

PREAMBLE

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2
3 This Committee has been tasked by the 2019 General Assembly to “*study the topic of human*
4 *sexuality with particular attention to the issues of homosexuality, same-sex attraction,*
5 *and transgenderism and prepare a report*” (Overture 42 from Chicago Metro Presbytery,
6 as amended [M47GA, 104]). Our task was not to address the whole of human sexuality,
7 but limited to specific concerns raised in our denomination.

8
9 The Assembly’s adopted overture lists a number of issues that it wants the Report to address,
10 including: (1) the nature of sexual sin, temptation, and mortification, (2) the propriety (or not)
11 of a Christian referring to himself or herself as a “gay Christian,” (3) the propriety (or not) of
12 speaking of a homosexual “orientation,” and (4) recent practices of incorporating Christians
13 into Christian community who have been attracted to the same sex—all while giving special
14 attention to parts of the Scripture (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6) and the Standards (e.g., WLC 138 &
15 139) that are relevant to these topics.

16
17 Our list of assigned topics is long, and we have sought to address them most directly in this
18 Preamble and the immediately following Twelve Statements that we pray are of a length to
19 be most helpful for ease of distribution and common use in the church. This Preamble and
20 Twelve Statements are a summary of our discussions and convictions, and provide a
21 theological and pastoral framework for all the other parts of this Report. Our Committee
22 engaged in its most lengthy and precise discussions on these two documents, as we carefully
23 weighed the most critical issues to provide Biblical and Confessional arguments that we hope
24 will bring clarity and unity on these sensitive subjects for our churches, families, and friends.

25
26 Our Committee also gathered explanatory essays from our members that discuss issues
27 assigned to us by the Assembly. We have included these essays in subsequent sections of this
28 Report because, without endorsing how every thought is expressed, we all believe they will
29 be helpful in explaining key understandings behind our Twelve Statements. Finally, we
30 compiled a Select Annotated Bibliography that lists materials we believe will be helpful to the
31 various constituencies of our church who wish to become more informed about these issues.
32 In this bibliography, we have provided materials for a variety of audiences (pastors, scholars,
33 parents, children, etc.). Our goal is *not* to present an exhaustive list of all available materials
34 (that would unbalance the elements and efficacy of this Report), but to aid the church by
35 presenting some of the most useful materials for different constituencies and different
36 purposes. We cannot affirm our agreement with every word or thought in such a wide variety
37 of materials (indeed, sometimes we must make informed readers aware of resources they
38 should be prepared to counter or receive with caution). Our goal is for our annotations to guide
39 our readers with the Biblical discernment needed to hold to what is good and rightly sift what
40 is unbiblical or less certain.

41
42 Amidst all these statements and essays we discern two overarching concerns—concerns which
43 may be expressed as two important tasks for the Church in our time and two competing sets
44 of fears.

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1 The two tasks could be called the “pastoral task” and the “apologetic task.” On the one hand,
2 Overture 42 asks that the Report “*help pastors and sessions shepherd congregants who are*
3 *dealing with same-sex attraction*” (M47GA, 104). On the other hand it asks for “*suggested*
4 *ways to articulate and defend a Biblical understanding of homosexuality, same-sex attraction,*
5 *and transgenderism in the context of a culture that denies that understanding*” (M47GA, 105).
6

7 There is no reason why these two tasks need to be pitted against each other, although they
8 often seem to be. One reason they seem at loggerheads is that attached to each undertaking is
9 a set of fears.

10
11 One set of fears is that we will be harsh and unfeeling toward people who have been wounded
12 and deeply hurt—and often by the Church. A hard-sounding stance toward them at this
13 moment may only make it easier to discredit the Church in people’s minds. As a consequence,
14 many are afraid that the Church will speak in ways that only support the powerful cultural
15 narrative that orthodox Christian belief is toxic for hurting and struggling people.
16

17 Another set of fears, however, is that we will compromise at the very place where the world
18 is attacking the Church in our culture. We see many professing Christians and whole
19 denominations surrendering to the sexual revolution. We do not want to be one of them, nor
20 even now in subtle ways to sow the seeds for some future capitulation. As the natural family
21 is a fundamental unit of human society and is the normal means of care and nurture, all sins
22 which threaten, undermine, or marginalize it are both spiritually dangerous and detrimental to
23 human flourishing.
24

