

# SALZBURG DECLARATION

## CURRENT THREATS TO HUMAN CREATURELINESS AND THEIR OVERCOMING:

*Life According to the Creator's Will*



*A Theological Memorandum by the  
International Christian Network*



**IKBG/ICN**  
*International Christian  
Network*

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Most footnotes of the German Text have been omitted in the English translation.

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**INTRODUCTION:**



**Current threats to us as God’s creatures and the necessity of an ecumenical “ecology of man” [Nr. 1–5]**

What led to this declaration

1 Since the emergence of the global environmental movement in the 1970s, our time has been marked by a great sensitivity for the integrity of creation. The Christian churches have long recognized and supported this concern from a theological perspective. Pope Francis, June 2015, in his encyclical *LAUDATO SI’* affirmed the importance of environmental concerns in the light of the Bible and of the larger Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup> The Judaeo-Christian view of the world as God’s creation has always instilled a sense of deep appreciation and respect for creation as the work of divine love, and the responsibility to care for it, as advised by the Creator himself (Gen 1:18, 2:15). Pope Benedict XVI in his speech to the Bundestag, September 22, 2011, recognized the rise of the environmental movement. “Young people had come to realize that something is wrong in our relationship with nature, that matter is not just raw material for us to shape at will, but that the earth has a dignity of its own and that we must follow its directives. ... We must listen to the language of nature and we must answer accordingly.” The pope lamented in his speech a factor which, he said, was largely ignored: “there is also an ecology of man. Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he respects his nature, listens to it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself.”<sup>3</sup> Humans are creatures and have to observe the nature of being human. The **“ecology of man”** means that humans are to treat their own nature (and not only the nature that surrounds them) with care, respecting the order of creation and the commandments that God has given them to their own benefit.

<sup>1</sup> The term “man” is used in this document according to its primary meaning, as given by the Shorter Oxford Dictionary. In a generic sense without the article (as used here), it means “the human creature, regarded abstractedly; hence the human race, species, mankind.” Only in a secondary sense does it mean an adult, male person, and this is always clear from the context. Feminism distorts the English language by reducing the meaning of the term to the secondary sense exclusively - and then banning its use as patriarchal!

<sup>2</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20110922\\_reichstag-berlin.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html)

2 With this critical observation before the Bundestag Pope Benedict hit the nail on the head. The commendable sensitivity of contemporary society when confronted by the creation that surrounds us stands in stark contrast to the blindness with which **we fail to see the destructive ways in which human beings act towards themselves and their own specific nature as God's creatures.** The reason for this statement is precisely this fact. As Christians of different Churches we must note today that humanity as God's creation is threatened in unprecedented ways, even in times of (relative) peace. While the ecology of the environment has become well developed, the ecology of man has suffered from serious underdevelopment. The ecology of man has been replaced by irrational ideologies which threaten people, because they contradict the creaturely nature of being human. Thus a dangerous situation has arisen, which is reminiscent of what C. S. Lewis in 1943 in almost prophetic insight called "The Abolition of Man" by man himself.<sup>4</sup> **The purpose of this SALZBURG DECLARATION is to give an account, at least in outline, of that underdeveloped ecology of man and to explain the significance of life lived in accordance with the Creator's will for the protection of the human person and our very humanity.**

3 Any impartial and realistic observation of our contemporary situation will identify **two serious threats to humanity:**

1. For one thing, there is the threat of the **destruction of human existence**, even in relative peaceful times, through abortion and active euthanasia. Today many people die by human hands, especially at the beginning and the end of life (See below Nr. 13–15)
2. Secondly, the **creaturely basis and hence the nature of being human** is threatened by emancipating ideologies (feminism and gender theory, see Nr. 16–24). In concrete terms, what has come under threat are:
  - **Sexual difference of male and female** as the God-given and God-willed basis for marriage and the family, and thus also for the dignity of human beings as men and women and as fathers and mothers (Nr. 18–24)
  - the **order of creation regarding** marriage and family and the divinely given orientation of human sexuality towards procreation as indispensable conditions for any decent society and civilization (Nr. 25–28)

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on education with special reference to teaching English in the upper forms of schools* (Oxford: University Press, 1943)

4 An additional problem is how these threats undermine **the ecumenical efforts towards the desired unity of the Christian Church in truth and love.** The Protestant Churches, in particular, have reacted very differently to these threats. However, it is essential for the credibility of the Church that Christians, regardless of their confessional difference, speak with one voice on the "ecology of man" and with a voice that is also can be comprehended by non-believers as well. When it comes to the preservation of humanity, non-Christians are just as affected as Christians. We are motivated therefore to speak out in this declaration not only for doctrinal and ecumenical reasons, but also for reasons that reflect our concern for humanity as such.

5 We shall elaborate our concern for an "ecology of man" in **three parts:**

- Recalling the **biblical witness regarding creation**, which is the basis for an ecology of man in the Judeo-Christian tradition (**part I**)
- Describing the **current threats to the human person and our created nature with special regard to the ideology of gender** (**part II**)
- Demonstrating the **necessity of a renewed appreciation of the biblical witness regarding creation as the basis for an "ecology of man"** (**part III**)

## 1. THE BIBLICAL WITNESS REGARDING HUMANITY AS THE BASIS FOR AN "ECOLOGY OF MAN"

What we testify and confess to the praise of God [Nr. 6–12]

6 Since the basis for human existence as part of God's creation is threatened as never before, we see ourselves as Christians from different Churches called to recall the **Biblical witness to God as Creator of mankind.** Already on the first pages of the Bible the understanding of humanity as God's creation is developed. This understanding is therefore normative Christian doctrine for all denominations. In addition, this understanding of humanity strongly influenced the culture, the legal system, and the ethos of many nations well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also essential that this understanding of humanity be retained in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the sake of the humane character of our societies.



