

Protect them all

A Christian case for eliminating
Lists of special identity groups
in school policies



You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

- Leviticus 19:17-18

*Truly, I say to you,
as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,
you did it to me.'*

- Matthew 25:40

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BAD POLICIES HURT...

Christian schools have been updating their bullying policies and hiring/employment policies recently – some in response to pressure from the provincial government. Provincial education ministries recommend or even insist that schools include lists of “identifying characteristics” in their policies, including:

race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression

Depending on the province, the list might add other characteristics or terms including “source of income”, “political belief, association or activity”, and “social disadvantage”. Among these characteristics, “sexual orientation”, “gender identity” and “gender expression” are relatively recent additions and create a dilemma. Should Christian schools incorporate those terms into their policies?

Some Christians are quick to reply that “Jesus tells us to love our neighbours as ourselves and the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us to even (maybe especially) love those who are different from us. So, we need to love our “trans” and “gay” neighbours and welcome them in our communities and include them in our anti-bullying policies.”

Yes, we must protect “trans” and “gay” and all other students from bullying in our schools. It’s not a question of *whether* we protect students, it’s a question of *how*. But we should *not* include lists of identifying characteristics, taken from human rights statutes, in our hiring, anti-bullying, and other policies, because such lists and terms:

1. promote a non-Christian worldview;
2. deny the equal dignity of all persons;
3. legally undermine Christian safe school policies;
4. embrace as healthy a psychological pathology; and
5. fail to love our neighbours.

Let’s take a closer look at each of these points. Then, we will explore how Christian schools can do better even while remaining under the protection of human rights codes.

1. THEY PROMOTE A NON-CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

In the beginning God created. And the crown of his creation was made in his image: a man and a woman. Two distinct individuals both wonderfully reflecting his image. The wonderful mystery of that design includes the binary reality of the sexes: a woman's femaleness reflects something of the image of God, and a man's maleness also reflects something of the image of God. And it was *very good*.

But something happened. One day the woman reached out and grasped a piece of fruit and ate, and she gave it to the man who was with her, and he ate. And that changed everything. Everything! All of creation was cursed. All creation groans still today under that curse. And even that which was created in the image of God, something that God said was *very good*, the crown of his creation, that too was touched by that act, and so we witness brokenness.



Part of that brokenness is the temptation to mar, to diminish, or even to exaggerate our masculine and feminine distinctions, and to diminish our God-given identity as male or female. This is why God forbade cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5. The point is not the article of clothing *per se*; it's the intentional diminishing or obscuring of masculine or feminine differences, which is an assault on God's good design.

But the Bible does not leave us in the brokenness of Genesis 3. It not only speaks to the issue of gender or sexual confusion and what *not* to do, it also speaks to how Christians should relate and communicate on this issue. John 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... *full of grace and truth.*” (John 1:1,14). Jesus Christ is the Anointed Saviour; he not only saves souls sometime in the future, but he is redeeming all things right now.

As a part of that redeeming work, the Church invites all transgender and gay persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the gospel (1 Tim. 1:15-16). Further, Christ inspires the Church to love our neighbors struggling with their identity, seek their good always, welcome them in our congregations and schools as they repent and believe in Him, and spur them on to love and good deeds in His name (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Gal. 5:14; Heb. 10:24). (Denny Burk, a Professor of Biblical Studies at Boyce College, provides a long list of resolutions regarding a Biblical understanding of the issue of gender and sex which are worth reading and contemplating.)¹

This is the Biblical worldview. A worldview that sees the world as it is, the way God created it, the way man polluted it, the way Christ is redeeming it. And that's the basis on which we should be building our policies.

Those committed to Jesus Christ seek to “bring every thought captive” to him (2 Cor. 10:5). Others are committed to something else. There is no neutrality. When the State rejects the Christian worldview, it will teach certain behaviours as good that we know are harmful; it will teach certain ideas as true that we know are false (see for example the Alberta guidelines on gender identity²); it will teach certain things as beautiful that we know are disordered.