25 Part of the problem with regard to addressing these issues is that many of us are far more
26 gripped with one set of fears than the other. But because both of these tasks—the pastoral and
27 the apologetic—are required, we should give each of them strong attention.
28

29 Sinclair Ferguson, in his book *The Whole Christ*, reminds us that the two main ways that the
30 gospel is compromised are through legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other.
31 He then says that it is common to fall into “the mistake of prescribing a dose of antinomianism
32 to heal legalism, and vice-versa, rather than the gospel antidote of our grace-union with
33 Christ.”² He goes on to argue that the Church must present to the world the *whole* Christ,
34 “clothed in his gospel.”³ Jesus is both the Holy One and the merciful one. He cleanses the
35 temple yet eats with sinners. He gives Martha teaching on truth (John 11:25-26) yet he gives
36 Mary only tears (John 11:35) even though they had both said the same thing to him about their
37 grief (John 11:21, 32). He gives each of them what they most need at the moment. On the
38 cross Jesus fulfills both the unyielding demands of the Law yet also the most wonderful
39 purposes of God’s love.
40

41 And so we must present “the whole Christ” when we both pastor individuals and speak to the
42 world about sexuality and gender today. Jesus is full of grace *and* truth. In pastoral care we

² Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 86.

³ *Ibid.*, 46.

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1 must not apply the truth so harshly as to be callously alienating *or* so indirectly that the truth
2 is never clearly grasped.

3

4 The very form of the following Twelve Statements seeks to capture this “grace and truth”
5 wholeness as we address the issues. Each statement is dual, an associating of one truth with a
6 concomitant truth or teaching. The aim is not to achieve some kind of abstract intellectual
7 balance or “third way,” but rather to show the path of theologically rich pastoring. The paired
8 truths help the pastor avoid the opposite errors of either speaking the truth without love or
9 trying to love someone without speaking the truth.

10

11 The “grace and truth” path to which we point the church in this Report is not an easy one.
12 Speaking the truth yet doing it in love is nearly always harder than separating these needed
13 aspects of the whole gospel into two alternatives. Speaking with grace and truth, in the process
14 of our work together this year, we on your Ad-Interim Committee have been delighted to find
15 a greater spirit and degree of oneness amongst ourselves than we would have expected. Our
16 prayer is that our entire church may increasingly find that same “unity of the Spirit in the bond
17 of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

TWELVE STATEMENTS

STATEMENT 1: MARRIAGE

We affirm that marriage is to be between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6; *WCF* 24.1). Sexual intimacy is a gift from God to be cherished and is reserved for the marriage relationship between one man and one woman (Prov. 5:18-19). Marriage was instituted by God for the mutual help and blessing of husband and wife, for procreation and the raising together of godly children, and to prevent sexual immorality (Gen. 1:28; 2:18; Mal. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 7:2, 9; *WCF* 24.2). Marriage is also a God-ordained picture of the differentiated relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:6-10). All other forms of sexual intimacy, including all forms of lust and same-sex sexual activity of any kind, are sinful (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7; *WLC* 139).⁴

Nevertheless, we do not believe that sexual intimacy in marriage automatically eliminates unwanted sexual desires, nor that all sex within marriage is sinless (*WCF* 6.5). We all stand in need of God's grace for sexual sin and temptation, whether married or not. Moreover, sexual immorality is not an unpardonable sin. There is no sin so small it does not deserve damnation, and no sin so big it cannot be forgiven (*WCF* 15.4). There is hope and forgiveness for all who repent of their sin and put their trust in Christ (Matt. 11:28-30; John 6:35, 37; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31).

STATEMENT 2: IMAGE OF GOD

We affirm that God created human beings in his image as male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). Likewise, we recognize the goodness of the human body (Gen. 1:31; John 1:14) and the call to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:12-20). As a God of order and design, God opposes the confusion of man as woman and woman as man (1 Cor. 11:14-15). While situations involving such confusion can be heartbreaking and complex, men and women should be helped to live in accordance with their biological sex.

