person was born with a perfectly healthy and functioning hand that wasn't his hand. A transgender person's body is perfectly healthy and whole. The question of people who are intersex often comes up at this point. Walker addresses this

on pp. 157-159. He correctly points out that the narrative (my term) of transgenderism is not analogous to cases of intersex. In the case of people who are intersex, the sex of their body is unclear. In the case of transgender people, the sex of their body is clear. As Walker notes: "Transgender identities are built on the assumption that biological sex is known and clear--and then rejected" (p. 158). Intersex people have an empirically verifiable ambiguity in their sex, transgenders do not. Another area that Walker could have fleshed out more is the relationship between gender and sex. According to Walker, gender is the culturally appropriate expression of our sex. He acknowledges the cultural subjectivity here but he also maintains that gender should follow sex. Thus, there are boundaries. But what are those boundaries? Walker doesn't really touch on these except to say that leadership and protection are appropriate for men and nurturing and mothering are appropriate for women. But we should probably cut Walker some slack for a difficult issue. There are clear physical differences between men and women, but for any specific man and woman the differences will not match up the same as for a different pair. Likewise, the gender boundaries are going to be somewhat fuzzy. Regarding the rest of the book: The pastoral advice hits all the points one would expect (don't make fun of transgender people, be loving, humble, etc.). But the fact that most people could already guess all the main points that Walker is going to hit here doesn't make it worthless. His framing of the issue is impactful and he moves beyond generalities to give concrete particulars of, say, what it should look like to love our transgender neighbors. I thought I might have a lot to say in disagreement with what he writes in chapter 11, regarding children and public schooling. The chapter makes it sound as though he is characterizing the decision to not put your child in public school as "panic." What he says on page 134 sounds as though we should let transgender activists (and others) dictate when we have a conversation with our kids about issues which they surely can't understand. For instance, after saying "Will you panic, withdraw your child from school, and then aim to shield them from this--and everything else that is wrong 'out there' in the world? ... You can't avoid your child having this conversation, sooner or later. ... The temptation to shield our children from such topics is understandable, but it is not acceptable." These paragraphs had me vigorously scribbling notes of disagreement: Withdrawing your kids isn't "panic" but the reasonable response to schools seeking to train up our children in counter-biblical worldviews. Sure, we should eventually discuss gender issues with our kids. But why should we be forced to have this conversation with our five year olds just because trans activists have infiltrated my kids kindergarten class? Why do they get to dictate the time-table? Why does my kid have to be in public school to broach these issues? etc. But reading into chapter 12 assuaged my concern here. Perhaps what Walker is trying to critique in this section could be more clearly written, because what

he states regarding schooling in chapter 12 falls in line with everything I was thinking as I read this section in chapter 11. Over all this is a great book. I would be interested in seeing a more robust case against the transgender narrative situated in our contemporary political and legal context (hopefully Ryan Anderson's forthcoming book will address that). As I stated, the focus of this book is on the pastoral side. That's a needed perspective that if we neglect can easily lead to adopting unloving and adversarial attitudes towards our transgender neighbors.

This is a valuable resource for the church. Thoughtful, compassionate, and faithful to Scripture, Walker's book is helpful for those trying to navigate this important issue. Highly recommend.

God and the Transgender Debate is an immensely helpful, accessible resource for both the Christian and non-Christian alike. Written with both clarity and compassion, Walker has gifted the Church with a powerful resource to think rightly about what it means to be created in the image of God, male and female. This book helps us reorient our hearts and minds to see the struggling person in front of us as our neighbor and friend, as one who Jesus deeply loves.

MUST READ In a flash, the transgender issue became a central debate in American life. The Church must be equipped to understand the basic issues involved from both a theological and scientific perspective, but most importantly to respond to others in a loving, compassionate, effective way. This book provides a one-stop resource for ministers and laypeople looking to do just that.

