**Some brief responses to the Nashville Statement**

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Some evangelicals, mostly men, mostly white, mostly American, mostly of a certain age, got together and present a series of affirmations and denials about human sexuality, with a focus on condemnation of human sexuality outside traditional understandings of gender and marriage.

I’m a Christian, a man, also white, American, and of a certain age. I have many problems with the Nashville Statement, and here are some of them. They are not, alas, in any particular order. The writers of the statement have a hard time describing what they are up against. But I’ll use the terms “sexual minority” to refer to people who are lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and so on, and “sexual majority” to refer to gender-conforming heterosexuals.

*Failure of repentance and lament for the mistreatment of sexual minorities*

All blame and failure is assigned to those engaged in “homosexual immorality or transgenderism.” No calls to repentance are made to sexual majorities who have acted in often heinous ways to sexual minorities. No lament for the shame and harm caused is raised. Jesus calls on us to take out the plank in our own eyes.

*Failure of repentance for divorce and heterosexual sexual sin*

It is astounding to me that the Nashville Statement does not lament the state of marriage in evangelical circles, or call for repentance. Jesus never directly addresses same sex attraction or gender fluidity, but he very specifically calls out divorce and heterosexual sexual sins. Of course, divorce, adultery, immoderate lust, etc., are sin of the sexual majority affecting most of the signers directly in ways that might be tricky or challenging. No such nuance is afforded to sexual minorities.

*Failure to call for the building of communities of grace and support*

To “speak the truth in love” means, among other things, building communities of support for those to whom hard truths are told. It isn’t enough to tell someone to “forsake transgender self-conceptions” (whatever that means) without providing the kind of communities of grace where godly sexual expression can flourish. The statement rightly says the spirit of the age is all about “autonomous preferences,” and this is problematic for the Christian life. But to leave people to alone to make the right choice, autonomously, is pastoral failure. We all need help to become our best selves, including our best sexual selves; we all need to extend grace to one another as we strive to become our best selves, including our best sexual selves.

*Failure to acknowledge any good to come out of the challenge of sexual minorities to sexual majorities and the lived experience of sexual minorities*

Nowhere does the statement acknowledge *any* good that comes of the lived experience of sexual minorities, but only failure and sin. Yet I am often struck by the courage, comradery, deep spirituality, and creativity of my friends who are sexual minorities. And, as a person who (like most of the signers of the Nashville Statement) enjoys the perquisites and power of being white, male, heterosexual, powerful, and of some means, I am grateful for the challenges I have been presented with. After all, Jesus is the one who claims that the first shall be last, and, if there is any chance for rich men to enter the kingdom of heaven, it is by the grace of God showing us how to be last, as little children.

*On the very notion of “transgenderism”*

What do the writers understand by the term “transgenderism?” Do they mean it literally as an *ism*, a belief system like *Republicanism* or *Marxism* or *liberalism*? Do they mean in it in some technical, medical sense? Or are they using it to place anyone who goes against gender norms in a category of *those others*, convenient for condemnation? It is nowhere defined in the document, and so it is hard to know what they are condemning. If the document seeks to clarify, it fails fundamentally here. (Mark Yarhouse says this much better than I).

*Recursive sinfulness*

They deny that “homosexual immorality or transgenderism” a matter on which Christians can agree to disagree (in other words, a “disputable matter” in Paul’s terms, and as explored by people such as Ken Wilson), and affirm it is, in fact, sinful to do so. There is no space, for them, to disagree on what behaviors are immoral; any who disagree are in a state of sin. Among other things, this leads to the *reductio* that anyone not actively condemning (their understanding of) sexual immorality are in a state of sin.

*A call to repentance*

I know it is foolish to expect the signers of the Nashville Statement to repent of this noxious and anti-pastoral creed. But I do so, “speaking the truth in love.” I think there are beautiful ways those who hold a traditional Christian view of sexuality can help the church reclaim sexuality for Christian discipleship. But, this will not happen by beating down others, drawing harsh lines, or policing thought crime. It will be by living good lives, building supportive, flourishing communities, and helping ourselves and others redeem our sexual brokenness.