

psychological intervention. It seems to me that conforming to one sex or the other is a valid choice.

Haarsma et al. discussed eunuchs who were born that way as being gender nonconforming. If the individual wants to stay in a nonbinary condition and serve God, living a devoted single life certainly has the approval of Jesus in his call for the eunuchs who chose that way for the sake of the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the eunuch by commitment must be joyful in service as a spiritual discipline; unfortunately, the quoted passage on the top of p. 194 stings with sarcasm. “‘God wants to heal you!’ She is undoubtedly thrilled by this opportunity ... She doesn’t have the intimacy that prayer or accountability or sarcasm require.” Is it not possible to assume the best about the questioner and possibly build the intimacy? Eunuchs are offered a reward in Isaiah 56, as noted by Haarsma et al. and the authors of the EFC document noted above.

Will Jesus heal the disabled in the next life? Let us consider Jesus’s first coming. Jesus opened his ministry in Luke 4 by saying he had come to bring sight to the blind. Jesus offered a choice to disabled individuals prior to most of his healing miracles. Most of them wanted the cure. There appeared to be no limit to what Jesus could do. The man born blind in John 9 was healed and could see; whereas, even with modern medicine, children who are born blind and have surgery later cannot adjust to the experience of sight and prefer blindness. Jesus must be able to rewire the brain. In Mark 8, the blind man got sight in two stages: firstly, he saw what he thought were trees walking about; and, secondly, he had full sight.

Haarsma et al. seem to suggest that some disabled individuals may not want to be healed (p. 193, top of right-hand column), thereby choosing to retain their identity, even in the next life (p. 198). It is true that Jesus’s resurrected body bore his scars but that was to show Thomas that he was the same Jesus as was crucified. We surely take with us our memories that were conditioned by our genes and our neuroanatomy, but we will have a new body. Paul deals with the question of the resurrected body in 1 Corinthians 15:38, “But God gives it a body as he has determined and to each kind of seed its own body.” All of God’s seeds together will be a perfect garden.

Stephen Reinbold
ASA member

The Authors Reply to Stephen Reinbold

We thank Stephen Reinbold for his thoughtful letter and his spirit of promoting discussion. He asks, “Will Jesus heal the disabled in the next life?” We agree that there is much we do not know about what form our resurrection

bodies will take. What concerns us in this article is harm caused in *this* life by common beliefs that all congenital disabilities resulted from the marring of God’s creation by sin.

Imagine a young Christian with a congenital disability absorbing the default teaching of their church that—although they are not culpable for their condition and although the church loves and supports them—they are fundamentally flawed; they are not what they *ought* to be; they would not exist as they do if humans had not sinned. Now imagine that same young Christian raised in a church that teaches that—although their disability causes them difficulties—they are *already* fully human; they are part of God’s intended diversity for humanity; their unique gifts and full participation are valued; they are accepted as they are even as the church supports them in whatever healing they might or might not seek in this life or the next.

Stephen points out that individual Christians might mean well when they say insensitive things. We agree. Poor theology can lead well-intentioned Christians to do harmful things, including many that have harmed disabled individuals both individually and structurally. As we point out in the article, our collective views of eschatology shape the world we build now, including its social structures and dynamics. Few denominations might formally teach that congenital disabilities are a result of sin, but such lay beliefs are commonplace, and there is no shortage of books and articles that make this claim.¹ We hope more Christians will discuss this. If our article is on the right track, churches could teach their members that at least some congenital disabilities are part of God’s intended diversity for humanity. Better theology might prompt the same loving intentions to produce better action.

There is a parallel situation with gender nonconforming identities. (To be clear, we do *not* think gender nonconformity is itself a disability.) As Stephen’s letter points out—and as several individuals on the “diving deeper” discussion pointed out—there is a wide variety of types and causes of gender nonconforming identity. Even within the narrower category of transgender individuals, there is a wide variety. One person might have known from before puberty that their psychological gender, and the social gender identity they desire, is at odds with their anatomical sex. Another person might have been cis-gender through mid-puberty, then entered a time of uncertainty, and after discerning for a while might have decided that they are non-binary (some such individuals, but not all, develop a clearer gender identity as they age).

Our question is this: What should churches teach to, and about, such individuals? Again, imagine a young

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transgender Christian in two different churches. Both churches urge loving care for all individuals. Both churches teach that the young person is not personally culpable for their gender minority status. Both churches seek to lovingly come alongside the young person to help them avoid taking sinful actions and avoid cultivating sinful habits of thought. However, one church teaches that the existence of non-binary gender is a result of humanity's fall into sin. It teaches that, although the young person might not be culpable, any attempts to live or think in ways other than binary gender is to participate in that sin. Another church teaches that, although that young person's gender identity is uncommon, it is not a result of sin, but is, in fact, part of God's intended diversity for humanity. This church affirms the young person's identity and questions as normal, while helping them to find ways to live as a loving and obedient child of God. We think the latter theology is more likely to be correct. And the research literature strongly indicates that the latter approach correlates with healthier psychological outcomes for young LGBTQ+ Christians.

Note

¹In addition to the literature we pointed to in our article, see, for instance, Kristi Upson-Saia, "Resurrecting Deformity," in Darla Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus, eds., *Disability in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Springer: 2011) 93–122; Lisa D. Powell, *The Disabled God Revisited: Trinity, Christology, and Liberation* (T&T Clark, 2023); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (Columbia University Press, 1995). Bynum's discussion included Bonaventure's view as fairly typical, according to "the elect will rise with all their deformities removed" (p. 254). Augustine too thought that we will be raised "with an amended and perfected body" (*Enchiridion*, chapter 87: "The Case of Monstrous Births"), though he thought some martyrs would bear marks of their martyrdom as signs of their faith.

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Thanks for Hal Poe's Article on C. S. Lewis

I was delighted to read Hal Poe's article, "C.S. Lewis on Science and Technology" (*PSCF* 76, no. 3 [December 2024]: 178–89). Although I have known and appreciated the works of C.S. Lewis for many years, it was helpful to have his scientific thought gathered into one review article. Hal revealed much more in scope and depth than I knew about. Not only does Lewis's work help in Christian apologetics, but it also bridges the traditional gulf between the humanities and the sciences that C.P. Snow famously wrote about ("The Two Cultures").

Back in 1980, I received an unexpected gift from C.S. Lewis. As one of the volunteers for the recently formed C.S. Lewis Institute in Washington, DC, I was helping to

organize a symposium on the emerging topic of recombinant DNA, "The Church in the Genetics Age." I wanted to find a real practitioner in the field of genetic engineering, so I met with Dr. David A. Jackson, the scientific director of a new company called Genex Laboratories. David Jackson did not have a particular religious interest, but he knew of C.S. Lewis from his novel *Till We Have Faces*. It was this connection that intrigued him enough to join the symposium, and he provided authoritative and up-to-date scientific information about DNA for the event.

The C.S. Lewis Institute is still thriving through its Fellows programs in 24 cities around the US and the world. It began in 1976 through the efforts of volunteers who were challenged and inspired by another professor from Oxford, James Houston. The intent of the Institute was not to focus on the literary work of C.S. Lewis, but rather on the way that Lewis exemplified how a Christian can integrate personal and professional life. This, of course, is also a central interest of ASA.

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