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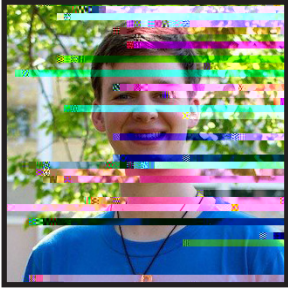
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order to promote human flourishing.

moral and economic principles.

Mark 8:36



So... What is Quaestus?

A Letter from the Editor

The following periodical includes transcriptions from the 2023 Liberty, Faith, and Economics (LFE) Summit at Concordia Wisconsin. This event is run by the Concordia Free Enterprise Center in association with the Acton Institute, an American think tank which focuses on religion and liberty. The summit

Understanding the Struggle Against Pornography

Written by: Eleanor Mroczenski, Senior Editor



In a free market, agents can advertise, sell products, and support charitable causes as they desire, within legal limits. Presently, the advertisements, products, and donations of eq o rcpkgu"tg ħgev"vjg"i tq ykp i "uj khv"kp"C o gtkecp" culture and society away from a Christian worldview. A primary example of this is the pornography industry, which 70% of 18- to 30-year-old US citizen admit to consuming at least once a month (Dwulit & Rzymiski, 2019). Christians consider the usage of pornography a sin, as the sixth commandment condemns adultery, which includes pornography as “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27). Nevertheless, pornography remains highly prevalent, even when coupled with natural consequences. Pornography is shown to Łv"vjg"htc o gy qtm"qh"cf fkevkqp"kp"pgwtqdkqñq i kecn" studies, and it is found to effect relationships and wellbeing. Married Americans who watch pornography – no matter the frequency – are twice as likely to experience divorce (Perry, 2018). One study found that those who view pornography more frequently are 17% more likely to report emotional abuse, and this same study predicted that pornography usage also corresponds to higher levels low-self-esteem and depression (Spadine et al., 2022). Thus, by reason from the natural consequences and by faith and adherence to the commands of the law, the Christian worldview opposes pornography and can support this opposition through extrabiblical evidence and logic. The moral and social implications of the pornography pandemic transcend religious beliefs. However, estimated to make \$10 billion to \$14 billion annual revenue in the United

States as of 2001, the pornography industry is a stubborn reality of the American free market landscape (Rich, 2001). Therefore, Christians must go beyond passively holding an ethical or philosophical stance on pornography to respond to this crisis on economic, political, and spiritual levels with boycotts, legislative support, and the gospel.

As an agent within the free market, economic measures like boycotts can allow Christians to oppose the pornography industry through individual choices. While a Christian paradigm opposes the usage of pornography, a study of American evangelicals revealed an increase in reported pornography viewership “at rates identical to other Americans” (Perry & Cyrus, 2018). Therefore, as 64% of Americans are Christian as of 2020, the elimination of pornography from Christians lives would uk i pkŁecpwm{ "fgvtcev"htq o "vjg"eqpuw o gt"dcug" and impact revenue (Pew Research Center, 2022). However, one could question whether that change would be enough to affect this mammoth industry, especially when Christians are not the target consumers. Yet if done with o gfk"eqxgtc i g"vct i gygf"vq yctfu"qpg"jki j /rtqŁng" company, boycotts can cause drops in stock prices that further incentivize companies to change (King, 2017). Quantitative historical research suggests that only 3.5% of a population needs to participate in active and sustained protests and boycotts for change to occur (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011). Thus, if done with high publicity and open support, boycotts could be effective methods to at least raise awareness of the anti-pornography movement and at best implement substantive change. While Christians may ideally

desire the elimination of the pornography industry altogether, the most attainable measures to curb the problem involve limitations and changes to implement content and age restrictions. Thus, public boycotts and poor press can achieve revenue and public relations impacts large enough to affect change in the pornography industry, as well as other industries contrary to Christian worldviews.