God and the Transgender Debate--What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity? authored by Andrew T. Walker, Director of Policy Studies with the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), has been positioned as a book that will help readers learn more, (and) love better (p 16) as he takes a careful look at what the Bible really says about gender identity. (p15) Settle in for one of my epic reviews. I will be challenging the author's premises and conclusions in three sections. Walker begins his book, "At its heart, this debate isn't about a debate. It's about people; precious people made in the image of God who are hurting." (p 14) In light of the transgender revolution that is flipping over the table of centuries-old norms, (p15) Walker wrote the book for busy people who want to consider what the Bible says about transgenderism. (p 16) Because transgenderism is "The most fashionable social-justice issue of our day," (p 20) Walker believes

It's important that God's voice is heard in this debate. (p 16) Further, Walker promises to tell his readers what Jesus says to those who experience gender dysphoria or who identify as transgender. (p 17) Should we use a literal reading of Genesis 1 to inform us about human sexuality in general, and gender roles in particular? In 1982, the SBC published a Resolution on Scientific Creationism which has been marginally clarified publically by Mohler. The resolution states that evolution is not a scientific fact, but goes no further in establishing denominational uniformity in belief of old earth creation (OEC) (dating the earth as much as billions of years old with the creation of Adam and Eve around 12,000 years ago), or young earth creation (YEC) (God spoke the world and creation into existence between 6,000 and 50,000 years ago). I include both OEC and YEC views in my challenge of Walker's view of God's blueprint. SBC holds firmly to a story with the creation order depicted in Genesis 1. (Genesis 2 has a different order of creation than Genesis 1. In Genesis 2, the order is man, plants, animals then woman, rather than plants, animals, and man and woman depicted in Genesis 1.) For this purpose of this review, the order doesn't really matter. But, for the emphasis widely placed on the creation story as a blueprint and to be taken literally, I would expect such a blueprint set by God to be the same in both chapters. Haven't you ever wondered how day and night came to be without the sun, moon and the stars? Have you considered that the creation in Genesis should not be read and understood literally? Perhaps it is an account of how ancient peoples understood the natural world? Such considerations however would be contrary to SBC's view of Scripture as without any mix of error. Christians, it seems, are forced to choose between two alternatives -- either choose faith and literal reading of the Bible in intellectual exile, or be intellectually curious and honest and abandon your faith. A majority of those with religious affiliations, and a majority of mainline Protestants and Catholics do not read the traditional creation story literally. For them, the tandem of Scripture and science is the most logical and compelling approach to understand the beginnings of humankind. Inherent in honoring science and other earth sciences with Scripture, a strict view of God's blueprint, such as the one espoused by Walker and the SBC, supportive of the dominant/submissive complementary structure of male and female relationships and gender binaries begins to crumble. Staying within the belief structure of the SBC and the author and using a literal reading of Genesis 1, let's see if their interpretation can be accurately used as a blueprint for human sexuality and gender. In both OEC and YEC, it is agreed that Adam and Eve would have been placed in/created in the garden no sooner than 6,000 years ago. This leaves little time for complex societies to develop, as archeologists