Nevertheless, we ought to minister compassionately to those who are sincerely confused and disturbed by their internal sense of gender identity (Gal. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). We recognize

⁴ Paul coined the term *arsenokoitai* (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10) from the use of two related terms in the Septuagint version of Leviticus 18 and 20. The basic meaning is “man-bedders” or men who have sex with other men. The word *malakoi* can mean “soft” as in soft clothing (Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25), or when used pejoratively of men it can mean “effeminate.” In the ancient Roman world, “The ‘soft’ man lack[ed] masculine posture, courage, authority, and self-restraint; he is like a woman.” Fredrik Ivarrson, “Vice Lists and Deviant Masculinity,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, eds. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 180. Sexual passivity or penetrability is not the definition of *malakos*, but it is one possible connotation. Ivarrson, “Vice Lists,” 180-81. The combination of *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi*, uniquely used in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 6:9, likely refers most directly—as per the ESV footnote—to the active and passive partners in consensual homosexual activity. For more extended discussion, see Chapter 5 in Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

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1 that the effects of the Fall extend to the corruption of our whole nature (*WSC* 18), which may
2 include how we think of our own gender and sexuality. Moreover, some persons, in rare
3 instances, may possess an objective medical condition in which their anatomical development
4 may be ambiguous or does not match their genetic chromosomal sex. Such persons are also
5 made in the image of God and should live out their biological sex, insofar as it can be known.
6

7 **STATEMENT 3: ORIGINAL SIN**

8
9 We affirm that from the sin of our first parents we have received an inherited guilt and an
10 inherited depravity (*Rom.* 5:12-19; *Eph.* 2:1-3). From this original corruption—which is itself
11 sinful and for which we are culpable—proceed all actual transgressions. All the outworkings
12 of our corrupted nature (a corruption which remains, in part, even after regeneration) are truly
13 and properly called sin (*WCF* 6.1-5).⁵ Every sin, original and actual, deserves death and
14 renders us liable to the wrath of God (*Rom.* 3:23; *James* 2:10; *WCF* 6.6).⁶ We must repent of
15 our sin in general and our particular sins, particularly (*WCF* 15.5). That is, we ought to grieve
16 for our sin, hate our sin, turn from our sin unto God, and endeavor to walk with God in
17 obedience to his commandments (*WCF* 15.2).⁷
18

19 Nevertheless, God does not wish for believers to live in perpetual misery for their sins, each
20 of which are pardoned and mortified in Christ (*WCF* 6.5). By the Spirit of Christ, we are able
21 to make spiritual progress and to do good works, not perfectly, but truly (*WCF* 16.3).⁸ Even
22 our imperfect works are made acceptable through Christ, and God is pleased to accept and
23 reward them as pleasing in his sight (*WCF* 16.6).

⁵ A.A. Hodge comments on *WCF* 6.5 that “innate moral corruption remains in the regenerate as long as they live” and that “all the feelings and actions” prompted by this remaining corruption “are truly of the nature of sin.” A.A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), 115.

⁶ In theological language, actual sin is distinguished from the original sin we inherited from Adam. “Actual” should be understood in a comprehensive sense of the word “act.” The term “does not merely denote those external actions which are accomplished by means of the body, but all those conscious thoughts and volitions which spring from original sin.” Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 251.

⁷ Calvin defines repentance as “the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.3.5 [cited by Book, Chapter, and Section].

⁸ Francis Turretin writes: “We must distinguish between truly good and perfectly good. We have proved before that the latter cannot be ascribed to the works of the saints on account of the imperfection of sanctification and the remains of sin. But the former is rightly predicated of them because although they are not as yet perfectly renewed, still they are truly and unfeignedly renewed.” Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997), 17.4.9.

1 **STATEMENT 4: DESIRE**

2
3 We affirm not only that our inclination toward sin is a result of the Fall, but that our fallen
4 desires are in themselves sinful (Rom 6:11-12; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:11).⁹ The desire for an illicit
5 end—whether in sexual desire for a person of the same sex or in sexual desire disconnected
6 from the context of Biblical marriage—is itself an illicit desire. Therefore, the experience of
7 same-sex attraction is not morally neutral; the attraction is an expression of original or
8 indwelling sin that must be repented of and put to death (Rom. 8:13).

