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Resources for Thinking and Loving Christianly Amidst the Changing Cultural Winds Surrounding Gender Incongruence

Although intelligence and academic learning are not in themselves marks of spiritual attainment, the New Testament consistently affirms the desirability of good thinking. Two of the Gospels explicitly mention that one effect of Jesus's healing of the Gadarene demoniac was the demoniac's restoration to a sound mind. The New Testament epistles even more plainly indicate that Christian believers are to think clearly so they can act rightly. Notably, the readers of 1 Peter were not to live according to the wisdom of a world in which whoever experiences the most sensual pleasure wins; instead, they were to be "vigilant," "alert," and "sober-minded" (*vide* 1 Peter 4, especially 4:7).

Within the wider context of the passage, the outcome of such thinking involves an ordering of life around God's will in prayer, outpouring in acts of sacrificial love. Such love "covers a multitude of sins," practices hospitality, thinks of gifts and status as an opportunity to serve, and speaks truthfully and with grace—for God and the benefit of others. This has direct relevance for the mission of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*. Indeed, it is the frame in which we are called to operate, something that should direct and shape the perspectives we offer.

The above is important, for this issue of the journal is an unplanned *de facto* theme issue addressing Christian thinking about a contentious topic, gender incongruence. The first essay, by Tony Jelsma, updates and extends his 2022 review of the science surrounding gender incongruence and gender-affirming care.¹ The second, by Gregg Davidson, challenges arguments that employ variable or morphable sex in the animal kingdom and the existence of variable sexual developmental pathways in humans to argue against traditional binary understandings of biological sex. Such arguments have been influential in evangelical conversations about gender and sexuality over the past 15 years. Davidson contends that they rely on logical fallacies and, if applied consistently to a wider range of even more relevant animal behaviors, would normalize numerous human activities incompatible with universally accepted Christian ethical norms. Writing independently of Davidson, the philosopher Adam Smith addresses a question that naturally results:

What, then, is the role of science in discussions about gender incongruence? Smith concludes that the question is not about the science but respect—just as some secular gender theorists contend. However, in contrast to some of those theorists, Smith does not assign empirical biological understandings of gender incongruence and gender-affirming care a lower value than personal feelings. Rather, Smith contends that respect involves honest conversation about the contestable ethical judgments involved when deciding whether gender incongruence is "a medical problem to be fixed" or "an identity to be celebrated."

The perspectives offered in this *de facto* theme issue highlight the urgent need for contributions addressing how Christians might understand gender incongruence theologically and respond to it pastorally, especially since the few rigorous accounts currently on offer have been problematized by the arguments in Felipe do Vale's recent *Gender as Love*.²

This issue contains sixteen book reviews, representing the partial alleviation of a significant backlog generated by *PSCF*'s hardworking and longsuffering reviewers and review editors. Then there is an exchange of letters addressing Haarsma et al.'s argument that gender incongruence should not be understood to result from the Fall in a simple historical sense, plus a note of appreciation for Hal Poe's article addressing C.S. Lewis's approach to science and technology.

May all of the contributions in this issue help you think, live, and love Christianly.

Notes

¹Tony Jelsma, "An Attempt to Understand the Biology of Gender and Gender Dysphoria: A Christian Approach," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 74, no. 3 (2022): 130–48, <https://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/2022/PSCF9-22Jelsma.pdf>.

²Felipe do Vale, *Gender as Love: A Theological Account of Human Identity, Embodied Desire, and our Social Worlds* (Baker Academic, 2023).

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