

# They/them

By Bill Kilpatrick

Imagine witnessing the following exchange: you see two people meet and one is a person of colour who has what appears to be an African accent and the other person picks up on this and asks where they are from. The person responds Ghana, then the other person says, 'I don't think so, I've heard many African accents and I'm pretty sure you're from Rwanda, plus you don't look like you're from Ghana. You're clearly from Rwanda. So, I'm going to refer to you as a Rwandan.' No one in their right mind would ever do this. No one would ever tell another person who they are after they have already identified themselves, but for some reason there are those among us who insist on telling people who identify as transsexual or don't identify with traditional he/him or she-her pronouns, who they are and how they should identify. After spending around six months on the One Million March for Children's Facebook page, a group dedicated to getting all school curriculum related to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community removed from public schools, it seems that many of those at the forefront of this fight tend to be religious fundamentalists, Christian, and Islamic primarily, who take the word of their holy books, that state God created man and woman, as literal, while ignoring inconvenient facts and truths from the world that stand in direct contrast to their beliefs. The primary argument at the bottom of this whole argument is that we, humans, are special because God created us differently, God created us with a free will to rule over the animals who do not have a free will. Christianity.com put it this way, 'Animals are dichotomous beings. This means that they do have bodies and particular kind of soul, which gives them consciousness, but they do not have free will. The knowledge of free will gives man the knowledge of what is good and what is evil. Animals, however, do not have this. Instead animals do actions based on their 'animal instinct' and the 'circle of life' where there is a predator and prey. Because of their lack of free will, God has entrusted humans to have dominion over animals?' But this argument poses some very interesting questions when it comes not only to homosexuality, but gender roles as well. How do beavers know how to build dams? God has programmed them to do it. If they don't have free will, something or someone must have programmed them to do it as there is no beaver school of engineering, to my knowledge, so something must have programmed their instincts, right? Thus, if the Bible says that homosexuality is wrong and that there are only two genders, one would expect this rule to be unanimous throughout nature, where animals only act on their instincts programmed by God, who condemns homosexuality and has defined only two genders. But this is not the case as an article in Nature.com points out, 'Same-sex sexual behaviour, that is, any attempted sexual activity between members of the same sex has been reported in over 1,500 animal species, including all main groups from invertebrates such as insects, spiders, echinoderms, and nematodes, to vertebrates such as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Some frogs and fish actually change their sex depending on environmental conditions. If God is against homosexuality, and only wanted two genders, clearly the design in the animal world proves that 'He' or 'She' or 'They', since I'm not sure how God has a gender, wasn't that opposed to these things. But what about humans? When we examine humans, how do these fundamentalists explain intersexuality, or people who are born with both sex organs? According to Medical Life Sciences News there are four variations to intersexuality, 46, XX hermaphroditism, 46, XY hermaphroditism, true gonadal hermaphroditism, and complex hermaphroditism, which does not make sense from a Biblical binary point of view. However, the fundamentalist group Focus on the Family, who would much rather focus on other people instead of their own families, argues, 'does this [intersexuality] mean that 'transgender' activists are correct when they argue that the traditional understanding of gender as 'binary' or two-fold, male and female is outdated and should be discarded in favour of the 'more enlightened' view that gender is 'fluid' and virtually unlimited in its possible variance? From a biblical perspective, the answer is 'no.' Despite the fact that a tiny fraction of the population faces life with an intersex condition, Scripture teaches that humans are made in God's image as male and female?' Again, if God is so concerned about upholding his/hers/thiers binary view of people, He/She/They sure has a funny way of showing it. This is what happens when a 'biblical view' comes up against actually viewing things in nature. Fundamentalists hold onto this binary view, despite new research and glaring facts to the contrary, like research that was cited by Robert Greene in his book *The Laws of Human Nature*, which states, 'When it comes to boys studies have shown that at an early age they are actually more emotionally reactive than girls, they have high degrees of empathy, and sensitivity.' This stands in direct contrast to the North American notion of men as tough, in control, domineering, and emotionless and reinforces the fact that gender roles are constructed and taught. For girls it's much the same, says Greene, 'Girls have an adventurous and exploratory spirit that's natural to them, they have powerful wills which they like to exert in transforming their environment.' Traits which are not traditionally associated with women in North American Judeo-Christian culture where women are to be meek, mild, and passive. However, as Greene further points out, 'each child may also naturally possess these opposite

gender traits in him or herself.? What changes then? It is society and what traits the parents value that will be reinforced and rewarded. Gender it would seem, and sex too, in some cases, is in fact fluid. This should not have to be pointed out in a society that has sufficient liberty and freedom, because in such a society, like the point I made in my opening paragraph, people are not told what they should be, they are accepted as they are. However, for many people, or all people for that matter, finding out who you are is a journey not a destination and can take entire lifetime to explore. In a diverse world, the only sin it would seem, is getting stuck in a binary fundamentalist view of life. And for the record, when you tell others who they are and who they should be, that's not freedom, that's tyranny.