indicate that about 5,000 years ago, the first kingdoms started popping up, and along with them, a crude form of writing and a way of keeping records was developed. The first records were more administrative in nature, along the lines of -- how many wives, sheep, bushels of barley and olive trees does Kushim have? Drama, storytelling, and poetry eventually came along as languages and writing developed. In line with the evangelical view that Moses wrote Genesis 1 and most of the Torah, this would have occurred about 3,400 years ago, which is at least 2,600 years after the events of the creation story (or at least 3,000 years after the events if we accept the archeological biblical scholar view that Hebrew did not become a written language until less than 3,000 years ago.) Things get a bit more dodgy when we begin to wonder which god talked to Adam and Eve and which god was the Yahwist/Moses listening to? It is clear with careful reading of the texts, we know the people of God were polytheistic. God's people did not become monotheistic for about another four centuries (Deuteronomy). Science, in particular archeology and anthropology, substantially challenges the timeline of a young earth 6,000 year old creation story. According to science, modern humans began living in permanent villages at the time of the agricultural revolution, about 12,000 years ago. This is the most likely timeframe for a creation story. This means another nine thousand years passed until Genesis was written down. During seven thousand of those years, there was no ability to make written accounts. Seven thousand years of accurate blueprint telling is hard to imagine. Walker cautions his readers to make sure their understanding of gender and human sexuality is centered in a literal interpretation of Genesis 1. He cautions, "The Christian worldview is where we locate authority, knowledge and trustworthiness." (p 45) Walker evaluates a person's spiritual integrity and worthiness of their worldview based on affirming "do I hold the Bible as my spiritual authority?" Unfortunately, literal reading of the creation story and the Bible is the barometer by which they measure one's spiritual integrity and authority under which they live. If one does not adhere to the creation story, and blueprint for human sexuality and gender depicted in Genesis 1, then we are judged as not spiritually centered in God. Obviously, I don't agree. Incorporating Scripture and science does not diminish my respect for and submission to God's authority. I can both value the creation story as a different style and intention in writing than say, the New Testament letters and gospels. I remain safe from a threatened slippery slope toward unbelief in Jesus while using my intellect alongside the Genesis 1 texts to establish a more realistic yet still God-honoring view of human sexuality and gender identity that also is reflective of what I witness in people before me with whom I have relationship. Knowledge of human sexuality and biology are quite new and was certainly unknown to biblical writers. I find it

shortsighted that Walker believes he understands and knows God's blueprint for marriage, human sexuality and gender identity based on literal reading and interpretation of Genesis 1. Our God is capable of creation far beyond our imaginings and limitations. A challenge to Walker's reasons the transgender revolution has happened, and a brief look at the history of understanding transgenderism in the culture and in medicine

Beginning in Chapter 2, Walker, via telling the story of Caitlyn Jenner (without using female pronouns), explains how gender identity became the most fashionable social-justice issue of our day. He asks then answers "how did we get here?" (p 21) Walker posits on the "many streams (that) flow into the transgender debate" (p 21) and have caused the transgender revolution. Included in his list is relativism, a belief that truth and meaning are relative, and not absolute. Of course, the "right" way to think about gender agrees with God's blueprint laid out in Genesis 1. Understanding human sexuality and gender outside the literal reading of Genesis 1 is therefore cultural, anti-Bible and has fallen into relativism. Next, Walker rightly states that we are in a post-Christendom period in the West. Christianity as the prime worldview has declined. Next, there is radical individualism which "flows downstream from relativism" (p 23) and allows people to decide what is right or wrong, moral or immoral. Walker sees the sexual revolution as another contributing factor toward acceptance of trans people. He actually gets this right, in part. While Walker centers on the impact of the birth control pill which "sever(ed) the connection between sex and procreation" (p 25), more widely, feminism brought additional freedom in reproductive rights and decisions, along with a slew of social, employment, academic, economic, and marital options. Patriarchal structures (social and sexual male dominance) had been solidly entrenched since the agricultural revolution -- 12,000 years past. Within that structure, strict binary lines between male and female roles and limitations existed. Feminism, or the sexual revolution, vigorously challenged patriarchy. Another contribution to the transgender revolution Walker says is Gnosticism. This ideology connecting gnosticism to transgender people has been floating around in conservative communities for about a decade. Frankly, when you pick it apart, it makes no sense. Gnosticism was a heretical movement in the second century that espoused the need for a special knowledge from God that released a person from their material earthly body seen to be evil. Gnosticism believed in a tension between evil body and good spirit. Calling transpeople Gnostic, according to the 2nd century model, assumes those who are transgender see their spirit (soul, psyche, inner sense of gender) as pure, but their material bodies as evil. Second century Gnostics kept the two realms (good spirit and evil body) apart so that they might greater spiritual and emotional well-being. It is actually quite the