Through vocal economic resistance, how does one articulate the problem to a broad audience in a non-religious context, Christians can be advocated? The arguments for further legislation about pornography, whether prohibited or regulated, may be colored by religious perspectives, but they should be presented as an argument against vices for public safety and wellbeing. Establishing a line of reasoning that appeals to the data and to American morals will persuade both those inside and outside of Christianity of the need for change, providing a broader base of support. Although the Bible explicitly condemns the adultery and lust that is pornography, even those unfamiliar with the law have “requirements of the law written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness” (Romans 2:15). Thus, one can recognize the dangers of pornography and the need for further legislation, whether they are Christian or not. Therefore, Christians must reveal the dangers of pornography to constituents and political leaders, trusting that their reason and conscious will recognize the truth of the Word, even if it is not directly presented.

One can clearly establish that pornography contains and causes issues, yet there are matters with the First Amendment and censorship to be reckoned with. Under the First Amendment, obscenity is not protected. Obscenity generally pictures,” but determining whether something is obscene is not so easy (Esmaili (Ed.), 2017).

Currently, the Miller test, established by Miller v. California, is the current test for obscenity. It evaluates whether the work appeals to “prurient interest” when “contemporary community standards” are applied; “whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct in a lascivious manner, or who depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically to the stimulation of sexual desire” (Esmaili (Ed.), 2017). When applied to pornography, it does not condemn the industry as child pornography nor pornography deemed obscene, which does not directly include violence (Hudson, 2009). Thus, Christians can support legislation that seeks to further reign in what is considered obscene in the context of pornography given its known consequences. Opponents argue that the majority of pornography leads to censorship of ideas, which are not in and of themselves illegal, even if they are regarding topics that are “immoral, sinful, or even illegal” (Arthur, 2019). While censorship is a risk, one must recognize that these ideas model a reality. Nonetheless, the ability to regulate content and distribution can become quickly muddled, and a political approach that advocates regulations regarding age restrictions is more feasible and effective.

Presently, some of these age regulations are coming into effect in states like Texas, Utah, and Louisiana, among others. Louisiana House Bill no. 142 was passed in 2022, and it holds internet pornography companies liable if they “fail to verify the age of individuals attempting to access the material” with some form of government ID place, “according to Ethical Capital Partners, the private equity company that owns Pornhub, 2 percent” (Novicoff, 2023). In other states with such laws, PornHub stopped operations altogether (Novicoff, 2023). While these matters do not prohibit pornography, they reduce availability to

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/obscenity#:~:text=Obscenity%20is%20a%20category%20of,or%20disgusting%20words%20or%20pictures.>

modeling-the-future-of-religion-in-
america/

Rich, F. (2001, May 20). Naked Capitalists. New
York Times Magazine.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/magazine/
naked-capitalists.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/magazine/naked-capitalists.html)

overtake many technologically oriented tasks.⁵
This automation cannot easily be halted either. As
one conservative commentator explains, “Even
if many of the tech executives themselves have
valid concerns about their long term consequenc-

ng (en-US)/M

two: an imposition of the ethical that is placed after the laws of the economy take place. This means that if altercations are going to be made to the economy, they must be done by those inside the capitalist structure, not by those attempting to change it from the outside.

Capitalism as a structure of society is the key to the debate. A free market economy has proven to materially increase production and wealth far more than any other economic system, but beyond that, it is fundamentally separate from all other schools of economic thought.

Socialism, communism, mercantilism and the like all are reactionary theories. They recognize a problem within a society and aim to correct it through interference with the economy. Without government regulation, the economy is beholden to certain laws, an invisible hand which guides it to natural ends. These laws wait for no man, and a

to run free. The other forms of economic structure

people who desire to impose their set of ethics upon the natural laws of the economy in order to warp it to their desired outcome. Capitalism is set apart by the very fact that any ethical regulation must be placed after the fact. Another prominent political

distance between the ideological mask and the

This cynicism is not a direct position of immorality, it is more like morality itself put in the service of immorality...the cynical reaction consists in saying that legal enrichment is a lot more effective and, moreover, protected by law.