9
10 Nevertheless, we must celebrate that, despite the continuing presence of sinful desires (and
11 even, at times, egregious sinful behavior), repentant, justified, and adopted believers are free
12 from condemnation through the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21) and
13 are able to please God by walking in the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-6).

14
15 **STATEMENT 5: CONCUPISCENCE**

16
17 We affirm that impure thoughts and desires arising in us prior to and apart from a conscious
18 act of the will are still sin.¹⁰ We reject the Roman Catholic understanding of concupiscence
19 whereby disordered desires that afflict us due to the Fall do not become sin without a
20 consenting act of the will.¹¹ These desires within us are not mere weaknesses or inclinations
21 to sin but are themselves idolatrous and sinful.¹²

⁹ James 1:14-15 should not be misunderstood as suggesting that fallen desire is something other than sin. Calvin explains: “It seems, however, improper, and not according to the usage of Scripture, to restrict the word sin to outward works, as though indeed lust itself were not a sin, and as though corrupt desires, remaining closed up within and suppressed, were not so many sins. But as the use of a word is various, there is nothing unreasonable if it be taken here, as in many other places, for actual sin. And the Papists ignorantly lay hold on this passage, and seek to prove from it that vicious, yea, filthy, wicked, and the most abominable lusts are not sins, provided there is no assent; for James does not shew when sin begins to be born, so as to be sin, and so accounted by God, but when it breaks forth.” John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 290.

¹⁰ After describing the Roman Catholic doctrine of concupiscence (i.e. that “the guilt and pollution of original sin was totally removed by baptism” and that concupiscence “does not injure those who do not consent to it”), Herman Bavinck argues: “The Reformation spoke out against that position, asserting that also the impure thoughts and desires that arose in us prior to and apart from our will are sin.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 3:143.

¹¹ “Yet certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls *concupiscence*, or metaphorically, ‘the tinder for sin’ (*fomes peccati*); since concupiscence ‘is left for us to wrestle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1264; see also 1426). Concupiscence is later defined as “the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason...Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man’s moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2515).

¹² Calvin articulates the Reformed position well: “But between Augustine and us we can see that there is this difference of opinion: while he concedes that believers, as long as they dwell in mortal bodies, are so bound by inordinate desires (*concupiscentiis*) that they are unable not to desire inordinately, yet he dare not call this disease ‘sin.’ Content to designate it with the term ‘weakness,’ he teaches that it becomes sin only when either act or consent follows the conceiving or apprehension of it, that is, when the will yields to the first strong inclination. We, on the other hand, deem it sin when a man is tickled by any desire at all against the law of God. Indeed, we

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1 Nevertheless, we recognize that many persons who experience same-sex attraction describe
2 their desires as arising in them unbidden and unwanted. We also recognize that the presence
3 of same-sex attraction is often owing to many factors, which always include our own sin
4 nature and may include being sinned against in the past. As with any sinful pattern or
5 propensity—which may include disordered desires, extramarital lust, pornographic
6 addictions, and all abusive sexual behavior—the actions of others, though never finally
7 determinative, can be significant and influential. This should move us to compassion and
8 understanding. Moreover, it is true for all of us that sin can be both unchosen bondage and
9 idolatrous rebellion at the same time. We all experience sin, at times, as a kind of voluntary
10 servitude (Rom. 7:13-20).¹³

11 12 **STATEMENT 6: TEMPTATION**

13
14 We affirm that Scripture speaks of temptation in different ways. There are some temptations
15 God gives us in the form of morally neutral trials, and other temptations God never gives us
16 because they arise from within as morally illicit desires (James 1:2, 13-14).¹⁴ When
17 temptations come from without, the temptation itself is not sin, unless we enter into the
18 temptation. But when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called
19 sin.¹⁵

20
21 Nevertheless, there is an important degree of moral difference between temptation to sin and
22 giving in to sin, even when the temptation is itself an expressing of indwelling sin.¹⁶ While

label ‘sin’ that very depravity which begets in us desires of this sort.” Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.10. Likewise, Bavinck argues that sin is found not in the excess of passions, but “in the manner [and] direction of those passions.” Later he writes, “This means, on the one hand, that the objects/images that spirit and body deposit in the soul as the seat of the feelings are impure, sinful, and corrupt; and, on the other hand, that the feelings themselves are corrupt, reflect impurity, are blurred and muddled.” Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: 2019), 90-91.