opposite for transgender people. When they do transition and align gender (spirit/soul) and biological sex (body), they feel more integrated, not less. Though Walker states his book is not a medical or psychological study and that "Christians must never fail to obey all that God says about gender; but equally, Christians should never go beyond what he says" (p 56), Walker clearly goes way beyond what God says. Walker strongly objects to hormonal therapy or sex reassignment surgery. To misunderstand, blur, or reject the Creator's categories for humanity doesn't just put us in rebelling against the Creator and creation "it puts us at odds with how each of us was made." (p 54) "The impulse to live out an identity at odds with our biological sex is to indulge fallen desires that our heart believes will bring peace." (p 67) With this thought, we see a frequently used excuse/default that helps account for anything falling outside the perfect picture of creation in Adam and Eve. Because transgenderism is not part of God's blueprint, it came after the fall. Intersex conditions also came after the fall. Intersex conditions do not disprove the sexual binary, Walker assures us "because they are a deviation from the binary norm, not the establishment of a new norm." (p 158) I sure would like to see a categorized list of what is good and what is bad that came after the fall. Intersex people are after the fall. Homosexuality is after the fall. But, then again, so are children and races. In order to comply with God's blueprint, after a transgender person becomes a believer in Jesus, or falls under the conviction of God's blueprint teaching, he or she needs to revert back to the clothing of their biological sex, their old name or a gendered name in alignment with their biological sex, stop taking hormones, and, if they can, even surgically revert as closely as possible to original physiology of their biological sex (though Personally, I (Walker) don't think repentance demands this). (p 117) Though gender dysphoria is the cross that some are called to bear, (p 113) and that " . . . your life will be very, very hard" (p 109), Walker says transitioning will not bring happiness. (T) o strive to become different than or even the opposite of how God made us can never result in happiness, flourishing, and joy, whatever it promises. (p 55) Hoping to convince the reader of this truth, Walker cites Dr. Paul McHugh, "one of the most esteemed psychiatrists of our time" (p 75): "It is a little reported fact that people who undergo sex reassignment surgery do not, statistically, report higher levels of happiness after the surgery." (p 67) Even McHugh, an 85-year-old Johns Hopkins University psychologist who believes transgender medicine is a "craze," admits his oft-cited opinions are not peer

reviewed. In a completely dishonest manner, McHugh bases his ideology and ideas entirely on one particular 2011 study from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. Using this study, McHugh claims that trans people had high rates of suicide years after undergoing surgery. However, McHugh's assertions do not reflect the findings of the author of the study, Cecilia Dhejne. Dhejne has repeatedly asked people (including McHugh) to stop misusing her research to support ridiculous claims. Dhejne has written articles and spoken at conferences about McHugh and others distorting her research. These accusations of abuse, misrepresentation of data, and truth of Dhejne's findings are easy to locate, yet, those on the conservative right, including Walker, continue to misrepresent Dhejne's study to support their anti-trans narrative. What is true, as stated by Dhejne and others, is that transgender people do benefit from transitioning. The typical result of transitioning is that most people flourish. Maybe you are curious along with me as to why it is that our spiritual relationship with our spiritual God is limited or impeded by whatever state or status our physical body is in? After all, I don't seek God with a penis or a vagina; I seek him with my soul and spirit. Shockingly, Walker believes that "When someone rejects this blueprint (of Genesis 1), they are not merely rejecting a thousands-of-years-old text. They are rejecting Jesus." (p 59) Because our "God-given task in the world to be fruitful and multiply. (Gen. 1:28) and "humanity's design is tied to humanity's mission. To bring more children into the world, and man and a woman need each other," anatomical body parts fitting together and creating children is part of "God's blueprint." (p 57) It is worth noting that "Be fruitful and multiply" is a blessing, not a command. Walker writes, "Christianity doesn't sever gender from sex, because according to the Bible, the unique ways that God made our bodies are tied to our gender roles." (p 57) Again, biblical writers would have never linked social roles or gender to anatomical body parts. It's just a silly statement. Continuing on, Walker states, "We are made quite literally, to fit together." (p 58) Yet, even in Christian marriages, sex is not just for baby-making; it is a pleasurable glue that enhances relationship. People fit together in all kinds of ways for sexual pleasure. A 2010 Indiana University study defined forty ways in which people regularly engage in sexual practice. If you only know of one way of having sex, you're not trying hard enough. Well, there you have Walker's list of "a confluence of powerful cultural influences" (p 26) including what he believes the Bible "actually says about gender identity," and by default, what God, and even Jesus think about gender identity. But, we progress, we learn, we advance socially, medically, scientifically and, more often than not, conservative denominations are "constantly playing catch-up in the culture." (p