There are at least four different worldviews or philosophies at work behind this distortion: secular humanism, Marxism, paganism and Gnosticism. Each of these are competing with the Judeo-Christian worldview.

SECULAR HUMANISM

Secular humanism is a worldview that “makes man the measure of all things” and permits man to decide autonomously what is good. The modern concept of social constructionism is a recent fad of this worldview, but it also finds roots in Marxism. It’s important to understand social constructionism in order to see how secular humanism is redefining language and identity politics in Canada.

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Part of the debate over transgenderism is the idea that our gender – i.e. whether we are men or women – is not fixed, but instead is just a changeable “social construct.” Likewise, various sexual behaviours that were once considered immoral are acceptable or even celebrated today because sexual morality is considered to be just a social construct, and therefore subject to change as we wish to change it.



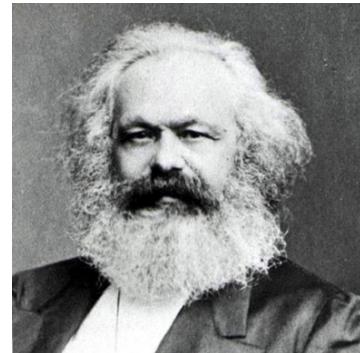
What is a social construct? It is an invention of society, rather than an objective fact. For example, money is a social construct. There is nothing intrinsic to the paper itself that makes a twenty-dollar bill valuable. It is only because society has agreed to value it that it has value. And if we decided to use something else as our currency, then our old paper money would be worthless.

When it comes to gender, things can get confusing because there are certain aspects of gender that *are* social constructs or inventions (e.g. pink being a woman’s color). But others are not. Certain aspects are fixed biological realities. Men are generally stronger. Women can bear children. God gives husbands and wives different roles in marriage. Men can’t be women and women can’t be men. They are all fixed realities that can’t be changed.

But because some elements are constructed, some people can be tricked into thinking *all* elements of gender are constructed. Our biological sex (and thus our gender) is fixed, real, natural and created. Gender is binary. The reality of two, and only two, categories of sex / gender is not the result of an oppressive patriarchy, but of God’s “very good” design. We defy it at our peril. Secular Humanists defy this reality seeing all of gender as merely ideas that we’ve created to live our lives.

MARXISM

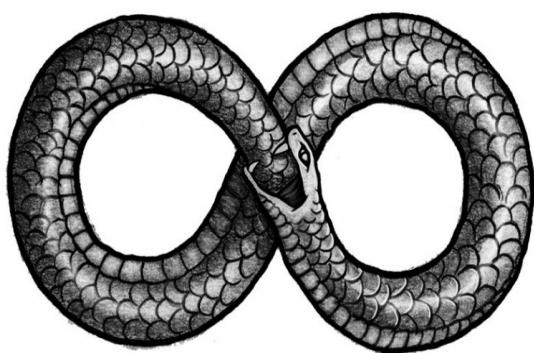
Marxists, on the other hand, see all of life through a lens of oppressor and oppressed. The Marxist worldview began as an economic one (rich oppressing the poor), but quickly morphed into a social one (men oppressing women, Europeans oppressing Africans, Christians oppressing other religions, heterosexuals oppressing homosexuals, etc.). The movement towards normalizing homosexuality and transgenderism makes use of this worldview, claiming that male and female are categories created by society for the purpose of oppressing others. This view is increasingly accepted as a fact by leading policy makers.



Karl Marx

GNOSTICISM

The transgender phenomenon of the 21st century is also influenced by one of the oldest heresies the Church had to confront. In the second century, two generations removed from the era of the apostles, a counterfeit gospel circulated under the names of the apostles and was peddled by various false teachers. The gospel of Thomas, for example, was not written by the apostle Thomas, but by those looking to promulgate Gnosticism.



Gnosticism was an attempt at cultural accommodation. The Gnostics adopted pagan assumptions about divinity, the world, and redemption, in order to make Christianity more palatable to the wider Greco-Roman culture. They claimed to have special revelation and knowledge and a higher form of religion. They subverted biblical teaching with twisted exegesis and supplemented the Scriptures with counterfeits.