¹³ “‘In some base and strange way,’” Calvin writes, quoting Bernard of Clairvaux, “‘the will itself, changed for the worse by sin, makes a necessity for itself. Hence, neither does necessity, although it is of the will, avail to excuse the will, nor does the will, although it is led astray, avail to exclude necessity. For this necessity is as it were voluntary.’” Afterward he says that we are oppressed by no other yoke than that of a kind of voluntary servitude.” Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.5.

¹⁴ The word for “tempts” (*peirazei*) and “tempted” (*peirazetai*) in verses 13 and 14 is the same word (in noun form) translated as “trials” (*peirasmois*) in verse 2.

¹⁵ John Owen explains: “Now, what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to man’s consideration which, if he close, it is evil, it is sin unto him. This is sin’s trade: *epithumei*—‘it lusts.’ It is raising up in the heart, and proposing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it will carry them on, though it does not wholly prevail. Now, when such a temptation comes from without, it is unto the soul an indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unless it be consented unto; but the very proposal from within, it being the soul’s own act, it is sin.” “Indwelling Sin,” in John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 276.

¹⁶ According to Owen, James 1:14-15 describes a five-step process of sin: (1) the mind being drawn away, (2) the affections being entangled, (3) the will consenting to actual sin, (4) the conversation wherein sin is brought forth into view, and (5) the stubborn course that finishes sin and ends in death (297-98). Each step of the process is worse than the next. We are to be “watchful against all enticements unto the conception of sin,” but in particular we must carefully “attend unto all particular actions” agreeable to God’s will (299). Speaking more broadly, the *Larger Catechism* teaches that while every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God (WLC 152), some sins are

1 our goal is the weakening and lessening of internal temptations to sin, Christians should feel
2 their greatest responsibility not for the fact that such temptations occur but for thoroughly and
3 immediately fleeing and resisting the temptations when they arise. We can avoid “entering
4 into” temptation by refusing to internally ponder and entertain the proposal and desire to actual
5 sin. Without some distinction between (1) the illicit temptations that arise in us due to original
6 sin and (2) the willful giving over to actual sin, Christians will be too discouraged to “make
7 every effort” at growth in godliness and will feel like failures in their necessary efforts to be
8 holy as God is holy (2 Peter 1:5-7; 1 Peter 1:14-16). God is pleased with our sincere obedience,
9 even though it may be accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections (*WCF* 16.6).

11 **STATEMENT 7: SANCTIFICATION**

13 We affirm that Christians should flee immoral behavior and not yield to temptation. By the
14 power of the Holy Spirit working through the ordinary means of grace, Christians should seek
15 to wither, weaken, and put to death the underlying idolatries and sinful desires that lead to
16 sinful behavior. The goal is not just consistent fleeing from, and regular resistance to,
17 temptation, but the diminishment and even the end of the occurrences of sinful desires through
18 the reordering of the loves of one’s heart toward Christ. Through the virtue of Christ’s death
19 and resurrection, we can make substantial progress in the practice of true holiness, without
20 which no man shall see the Lord (Rom. 6:14-19; Heb. 12:14; 1 John 4:4; *WCF* 13.1).

22 Nevertheless, this process of sanctification—even when the Christian is diligent and fervent
23 in the application of the means of grace—will always be accompanied by many weaknesses
24 and imperfections (*WCF* 16.5, 6), with the Spirit and the flesh warring against one another
25 until final glorification (*WCF* 13.2). The believer who struggles with same-sex attraction
26 should expect to see the regenerate nature increasingly overcome the remaining corruption of
27 the flesh, but this progress will often be slow and uneven. Moreover, the process of
28 mortification and vivification involves the whole person, not simply unwanted sexual desires.
29 The aim of sanctification in one’s sexual life cannot be reduced to attraction to persons of the
30 opposite sex (though some persons may experience movement in this direction), but rather
31 involves growing in grace and perfecting holiness in the fear of God (*WCF* 13.3).