model, the cynic acknowledges the charade of a certain system, but uses legal regulations to realizes the war between morality and immorality occurring in the background. Luther also advocated for government intervention when necessary. "Luther called on the people of his day to nip the monopolistic spirit in the bud – and if an individual propensity to sin in this regard Luther called on the government to check the sin via regulation and law."³

There is a key difference between the way

a feature which is exclusive to reactionary the-

to critique capitalism with his ideology, his distinction in actuality serves to prove why capitalism functions properly: precisely because it is not beholden to his cynicism. His cynicism only happens when there is a direct imposition on the economic system, which does not occur in the purest form of a free market. Likewise Luther only takes issue system itself. Every position that Luther has on the deeper, root, problem that absolves capitalism by leaving it alone as an economic structure.

While a proper institution of an ethical structure is required for a return to traditional morality, it must be placed correctly. Tucker is

2 Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (Verso, NY: 1989). 26.

3 Moble, Van. "Economic Systems, Vocation, and Human Flourishing from a Lutheran Perspective", June 2021.

in spirituality and some adverse effects of capitalism contribute to the real cause of societal disorder, it is a marriage between the two which causes it. It is the fallen morals acting upon the economy, which result from a decline in traditional western values, that interfere with the natural order. The fault lies in those who warp the economy instead of changing their own ethical compass.

Are there cases where it is necessary to

Gregory A. Smith, Pew Research Center. About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously WpchlĒkcvgf0" Tgvtkgxgf"htq o" j vvruc11 y y0
pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-wpchĒkcvgf1"

The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 26. Retrieved from
https://youtu.be/G1UpFHsbOf0?si=Zgdc_kX1HHuEA4_A

QGEF<"CtvkĒkcn"Kpvgnki gpeg"cpf"Go rñq{ o gpv0"
Retrieved from
<https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/reports-and-data/AI-Employment-brief-2021.pdf>

1791. The New Divide. Retrieved from
https://youtu.be/3JIWwDW_OzA?si=Rv9sueeytA38-jrY

associated with certain sex traits,” (NIH, n.d.).

broadly called internal experiences.

3. Each individual has total authority over their own gender selection and gender identity. This is because gender selection is based on internal experiences, and the only person who can discern these is the individual feeling them. Whatever a person desires or believes themselves to be, that is what they are licensed to be.

60" Y jgp"dkqni { "ku"cnvgtgf"vq"chŁt o "i gpfgt."kv" o gcpu" i gpfgt"chŁt o cvkqp"uwt i gkgu"chŁt o "kpvgtpcn" jw o cp"gz rgtkgpegu"cpf"fkuchŁt o "dkqni kecn"ugz0" Because gender is based on personal attitudes, the vgt o "ō i gpfgt"chŁt o kpi.ō" o gcpu"vj cv"vj g"urgekŁe" vjkpi "dgkpi"chŁt o gf"ku" c" rgtuqpou"cvkwvfg."ugnh/ impression, or desire for self-expression. Since biology is changed to match gender, biology is fkuchŁt o gf"cpf" i gpfgt"ku" i kxgp" rtkqtkv {0

The Modern Social account of gender fgŁpgu" i gpfgt"vqq"dtqcfn{."wpnkpmkp i "kv"htq o" biology. The result is that gender is essentially identical to your impression of your own identity or your own internal experience.

The Effects of the Modern Social Account on the Value of Gender

" Kh" i gpfgt"ku"pqv" fgŁpgf" d{ "dkqni kecn"ugz" then there can be incongruity between gender and biological sex, which is evidently occurring now. The solution, according to the Modern Social Account of gender, includes biological alterations vq"chŁt o " i gpfgt0"Vj g"tguwvn"ku"vj cv" fg o cpf" for biological solutions to gender incongruity arises in a nation. This demand is created by the contradictory Modern Social ideology which supports biological solutions to social gender problems.

This high demand is precisely the problem, because in a capitalist system supply rises to meet demand unless tempered by ideological constraints. When people demand something, like the capacity to transition gender or sex, and it is not prevented in a free market, other people capitalize on that demand. One of the only things that can prevent something from being bought and sold in a capitalist country is a prevailing ideology that it is too valuable to buy or sell. In

the United States, gender is now an exchangeable commodity. This reduces the value of gender because it indicates that gender has moved from the priceless category of American capitalism to the exchangeable aisle.