17) Unsurprisingly, I have different insights as to why transgender people are more visible in our culture. A researched and accurate brief history follows. A breakthrough in understanding human sexuality began in the late 19th century. Research and studies, geographically isolated and relatively small in number, began with Magnus Hirschfeld who founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany in 1897, and the Institute for Sexual Science in 1919. Hirschfeld collected interviews from over thirty thousand people who operated outside male/female normative roles in orientation or gender identity (though they would not have used those terms). His research was wiped out in the Nazi burning of his institute and records. Christine Jorgensen, an American GI turned female in 1952, was the first widely publicized transgender transition. Until this time period, synthetic hormones were not available. Also, trauma surgery skills learned in WWII allowed for surgical transitions to be successfully attempted and more accessible for people who felt that their biological sex was not in accordance with their internal sense of identity. One of the early doctors working in gender reassignment, Dr. John Money, wanted terminology other than "sex roles" to distinguish erotic and genital sexual activities from typical male or female nonsexual activities. In 1955, he appropriated the word "gender" to distinguish social roles from sexual roles. This was the first time "gender" was used in this way. It also marked greater understanding that people may not be in biological sex and gender alignment. (The concept of gender would have never been considered by biblical writers and certainly not transmitted in stories, legends, and oral histories from over 6,000 years ago. To believe so is to participate in outrageous biblical reconstructionism.) Groups and publications supportive of transgender people began along with some visibility in pop culture. Misunderstanding what "transgender" meant was rampant. In one of the top selling books of the sexual revolution, "Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask," (1968) transgender (gender identity) and homosexuality (sexual orientation) are conflated. Though bodies of information were growing, it was still slow moving. Beginning in 1966, transgender people began fighting back against legal oppression by police officers. In 1980, transgenderism was officially classified in the Diagnostics and Statistical Manual (DSM) as gender identity disorder. PFLAG added the Transgender Network in 2002 which supported parents with transchildren. Visibility of transpeople increased both in the culture and online on the internet. In 2013, the DSM recategorized those who are transgender with gender dysphoria to reflect their feelings of stress. Experts who work on brain science and chemistry say we are likely several decades away from understanding why 0.25 to 1.0% of the population is transgender. Reflection upon Walker's pastoral and relational suggestion for engaging with those who are transgender. I commend that Walker intentionally tries to be loving. If you