As Robert George explains, “For Gnostics, it was the immaterial, the mental, the affective that ultimately matters. This means when it comes to the person that the material or bodily is inferior—if not a prison to escape, certainly a mere instrument to be manipulated to serve the goals of the “person,” understood as the spirit or mind or psyche.”³

The self is a spiritual or mental substance with the body merely as its material vehicle.

The new Gnosticism sees human beings as non-bodily persons inhabiting non-personal bodies. This is why so many now think that it's better to mutilate the body to bring it into conformity with the mind rather than to conform the mind to physical reality. Whereas a healthy non-gnostic approach to gender dysphoria would be to seek to unite the biological with the mental, new Gnosticism prefers to only change the physical by means of sex-change operations. The physical body is easily mutilated to fit the "true" person within.

PAGANISM

The modern transgender phenomenon, as well as the sexual revolution generally, is influenced by paganism. This won't be explored in depth here because other trusted voices have already written extensively on this topic. For example, see the articles "Plastic People" by Dr. Scott Masson⁴ and "The Theory and Practice of Pagan Sexuality"⁵ by Dr. Peter Jones in the Spring 2013 Jubilee magazine. Suffice it to say that androgyny (the blending or blurring of gender differences in an individual) was a major part of ancient pagan rituals and practices and is prominent in the Wiccan religion today. But paganism is also closely associated today with the third competing worldview discussed above: Gnosticism.

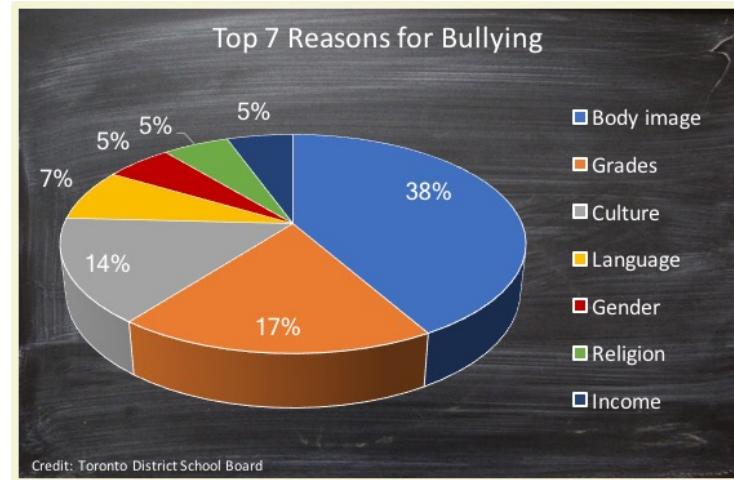


Pagan and Gnostic beliefs and practices have made significant inroads into the mainstream of Western life, language and thought, to the point where even many Christians have unwittingly adopted a view of God, the world and mankind that is closer to pagan spirituality than biblical Christianity. At root, the issue is a question of nature and authority – what are we, and who says so? The sad reality is that many government bureaucrats have, either consciously or unconsciously, accepted the social constructionist, Marxist, pagan and Gnostic view of things. And that is why they are asking our schools to add gender identity and gender expression to our school policies.

2. THEY DENY THE EQUAL DIGNITY OF ALL PERSONS

Every student has a right to be free from harassment, violence, name-calling, and intimidation, and all students should be treated with dignity and respect.

Anti-bullying laws based on long lists of identity groups privilege some students over others. For example, the most prevalent reason for being bullied is body image (students are perceived to be too fat, too thin, red hair, ugly, etc.). The second highest reason for bullying is grades or marks. These students fail to get special mention in the anti-bullying policies promoted by our provincial governments. Sexual orientation or gender identity don't make the top seven reasons for bullying but they receive explicit protection (see chart above).⁶



Bullying is ultimately a condition of human brokenness that torments too many children (and adults!). It occurs for all kinds of terrible reasons and sometimes for no reason at all. Christians do not tolerate bullying because it violates the commands of God (Leviticus 19:17-18; Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 5:44-45; Romans 12:17-21; 1 John 3:15). Therefore,

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Christian institutions should have total bans on bullying – full stop. No lists of special protected groups are necessary. Every individual child is protected completely and equally. Christian institutions need to put the onus on the State to demonstrate that its policies are superior. Let them explain why a limited list of identifiable groups is superior to a blanket prohibition on bullying.