As a case study of the Modern Social Account, consider the recent boom in gender-chŁt o kpi"ectg"rtqxkfgf"d{ "Rncppgf"Rctgpvjqqf ō cp"qt i cpk|cvkqp"y jkej"gzrnkekn{ "fgŁpgu" i gpfgt" as a social construct that does not have a basis in biology. Yet, according to Planned Parenthood itself, "most of our health centers provide jqt o qpg"vj gter { "cpf"qv jgt" i gpfgt/chŁt o kpi" services¹ for transgender and nonbinary patients," (Planned Parenthood, 2024b). Numerically, vj cv" o gcpu" o quv"qh"Rncppgf"Rctgpvjqqfou"822" nqecvqpu"cpf"63"qh"kvu"6; "chŁnkcvgu"ctg"rtqxkfkpi" jqt o qpg"vj gter { "cpf" i gpfgt/chŁt o kpi"ectg"vq" rcvkppvu"*Rncppgf"Rctgpvjqqf."4245+0"Vj cvou"wr" nearly 2000% from the 32 Planned Parenthood egpvgtu"vj cv"qhhtgf" i gpfgt"chŁt o kpi"ectg"kp"4238" (Brown, 2016). As noted by their yearly reports, the quantity of visits Planned Parenthood saw for "other procedures," which includes "transgender services" rose from 15,902 in 2021, to 256,550 kp"42440"Vj cvou" c"3.822 ' "kpetgcug"kp"qpg" { gct" (Planned Parenthood, 2021; Planned Parenthood, 4244+0"C ickp."ceeqtfkpi"vq"Rncppgf"Rctgpvjqqfou" own data, between 2021 and 2022 in the state of Ohio alone there was "a 544% increase in gender-chŁt o kpi"ectg"xkukvu.ō"y jkej"Rncppgf"Rctgpvjqqf" describes as, "indicating high demand and need for this care among Ohioans," (Nieman, 2023).

Because it can be exchanged the value of gender in the United States, according to the Modern Social Account, is somewhere between \$121 and \$25,000. Planned Parenthood, for kpuvcpeg."pqvgu"vj cv"hqf" i gpfgt/chŁt o kpi"ectg"ōv jg" self-pay fee for a visit will be \$250 plus additional cost for labs. For a follow up visit, it will be \$200 plus additional cost for labs if needed," (Planned Parenthood, 2024c). It does not appear that

1 ese services include "Estrogen and anti-androgen hormone therapy, Testosterone hormone therapy, Puberty blockers, and Surgery referrals," (Planned Parenthood, 2024).

these costs include the costs for hormones. In a case study of a transgender population, the NIH found that “the annual cost of providing gender-chŁt o kpi "ectg" hqt" vjku" rqrwncvkqp" ycu"&3.998.ö" (Baker, 2022). According to the same study, the average out-of-pocket cost of testosterone and estrogen hormone therapy per person was “\$121 and \$153 per year; GnRH therapy cost an average of \$2,410 per person per year.” These are repeat costs, consistently paid over the course of years. According to Forbes, more advanced surgical operations can cost up to \$25,000 (Medine, 2022). These surgical costs often follow months to years of payments for hormones.

More questionable companies are quickly ctkukpi "cu" y gnn"vq" o gg"v"jg"urgekŁe" fg o cpfu"qh" transgender individuals. Some brief research will show companies like New Era Pharmacy, True U Clinic, and Plume which are all online providers of resources to aid transgender individuals as they cvvg o r"v"dkqnq i kecn" e jcp i gu"vq"chŁt o " i gpfgt" Plume, for instance, will provide customers with r tguetkrvkqpu" hqt" i gpfgt/chŁt o kpi " o gfkcevqpu." letters for name and gender marker change, and medical letters of support for surgery, all for \$99 a month, plus the cost of hormones (Plume, n.d.). For only \$99 a month, a vulnerable population can bypass the medical expertise of a doctor to receive irreversible hormonal and surgical interventions as quickly as possible. For only \$99 a month people who experience severe distress over identity can give up their medical advocacy. This is equivalent to a patient buying medical letters of support for an amputation before a doctor has determined that the amputation is needed, simply because the patient is experiencing pain in the limb. Attention