listen to his speaking, he very much comes across with a gracious and compassionate tone. The problem with bad theology, worse ideology, and unsafe suggestions, even when they are spoken and written kindly, is that they are still destructive and untrue. Walker makes several suggestions about how one might live out a loving attitude towards transgender people in their Christian lives. He suggests, we are to view transgender people with dignity, and patiently treat them with empathy. We are to “take time and make the effort to listen and seek to understand,” (p 97) “to get to know people (and) bear their burdens.” (p 98) After establishing relationship, “the Bible says that love requires the truth” and we should “never assess (the truth) by the world’s response to our message of love.” (p 98) Though Walker writes, “Humility dictates that we are willing to acknowledge we have been wrong,” (p 126) there is no space in Walker’s version of truth, where he considers that he may be wrong. Despite the many suggestions Walker has for engaging transgender people and telling them God’s best for their lives, it appears rather questionable if Walker has actually ever engaged in relationship with a transperson himself. He uses created scenarios (except in one instance upcoming) for his examples. Readers may find that odd, but unfortunately, I find it typical. Unfortunately, it appears that Walker and those in his camp forego relationship and education by transgender people right in front of them. Worse, they ignore the Christian transgender people in churches, the witness of their lives and stories, and they ignore professional medical input, while enshrining words from a far distant culture, interpreted to their own narrative to construct exclusionary doctrines. Walker does write of a single incident where he met a transgender person. He successfully navigates the telling by never using gendered pronouns; he astutely defaults to the usage of “they” and “this person.” Walker tells of a meeting when “some Christian friends were involved in a prolonged and emotionally fraught conversation with members of the LGBTQ community.” (p 103) Interestingly, I too was in the room for that meeting that took place on the first night of the ERLC conference in 2014. As I recall, there were about eighteen men from the “SBC side” and ten members (half men, half women) of the LGBTQ community. Reflective of the old tale of the blind men and the elephant, Walker and I have different views of that meeting. Allow me to accentuate the points I made in the first part of this (epic) review. Both Walker and I follow God, believe in Jesus, have the ability to write down our thoughts and think clearly. Yet we each have different insights and views of this incident that happened only three years ago. How much more should we intellectually question the written “blueprint” account of Adam and Eve penned 2,600 after the event? I feel this is an important point, so I keep returning to it. Of the ERLC meeting, Walker writes, “

looked like a set-up predisposed to conflict and civil war—where in the back of everyone's mind there was hope that people from both sides would change their minds. (p 103) I did not see a civil war set up. I saw a room of people whose books, speeches, and sermons I had listened to, many of whom I had interacted with online, and now looked forward to meeting face-to-face. A room of chairs and couches with a table of brownies, cookies, soda and sweet tea that set a hospitable scene. Earlier in the evening, the group I was a part of had reiterated our intention for the meeting that night -- that the SBC leaders in the room might see that we too, despite our affirming and inclusive theology, possessed the spirit of Christ in us. At one point a transgender woman (a biological man who self-identifies as a woman) stood up and pleaded, with great emotion, that all they wanted was to be able to go to the bathroom without fear of abuse or mockery in the restroom that aligned with their new identity. (p 104) First, some insights about the woman Walker wrote about. Her name is Allyson Robinson. Allyson attended West Point before gender reassignment and graduated with a degree in physics before being commissioned as an officer in the Army. Also, before transitioning, she became an ordained Baptist minister earning an M.Div. from Baylor University. Allyson has worked for the Human Rights campaign, was the director of OutServe, and a pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. She has been married to her wife for twenty-three years and is the parent of four children. I don't believe most of the SBC people in the room knew who Allyson was, or that she was even transgender. When a theological question was asked of the whole group, Allyson responded as a follow up to Justin Lee's response. The topic was not bathrooms. Allyson spoke for about 7 or 8 minutes and then personalized the topic when she outed herself. I intentionally watched people to monitor their reactions; Allyson is a strikingly beautiful woman. It was hard for several of the men to maintain a poker face. They seemed to have had no idea that Allyson was a transwoman. There were numerous positive, empathetic, relational, conceding comments Walker could have made about Allyson's incredibly accomplished life, Christlike behavior and demeanor, as well as the attitudes of other LGBTQ and affirming people in the room. I would have seen that as a humble move toward questioning his own beliefs, or giving space to the possibility that we too were part of the Body of Christ. Sadly, as the book reveals, he resolutely believes that one cannot be trans (nor gay or lesbian for that matter) and Christian. In the final chapter, "Tough Questions," Walker offers answers in a spirit of humility and unity. (p145). Can someone be transgender and Christian? Response: if you limited your self-identification to a person suffering from gender dysphoria, then yes. The feeling or experience of it is not sinful, but it is broken; and acting upon one's dysphoria is