Human dignity is not first found in autonomous choices or in various group identities. Christians know that human dignity is bestowed by God on all persons. We have dignity as humans because we are all His special creation, made in His image. This understanding of human dignity is necessary for universal human rights and freedoms to flourish and to be equally available to all. This is also why the secular humanist definition of human dignity and human rights – rooted in autonomous choice – and the State’s approach to bullying is superficial and shallow.

When Christians encounter another person, we first see, (or we *ought* to first see), not skin colour, not gender, not disability, not sexual orientation. Rather, we see someone made in the image of our Maker, we see the *Imago Dei*. That’s why we must treat every human being with respect regardless of how sick they are, how confused they are about their biological make up, or how much or how little they can function.

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3. THEY LEGALLY UNDERMINE CHRISTIAN SAFE SCHOOL POLICIES

By adopting the misguided policies proposed by provincial education ministries, schools and their supporting communities communicate to courts and tribunals that they accept the ideas and worldview behind the policies being proposed. Instead, schools should consider legal alternatives available.

All human rights codes, while including a general rule against discrimination, include exceptions. For example, in Ontario's *Human Rights Code*, Section 18 allows religious, educational, and other institutions to serve the interests of their members in accordance with their beliefs. This section *describes lawful forms of discrimination*. Such provisions honour fundamental freedoms of belief, religion, expression, and association. Similar sections can be found in other provincial human rights legislation. Why subject our institutions to the onerous standards of human rights legislation when there are exceptions built into that very legislation that says that we don't have to?



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All human rights codes include exceptions
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It's one thing for the government to push its ideology regarding sexuality and gender in public institutions. It's another for it to pressure independent religious associations, which enjoy Code exemptions and conditional protections, to adopt them.

By eliminating the list of special groups and focusing on zero bullying or harassment, the analysis will shift to whether the action constitutes harassment or bullying, instead of whether the particular individual is part of a particular identity group listed in a particular policy document. After all, the policy goal is to prevent bullying. If we can do that (and even do it better) without flagging special identity groups, then all the better.

A Christian school cannot adopt policies that nominally protect people from discrimination on the basis of “sexual orientation” or “gender identity”, and remain free to govern the school in a manner faithful to its Christian beliefs.

To avoid or to defend against a legal claim from an employee, student, or parent that the school has failed to accommodate their sexual orientation or gender identity – which under current human rights jurisprudence requires accommodating various personal *behaviours* as well – a Christian school would have two options. First, cave in and accommodate the person the same way as any public school. Second, maintain that this school does not have to comply with the state’s controversial equality doctrines on such matters because the school enjoys the constitutional protection of freedom of religion and association, and because the school respects the basic policy goal of eliminating bullying in all its forms.

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*Focusing on zero
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Relying on option two would require the school to demonstrate that accommodating the person’s gender non-conforming or sexually immoral behaviour would significantly interfere with its religious mission. Accordingly, the school must demonstrate that its religious mission requires all students and staff to endeavor to live rightly. **But if the school has already signaled that it will respect everyone’s “gender identity” and “sexual orientation” by adding these terms into its policies, it will have a harder time relying on freedom of religion to justify going with option number two.**

4. THEY EMBRACE A PSYCHOLOGICAL PATHOLOGY AS HEALTHY

Transsexualism, transgenderism, Gender Identity Disorder (GID), or gender dysphoria is a desire to change one's sex or to fulfill the role of the opposite gender. Transsexuals / transgender people usually describe themselves as "trapped" in a body that does not match their "gender identity". They may seek hormone therapy or surgery to bring their bodies into conformity with their perceived gender.

Most provinces have now enshrined in law an idea that gender is not fixed but fluid, that there are more than two genders, and that what ultimately matters is how a person feels about his or her gender, rather than what his or her biological sex actually is.

This is not true.