33 **STATEMENT 8: IMPECCABILITY**

35 We affirm the impeccability of Christ. The incarnate Son of God neither sinned (in thought,
36 word, deed, or desire) nor had the possibility of sinning.¹⁷ Christ experienced temptation
37 passively, in the form of trials and the devil’s entreaties, not actively, in the form of disordered
38 desires. Christ had only the suffering part of temptation, where we also have the sinning part.¹⁸

more heinous than others, depending on the persons offending, the parties offended, the nature of the offense,
and the circumstances of the offense (*WLC* 151).

¹⁷ “We ascribe to Christ not only natural, but also moral, integrity or moral perfection, that is sinlessness. This means not merely that Christ could avoid sinning (*potuit non peccare*), and did actually avoid it, but also that it was impossible for Him to sin (*non potuit peccare*) because of the essential bond between the human and divine natures” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 318).

¹⁸ This phrasing comes from Owen, who goes on to say, “So that though in one effect of temptations, namely trials and disquietness, we are made like to Christ, and so are to rejoice as far as by any means that is produced;

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1 Christ had no inward disposition or inclination unto the least evil, being perfect in all graces
2 and all their operations at all times.¹⁹

3
4 Nevertheless, Christ endured, from without, real soul-wrenching temptations which qualified
5 him to be our sympathetic high priest (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Christ assumed a human nature that
6 was susceptible to suffering and death.²⁰ He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
7 (Isa. 53:3).

8 9 **STATEMENT 9: IDENTITY**

10
11 We affirm that the believer's most important identity is found in Christ (Rom. 8:38-39;
12 Eph. 1:4, 7). Christians ought to understand themselves, define themselves, and describe
13 themselves in light of their union with Christ and their identity as regenerate, justified, holy
14 children of God (Rom. 6:5-11; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Eph. 2:1-10). To juxtapose identities rooted in
15 sinful desires alongside the term "Christian" is inconsistent with Biblical language and
16 undermines the spiritual reality that we are new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

17
18 Nevertheless, being honest about our sin struggles is important. While Christians should not
19 identify with their sin so as to embrace it or seek to base their identity on it, Christians ought
20 to acknowledge their sin in an effort to overcome it. There is a difference between speaking
21 about a phenomenological facet of a person's sin-stained reality and employing the language
22 of sinful desires as a personal identity marker. That is, we name our sins, but are not named
23 by them. Moreover, we recognize that there are some secondary identities, when not rooted
24 in sinful desires or struggles against the flesh, that can be legitimately affirmed along with our
25 primary identity as Christians. For example, the distinctions between male and female, or
26 between various nationalities and people groups, are not eradicated in becoming Christians,
27 but serve to magnify the glory of God in his plan of salvation (Gen. 1:27; 1 Peter 3:7;
28 Rev. 5:9; 7:9-10).

yet by another we are made unlike to him—which is our being defiled and entangled: and are therefore to seek by all means to avoid them. We never come off like Christ. Who of us 'enter into temptation' and is not defiled?" "Of Temptation," in John Owen, *Overcoming Sin and Temptation*, eds. Kelly M. Kopic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006) 183.

¹⁹ This way of stating the matter comes from Owen: "[Christ] was also like unto us in temptations...But herein also some difference may be observed between him and us; for the most of our temptations arise from within us, from our own unbelief and lusts...But from these things he was absolutely free; for as he had no inward dispositions or inclination unto the least evil, being perfect in all graces and all their operations at all times, so when the prince of this world came unto him, he had no part in him,—nothing to close with his suggestions or to entertain his terrors." John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991), 3:468.