to receive letters of support for surgery. Capitalism o ggvu" fg o cpfu." cpf" vjg" xgt{ " fgŁpkvkqp"qh" i gpfgt" under the Modern Social Account has become c" rgtuqpøu" kpvgtpci" gz rgtkgpeg"qh" y cpvu" cpf" desires—demands—regarding who they want to be. Under such an account, incongruity between biological sex and gender leads to intense demand for biological solutions to social gender problems. In the United States, companies are allowed to supply these demands because the Modern Social Ceeqwpv" jcu" gpqw i j "kpŁwgpeg" vjcv" o cp{ " rgqrng" are open to and supportive of these biological solutions. As a result, transgender individuals are left highly vulnerable to an unrestrained capitalist machine. Plume gets money, and the buyer receives biological alterations more quickly simply because they demand them, whether or pq"kv"ku" o gfkccnn{ " dgpgŁekcn0" V jku"ku" gz rnkqvckqp." and the Modern Social Account views it as a good thing.

There are members of the trans community who agree with me on this. In the words of Miquel Missé, a Spanish sociologist and trans activist, “trans people became a succulent market niche. (They tell us that we have the wrong body and then we pay them: it has to be admitted that this is a brilliant business model),” (Misse, 2022). Miquel goes on,

öQwt" dqfkgu" ctg" Łpg" ô "vjg" r tqdng o "ku" j qy" certain parts of us are interpreted in our society, the meanings and connotations assigned to them. And due to this, unfortunately, many people might feel vjg" pggf" vq" cnvgt" vjg o ugnxgu í 0" Kvøu" hkmng" ygøtg" dgkpi "cuucwvngf" d{ "cnn" vjgug" kfgcu" and yet we exonerate the thieves, shouting: ‘No one has stolen my body, I abandoned it of my own free will because it was pgxgt" o kpg#ø" Dww" { gu."kv" ycu" { qwtu0" Kv" ycu" and is the only body you have,’” (Misse, 2022).

This is what an intellectually honest account of gender as social looks like. Miquel cti wgu" vjcv" { qwt" dkqnq i { "fqgu" pqv" kpŁwgpeg" { qwt" gender. The Modern Social Account, conversely, argues that gender is social and then advocates

value on gender than the Modern Social Account does. When examining this perspective, remember our two guiding questions: what is the account of gender given and what is the value that this account brings to gender?

Biological Sex in Genesis

The book of Genesis in the Bible speaks of the human biological male/female dichotomy as one of the most, and perhaps the most, important part of creation. Genesis chapter 1 gives an account of the creation of the universe, ending with the creation of man and woman and culminating with the powerful statement that, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good,” (Genesis 1:31). With this declaration of “very good,” God is saying creation is perfect. Now contrast this with chapter 2 of Genesis, which rewinds the narrative to give

made in different ways so that we can care for each other. In this way the Christian Relational Account of Gender both teaches us about ourselves using our very bodies and encourages us to value and cherish the differences between us. Thus, the Christian Relational perspective results in biological sex being viewed as a priceless thing, something to be accepted as a part of human identity, something to be learned from and not something to be changed.

The Christian Relational Account Unites Biology and Gender

The Christian Relational account holds that biological sex is the basis for gender because the biological sex one has determines many of the relationships one can have. Only a male human can be a father, only a female human can be a mother, and whether one experiences life as a father or mother drastically changes the experience of life one has. Whereas the Modern Social account bases gender on internal experience, the Christian Relational account sees experience as largely based on biological sex and gender. In this account, biology and behavior are united, but not the same, and human identity is more clearly outlined because the way biology plays into gender is clearly

Gender as Relational Clarifies Identity

Without it we would not even know who we are.