The Bible has plenty to say about human sexuality. Most basic to our understanding of sex is that God created two (and only two) genders that correspond to the two biological sexes: "male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Maleness or femaleness is stamped on one's body by our Creator. God created humankind as male and female, equal in dignity

and worth, yet with distinct and complementary bodies, abilities, and roles. (See, for example, Gen. 1:27, 2:18, 21-24; Deut. 22:5; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 2:12-14). To mar or to diminish the masculine and feminine distorts our God-given identity as males or females. These texts demonstrate that this is true before the fall and in the post-fall world too. All the modern-day speculation about numerous genders—or even a gender "continuum"—is unbiblical.

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The Bible confirms a person's biological sex constitutes a vital part of their human nature. And the sciences corroborate that – with the exception of a few simple organisms – all creatures, including humans, are marked by a fundamental binary sexual differentiation: for example, male or female markers are imprinted on each of their trillions of cells. The testimony of biology, chromosome data, and social-scientific evidence confirms the essential biological binary nature of the sexes. (For more on the scientific and medical case against the modern transgender movement, see ARPA Canada's policy report on gender identity⁷).



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5. THEY FAIL TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOURS

Before we look at how to love neighbor, it is important to note what we mean by love. The word is often used to describe an in the moment subjective emotion. But we believe it has an objective grounding. Love means treating other as we want to be treated as laid out in the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). It is grounded in who God is, because God is love (1 John 4:8). We know love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Loving our neighbor does not mean just doing what you feel like. Loving our neighbor means mirroring the perfect love of God to them.

As Lord's Day 43 of the Heidelberg Catechism makes clear, lying to our neighbours is not loving. "Love rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Promoting a non-Christian worldview or failing to promote a Christian worldview on issues of sexuality, gender, and identity is not loving the children of our neighbours, much less our own covenant children.

It is loving to ensure that anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies are the very best that they can be. Protecting our communities with all the resources reasonably available to us, including legally robust policies, is an act of love for our communities.

Affirming, implicitly or explicitly, the politically correct view that there is a gender spectrum and that it ought to be protected in our policies is harmful to children struggling with their identity. The same is true of finding your identity according to the orientation of your sexual behaviours. Such an approach is not affirmed anywhere in scripture – in fact, quite the opposite (e.g. 1 Cor. 6:8-11). How can it be loving then, to masquerade that way?

The medical and psychological evidence of the harms⁸ of the modern transgender movement are evident and the silent acquiescence to that movement spreads the harm in an unloving way. It is most loving to direct our students, staff and community to find their identity not in various aggrieved identity groups but in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26-29).



Therefore, it is most loving for Christian institutions to speak the truth and to refuse to change the language of Christian policies to incorporate unchristian philosophies, theories and terminology. The truth communicated in love will be kind and patient, not rude, irritable or boastful (1 Cor. 13:4,5). But love also “rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6) meaning that we cannot let our instinctive compassion run unmoored from truth because that will end up hurting, not helping.

LOOKING FORWARD: HOW DO WE LOVE ALL OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF?

We love our students and staff, including those struggling with their gender identity, by ensuring our school policies are Biblical and fairly enforced. Biblical policies will:

- a. Be infused with scripture;
- b. Have zero tolerance for bullying or harassment of any kind;
- c. Foster a Christian community environment that is loving and safe; and
- d. Direct students and staff on how to respond to bullying.

Let's take a very brief look at each of these (the discussion below is not at all exhaustive).

A. INFUSED WITH SCRIPTURE

Policies that are infused with scripture keep the school grounded on and faithful to the unchanging truth of God's word. They also do at least two things:

1. They force any state actor interpreting these policies to do so in light of their foundation: scripture. The more scripture, the less opportunity for a secular tribunal to apply secular humanist/pagan/Marxist/social constructionist interpretations.
2. Scripture-infused policies signal to staff and students and others who are living by the policies that the Bible has plenty to say about their human interactions, including what it really means to love your neighbor as yourself.

B. ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT

As discussed earlier, a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment which is blind to identity politics is the most just and appropriate response to these issues. The focus is then on moral action rather than personal identity. The Bible clearly demonstrates God's hatred of bullying. Leviticus 19:17-18 commands Israel not to hate their brother which is fleshed out in Proverbs 6:

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”

Jesus summarizes all of this in Matthew 5:44-45 commanding us to love even our enemies. This command Paul reiterates in Romans 12:17-21 and in Ephesians 4:29 urging the church to “let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” It is clear throughout the Bible that we have a duty to treat all – both our brothers and our enemies – with love, seeking to build each other up. This leaves no room for bullying or harassment in our Christian schools.

C. FOSTER A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT THAT IS LOVING AND SAFE

Christian institutions will have policies that are not just “negative” (i.e. don’t do this, don’t tolerate that, etc.). A church, school, or family environment that is distinctly Christian will not only be free of harassment and bullying, but will also foster a loving community that treats each individual as a unique creation of God bearing his image, strive for excellence, and show compassion by walking alongside those struggling in this broken world. Policies should not only explicitly prohibit all harassment and bullying, but also spell out a positive vision for a healthy school environment.

Consider the Heidelberg Catechism’s treatment of the 10 commandments. For each commandment, the Catechism does not stop at what behavior is prohibited, but also how we should act positively. For example, in Lord’s Day 40 the Catechism points out that “you shall not commit murder” means not dishonoring, hating, or injuring our neighbor, but it also means loving, showing patience, and protecting him from harm. The first part restrains evil and the second promotes good.

A school can follow this example with its policies. Not only do we prohibit shouting with anger, we promote speaking encouraging words to each other. Not only should children not harass other students, they should also look for ways to help their neighbor. It shows how a Christian individual and a Christian community can honour God and His love for justice and use their voice to speak for all.

D. DIRECT STUDENTS AND STAFF ON HOW TO RESPOND TO BULLYING

It is important not only to ask what our students will not do, but also what they will do. What will our students do the next time they see a classmate bullied? Will they do nothing, as most do, or will they defend the timid and encourage the weak, as Paul instructs? (I Thess. 5:14). Will they seek vengeance or peace? How will the school and the community deal with a bully, who often is a victim of bullying him or herself? How does reconciliation work in a Christian institution and how will it look different than at a secular institution?

There are no easy answers to this part of a school policy. Indeed, many of these tough questions may need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis with wisdom and discernment. However, this conversation should be an ongoing one at any Christian school. We must strive for peace and unity in our communities and be a witness to our culture through it.

CONCLUSION: COMPASSIONATE, CHRIST-CENTRED, BIBLICALLY-INFUSED POLICIES FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH IDENTITY

A Christian community has the opportunity to shine in these times with our love and support of the hurting. A Christ-centred, compassionate response to a sexual identity crisis recognizes the integrity of the two complimentary sexes as God has created them. It also recognizes the effects of the fall across all of nature, resulting in the pain, suffering and anxiety we see today. And it recognizes that every individual in their circumstances wants their experience to be understood and heard and wants to know who they are and where they belong. A compassionate, Christ-centered community walks alongside their struggling members. They point them to Jesus Christ as identity and Redeemer. They are a community in which healing can take place. The Christian worldview offers a compelling alternative to the approach being foisted onto our families and schools by the agendas of provincial governments. The Christian approach to this issue is the only one with the potential for lasting healing.

A compassionate, Christ-centered community walks alongside their struggling members

We hope this document is helpful in providing a philosophical and theological framework that paints a picture of how we got to the current state of affairs. The forces of secular humanism, Marxism, paganism and Gnosticism have shaped modern society and they continue to shape current educational debates. The story and success of Western civilization is built on the foundation of the Judeo-Christian worldview and it is this worldview that is being scrubbed out before our eyes. This is where things become difficult because we are losing the *common language of dialogue* we once shared. The issues of gender and sexuality in particular highlight this in a most striking way.

ARPA Canada recommends that schools refuse to adopt the language currently employed in human rights legislation. The courts will eventually have to decide whether Christians and other faith groups have the freedom to practice their religion. As Christians, we have no option but to remain true to the Gospel regardless of how courts decide. We do well to prepare our constituency for a potentially tough road ahead.