²⁰ Bavinck makes this point in arguing that although Christ's human nature was not fallen, he did assume a weak human nature that in some respects differed from Adam's before the Fall (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:311). The impeccability of Christ does not mitigate against genuine struggle in the life of Christ. "For although real temptation could not come to Jesus from within but only from without, he nevertheless possessed a human nature, which dreaded suffering and death. Thus, throughout his life, he was tempted in all sorts of ways—by Satan, his enemies, and even by his disciples (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1-13; Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:22; Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33). And in those temptations he was bound, fighting as he went, to remain faithful; the inability to sin (*non posse peccare*) was not a matter of coercion but ethical in nature and therefore had to be manifested in an ethical manner." *Ibid.*, 3:315.

1 **STATEMENT 10: LANGUAGE**

2
3 We affirm that those in our churches would be wise to avoid the term “gay Christian.”
4 Although the term “gay” may refer to more than being attracted to persons of the same sex,
5 the term does not communicate less than that. For many people in our culture, to self-identify
6 as “gay” suggests that one is engaged in homosexual practice. At the very least, the term
7 normally communicates the presence and approval of same-sex sexual attraction as morally
8 neutral or morally praiseworthy. Even if “gay,” for some Christians, simply means “same-sex
9 attraction,” it is still inappropriate to juxtapose this sinful desire, or any other sinful desire, as
10 an identity marker alongside our identity as new creations in Christ.

11
12 Nevertheless, we recognize that some Christians may use the term “gay” in an effort to be
13 more readily understood by non-Christians. The word “gay” is common in our culture, and
14 we do not think it wise for churches to police every use of the term. Our burden is that we do
15 not justify our sin struggles by affixing them to our identity as Christians. Churches should be
16 gentle, patient, and intentional with believers who call themselves “gay Christians,”
17 encouraging them, as part of the process of sanctification, to leave behind identification
18 language rooted in sinful desires, to live chaste lives, to refrain from entering into temptation,
19 and to mortify their sinful desires.

20
21 **STATEMENT 11: FRIENDSHIP**

22
23 We affirm that our contemporary ecclesiastical culture has an underdeveloped understanding
24 of friendship and often does not honor singleness as it should. The church must work to see
25 that all members, including believers who struggle with same-sex attraction, are valued
26 members of the body of Christ and engaged in meaningful relationships through the blessings
27 of the family of God. Likewise we affirm the value of Christians who share common struggles
28 gathering together for mutual accountability, exhortation, and encouragement.

29
30 Nevertheless, we do not support the formation of exclusive, contractual marriage-like
31 friendships, nor do we support same-sex romantic behavior or the assumption that certain
32 sensibilities and interests are necessarily aspects of a gay identity. We do not consider same-
33 sex attraction a gift in itself, nor do we think this sin struggle, or any sin struggle, should be
34 celebrated in the church.

35 **STATEMENT 12: REPENTANCE AND HOPE**

36
37 We affirm that the entire life of the believer is one of repentance.²¹ Where we have mistreated
38 those who struggle with same-sex attraction, or with any other sinful desires, we call ourselves
39 to repentance. Where we have nurtured or made peace with sinful thoughts, desires, words, or
40 deeds, we call ourselves to repentance. Where we have heaped upon others misplaced shame
41 or have not dealt well with necessary God-given shame, we call ourselves to repentance.

²¹ Martin Luther, “Ninety-five Theses,” in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 490.

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1 Nevertheless, as we call ourselves to the evangelical grace of repentance (*WCF* 15.1), we see
2 many reasons for rejoicing (Phil. 4:1). We give thanks for penitent believers who, though they
3 continue to struggle with same-sex attraction, are living lives of chastity and obedience. These
4 brothers and sisters can serve as courageous examples of faith and faithfulness, as they pursue
5 Christ with a long obedience in gospel dependence. We also give thanks for ministries and
6 churches within our denomination that minister to sexual strugglers (of all kinds) with Biblical
7 truth and grace. Most importantly, we give thanks for the gospel that can save and transform
8 the worst of sinners—older brothers and younger brothers, tax collectors and Pharisees,
9 insiders and outsiders. We rejoice in ten thousand spiritual blessings that are ours when we
10 turn from sin by the power of the Spirit, trust in the promises of God, and rest upon Christ
11 alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life (*WCF* 14.2).