The Christian Relational Account Promotes Human Wellbeing

One of the primary concerns of the Modern Social Account of gender is behavior. The concern is that a person should be able to exhibit whatever behaviors they please, that they should not be constrained into behaving a certain way because their culture has an expectation for how their gender will behave. This is a fair critique. Different cultures do have different expectations in general for men and women which makes it seem that there is no universal, objective standard for how the genders should behave.

While the arbitrariness of many behaviors is important to keep in mind, the primary concern of the Christian Relational Account is whether humans are being cared for. According to the Christian Relational Account our behavior is meant to be oriented towards loving the people with whom we have biological relationships. If a person is a son, his responsibility is to care for his parents and vice versa. If a woman is a wife, she has a responsibility to care for her husband and vice versa. This is the essence of gender identity. The focus is not whether you are behaving in the way you would like to, but whether you are loving those around you.

The behaviors a person can exhibit are extensive and somewhat arbitrary. There is no universal law that men should wear pants and women should wear dresses. The focus should not be on what you are doing, but who you are trying to care for. The goal is to avoid becoming obsessed with what is happening inside of us and to focus on the needs of those around us. If there are gendered expectations in a society and a person is deviating from them because they are rejecting their gender identity and therefore

Many people are reluctant to accept an identity that they did not choose, especially when that identity directs the behaviors that person should take. Yet the result is an account of gender that involves caring for the people around us, attitude. This Christian Relational Account of gender naturally supports human wellbeing and encourages healthy social cultures. It is for this reason that the Christian Relational Account views gender as priceless. If gender becomes exchangeable, this social fabric breaks down most critical relationships in their lives.

The Christian Relational Account Values and Affirms Gender

The Christian Relational Account of gender views gender as something that should be valued. It is a gift, not a cage. It is a part of your being that teaches you how to know who you are, not something that is to be determined individually. Ultimately, gender is primarily oriented around the giving of ourselves to those around us based on our unique skills and gifts, valuing the relationships we have. This makes gender priceless, not only to each of us individually but also in our relationships with one another.

Whether you grow up as a son or a daughter, spend more time around males or females, all the experiences you have on account of your identity are caused in part by your biological sex. A Christian Relational approach to gender involves accepting the identity placed upon us and attempting to serve others as best we can. Gender is valued in this account because it views gender as an unchangeable aspect of identity, one that must not be exchanged for any price.

Christianity places such high value on gender that it is intentional, it is meant to reveal His works and majesty. You do not need to believe the Genesis account is true to understand these points, nor

do you even need to be a Christian to see the powerful emphasis that the Bible places on human sex distinctions. Biblically, one of the greatest aspects of all creation is the distinction between male and female in humans and the capacity of the two to work in concert. Our differences, indeed, the most drastic differences between us, make the foundation for the greatest gifts we can give to one another. The highest of these is the way our relationships show us God.