Our prayer is that ARPA Canada can continue assisting Reformed Christians and their communities to speak prophetically to a culture facing the tidal wave of liquid modernity. We are being called to walk on water.

This document is a work in progress and a contribution to an ongoing discussion in Reformed Christian circles today. If you feel that correction or more nuance is needed, or points need to be clarified or you want to interact with this document in any way, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@ARPACanada.ca or toll-free at 1-866-691-2772.

RECOMMENDED READING

A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality, *NASHVILLE STATEMENT*, online: cbmw.org/Nashville-statement/

John Stonestreet & Brett Kunkle, *A Practical Guide to Culture: Helping the Next Generation Navigate Today's World* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2017).

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⁵ Dr. Peter Jones, "The Theory and Practice of Pagan Sexuality" *Jubilee Magazine* (Spring 2013 ed.), at page 26, online: <<http://www.ezrainstitute.ca/resource-library/jubilee/gender-and-sexuality>>

⁶ Maria Yau and Janet O'Reilly, "2006 Student Census, Grades 7-12: System Overview," Toronto District School Board Research Report, online: <<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/research/docs/reports/2006studentcensussystemoverview1.pdf>>

⁷ *Respectfully Submitted: Gender Identity*, Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada, online: <<https://arpacanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Respectfully-Submitted-Gender-ID-updated-1216.pdf>>

⁸ *Respectfully Submitted: Gender Identity*, *supra* note 6, at pp.2-4.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE HARASSMENT AND BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Beliefs in relation to a *Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy*

The *Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy* was developed, in part, in response to the Order of the Inspector of Independent Schools I 1/16, effective September 7, 2016 (“Order 1/16”). Section 2(b) of Order 1/16 states that the anti-bullying policies of all Independent Schools in BC must include:

A reference to the protection of students’ physical safety, social connectedness, inclusiveness and protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Our Christian school is fully committed to ensuring the physical safety and social connectedness of all its students. We are fully committed to providing protection from all forms of bullying, regardless of any student’s personal characteristics. We believe that each and every student is wonderfully made in the image of God and inherently deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and kindness.¹

The government’s requirement for our school to specify and focus on particular personal characteristics (i.e. “gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity”) in its *Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy* conflicts with our beliefs, founded upon the Bible and evidenced in our Statement of Faith and Mission Statement.

The Bible admonishes against a focus on people’s diverse personal characteristics.² Rather, Christians are exhorted to recognize and honour each person’s inherent dignity and unique God-given gifts.³ We believe that including specific references to particular personal characteristics does not foster Christian unity and equality, and is detrimental to that goal.

We believe that God’s commands to love our neighbour, and to practice patience and kindness towards all people, apply to all people at all times.⁴ From the standpoint of loving one’s neighbour, personal characteristics are irrelevant, and should therefore not be highlighted or otherwise emphasized.

We believe that all forms of bullying are morally wrong, regardless of the purported basis for that bullying or who is targeted by that bullying.⁵ We reject the notion that bullying is only ever caused by personal characteristics of either the bully or the victim. Rather, bullies often refer to personal characteristics as a pretext or excuse for their abusive and sinful behaviour.

We believe that bullying can only be effectively reduced and prevented by addressing the root causes of bullying, such as pride, hatred, fear and unkindness. All individuals should be treated with love, kindness, and compassion, regardless of their personal characteristics.⁶

We believe that adopting the Biblical standard of love and kindness, and implementing the Biblical understanding of unity and equality, are the best ways to prevent and eliminate bullying. We are committed to providing a school environment that is safe, caring, orderly and respectful by implementing policies that are consistent with our Mission Statement and Statement of Faith.

¹ Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:14; Romans 12:10.

² Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11.

³ Ephesians 4:1-7; Philippians 2:1-4; I Corinthians 12:4-23.

⁴ Mark 12:31; Luke 10:25-37.

⁵ Leviticus 25:17; 2 Timothy 2:24.

⁶ Zechariah 7:9; Ephesians 4:32; Luke 10:27.