sinful. (p 74) However, if you self-identify as transgender, you nullify God's revelation both in nature and in Scripture. The Bible calls it suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. . . a settled rejection of God's purposes for us as male or female cannot be reconciled with following Christ. (p 146) So, no, you cannot identify as trans and Christian. Is taking hormones to manage dysphoria okay? Response: No, any effort or action taken to suppress the truth of our natural biology, or to reverse our natural biology, runs contrary to God's word. (p 152) Is it true that Christian teaching is harmful in not affirming a transperson's identity leads to depression and higher rates of suicide? Response: (this) raises an important counter-question: is the emotional distress caused from identifying as transgender the result of not being affirmed, or is it a feature of the underlying emotional and mental difficulties that come with gender dysphoria, which are not solved by embracing a transgender identity? (p 155) Walker continues, It seems far more likely (albeit that it's unpopular to say) that emotional and psychological distress stem from gender dysphoria, not from the failure to feel affirmed by one's community. (p 156) Walker's response does not cite proof or studies which support his ideology. So, I will offer the statistical research which is easily accessible to Walker and any conservative faith leader. For over thirty years, Dr. Caitlyn Ryan of the Family Acceptance Project in San Francisco has been doing research on the effects of acceptance and non-acceptance of LGBTQ youth. If you reject your LGBTQ youth, they: Are EIGHT times more apt to attempt suicide than those who are accepted; May suffer depression SIX times more often than those who are accepted; Are THREE times more likely to get involved in drug abuse than those LGBT that are accepted; and Are THREE times more likely to contract HIV and/or STD's than accepted LGBT youth. Conclusion Fortunately, I can both hold onto my faith and submit to the authority of God while following the teachings of Jesus. Admittedly, I question the notion of God's blueprint for human sexuality in Genesis. I do not however, question the historical texts, the songs and beautiful poetry, the important directives and lessons, and the letters and gospels. I carefully study the writings in context. Not only is there plenty of historical records and support for much of the biblical writings, more importantly, the truth therein resonates and speaks to my spirit. I am a Christian. A Christian who will not abuse Scripture and unsubstantiated interpretations created by others to marginalize groups of people that are not like me. It is unfortunate that Mr. Walker has apparently not taken the opportunity to befriend transgender Christians and learn from them. Walker says, If I affirm transgenderism, I am actually doing an unloving thing. I am withholding truth because I value my own reputation or my own friendships or my own comforts more than I

value the eternal happiness of the person made in God's image who stands in front of me. (p 99) But, there is no need to fear loss of reputation in the comfy bubble. If Walker and others really did value the eternal happiness of another person over his own reputation, friendships and comfort, they might consider, with humility, the many objections I have raised in this review. I imagine I am not the first to point out extensive problematic aspects of Mr. Walker's theology. The echo chamber of SBC demands that he refrain from intellectually engaging what is known about human sexuality and gender from science, biology, psychology. Likewise, their exclusionary theology demands they ignore anthropology, archeology and other earth sciences. "God and the Transgender Debate--What Does the Bible Actually Say About Gender Identity?" continues this downward destructive spiral of scripture abuse negatively affecting people, the witness and message of Christ, & the SBC itself.

God and the Transgender Debate is hands down the best resource on this issue I've ever found. If you're still trying to completely understand the issues of transgenderism and gender fluidity, or simply struggling to know how to respond to these issues with Gospel truth and grace, this is a wonderful book. It's engaging and easy to read, and most importantly, clearly presents the Gospel and equips Christians and churches to deal with this issue. I'd highly recommend getting a copy!

This book should be mandatory reading by every leader in church today. It compassionately addresses the issues of sin and self for the church.

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