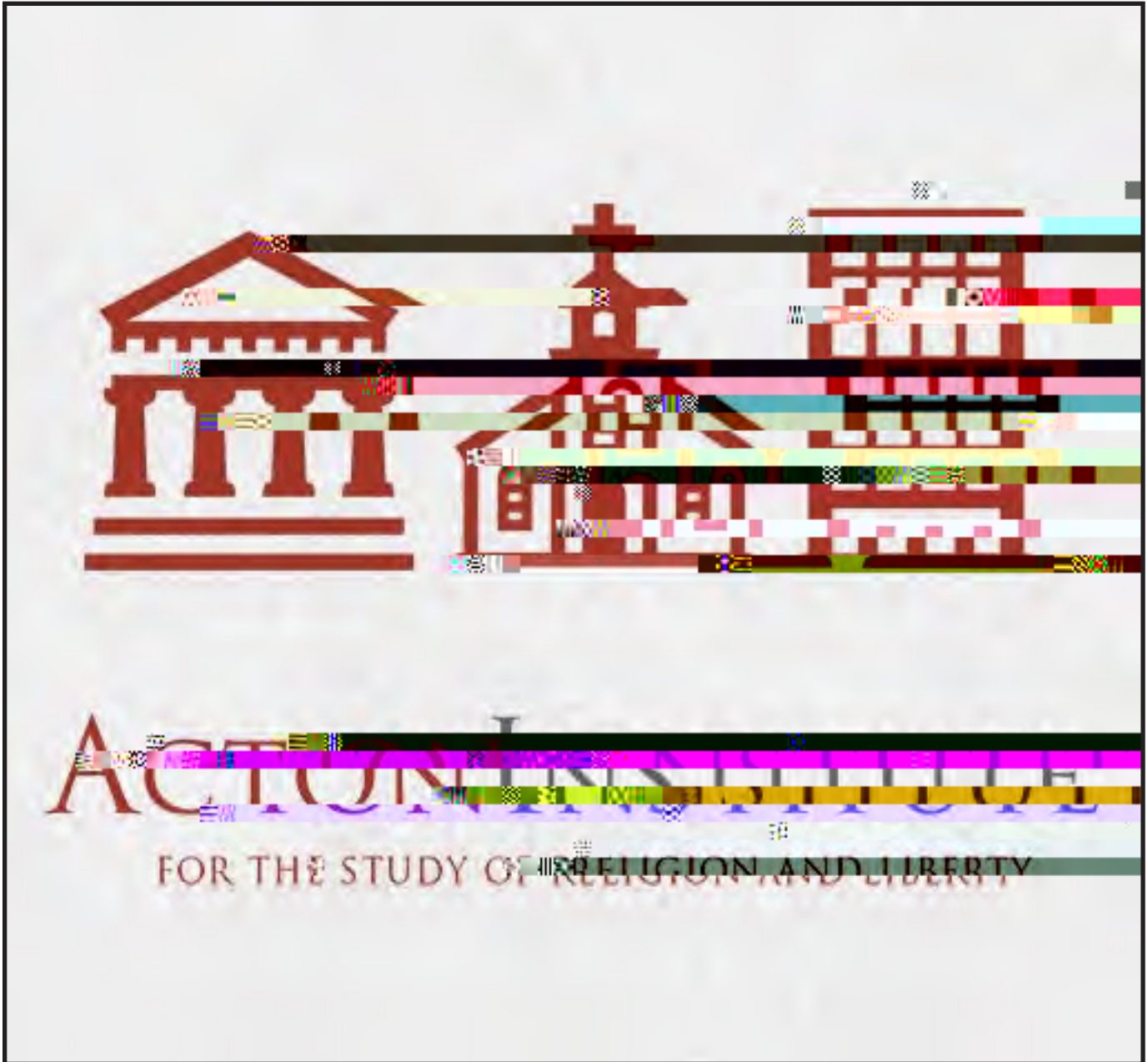
This account of gender is a high one indeed. In it, male and female, man and woman, are all irreducibly unique. Gender is indispensable. Sex is priceless, and there is no value high enough that could be assigned to it. To exchange it would be to give up an image of God and to forsake a responsibility to those around us. It is a required aspect of your identity, but it is a gift, not a cage. It is a part of your being that teaches you how to know who you are, not something that is to be determined individually. Ultimately, gender is primarily oriented around the giving of ourselves to those around us based on our unique skills and gifts, valuing the relationships we have. This makes gender priceless, not only to each of us individually but also in our relationships with one another.

Conclusion: Beautiful People

There seem to be two broad conversations over gender occurring in the United States, and the same thing when they use the word “gender.” The Modern Social approach views gender as unconstrained, as malleable and changeable. It roots gender in personal identity and has resulted in biological operations being viewed as commodities that claim to alter personal identity for a price. The Christian Relational approach views gender and biological sex in union, as gifts which are to be learned from and used to help other people. It roots gender in the relationships we have with people who love us, and according to the Christian perspective there is no price on this earth high enough that it could be given in exchange for gender.

identity priceless.

So, with all this being said, you decide.
Which of these two views of sex and gender
is more accurate? Y jkej "xkgy "xcnwg" igpfgt"



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