## A. Creation as the Gift of God's Love; Praise as man's response [Nr. 7–8]

7 In view of the present challenges to the Biblical picture of humanity, we see ourselves drawn **to praise God and offer our thankful confession**. The triune God has revealed himself in the Holy Scriptures and has likewise revealed his **redemptive love** through the incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Likewise his **love as Creator** is reflected in the goodness, beauty and glory of his creation and its structures and in his loving care for all people. As Christians we can grasp the creation only as a gift that comes from the open hand of the Father of all things.<sup>5</sup> This gift is so completely underserved. It is entrusted to us as an expression of God's free love. It calls us – even before all our ethical tasks – to praise God for the overwhelming wisdom and beauty of the creation (Pss. 104, 136, 146). This sense of wonder is also attested through scientific research in ever new variations. For us Christians, as Pope Francis has aptly said, "God's love is the foundation for the whole of creation." It is all the more deplorable when people today, because of the dark side that creation marked by the state of corruption shows, lose sight of this foundational fact and deny God his due praise. Each version of the "ecology of man" has but to begin with this sense of one's own creaturely nature which leads one to praise and thank God for his gifts (Rom. 1:26ff). The Church has expressed this doxological foundation for an ecology of man again and again in its prayer and hymns (e.g., *THE CANTICLE OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI*). Martin Luther in his *SMALL CATECHISM* has said it well: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures. He has given me and still preserve my body and soul; eyes, ears, and all my limbs and senses, my reason, and all my senses. In addition, He has given me clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children . . . and all my goods. He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger and guards me and preserves me from all evil. He does all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me. For all of this I ought to thank Him, praise Him, serve Him and obey Him."<sup>6</sup> When a person fails to give God the thanks and praise due to him, then the seed is sown for a defective evaluation of creation, which in return leads to a likely misuse or exploitation of creation.

<sup>5</sup> LAUDATO SI', 76 (see footnote 1 above).

<sup>6</sup> SMALL CATECHISM (The Creed: The First Article)

8 The foundation of a Christian "ecology of man" is the now often overlooked gift-character of all creaturely life. Before God commands us to do something, he gifts us with life and the capacity to work and be effective. Appreciation and thankfulness for the gifts of creation that God has entrusted to us human beings are the prerequisites for any "ecology of man". Since it is only then that the ethical tasks that arise from creation can be appropriately expounded so as to bring about an authentic conversion to God the Creator and the order of creation that he has created.

## B. The Biblical Witness to the Creation of Man [Nr. 9]

9 The Biblical revelation leaves no doubt in its first chapters (Gen. 1–3) that God created creation as a whole and human beings as his special "Others" (Gegenueber) in freedom and love. From this Biblical affirmation arise the **following ten fundamental statements** about human beings as creatures of God, which are now increasingly called into question or denied:

- 1) **Men and women** are created in the image of God (Gen1:26). They have received the vocation of reflecting God's being and God's eternal love, and to give it back to other people and to the non-human creation. From this particular position as God's personal Other (Gegenueber) arises the special dignity of humans as human over against the non-human creation. This dignity that humans receive as a gift from their Creator is unearned and cannot be taken away for them. It is the basic presupposition for every humane order of law and society.
- 2) Man is, according to the Biblical witness, **the image of God as Male and Female** (Gen 1:26f). It is noteworthy that the Biblical text reveals maleness and femaleness as distinctive, but equally authentic aspects of being made in God's image. This fact alone affirms the appropriate dignity of man and woman, which cannot be reversed or lost. Men and women, in spite of all human brokenness and sinfulness, are called to reflect - each in their own distinct way, and in the community of love they form - the archetypal selfless love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, especially where they have received this divine love through faith in Christ (Rom 5:5).

- 3) Due to their diversity in body and soul (which includes their biological ability to procreate) men and women are appointed in **marriage** to be a unique, complementary **community of unconditional love and faithfulness** (Gen.2:24). This community of love reflects God's eternal and unbreakable bond of love with his creation and, according to God's will, is a lifelong covenant (Mk. 10:9, Rom. 7:2, 1 Cor. 7:39). Marriage is for the benefit of man and woman and is established by God as an order of creation.
- 4) The marriage of man and woman involves **spirit, soul, and body in a comprehensive community** of unconditional love and faithfulness. It is, on the one hand, **a loving and complementary union** of spirit, soul, and body. Marriage also involves sexual reproduction (Gen. 1:28) through selfless and responsible acts of love. Marriage is an intimate (private) community of man and woman, which must not be understood as a form of "coupled egotism", since marriage is also a public and legal community, on which depend the future and wellbeing of **State and society**.
- 5) In marriage man and woman are empowered and called through sexual union to give life to **children** and thus provide for the future of family, nation, and all humanity (Gen 1,28). The gift of children establishes the special dignity of the man as a father and the woman as a mother.
- 6) The biological diversity of men and women not only enables the procreation of children, but also a holistic nurture and education of them by their fathers and mothers. They are therefore called upon to contribute their diversity as husband and wife creatively and constructively in the process of family nurture. **Fatherhood** and **motherhood** are not only biological prerequisites for the formation of children, but also an essential precondition for the education, identity-building, and socialization of adolescents.
- 7) The **family as a community of parents and their children** arising from marriage is to be seen from the perspective of theology as an order of creation also – but even from a purely empirical perspective the family is still the best way for providing security, well-being, and the happiness of the younger generation.
- 8) **Marriage and the family** promote over the years and decades an ongoing practice and training in social behavior such as respect, consideration, justice, and love, and therefore provide the best conditions for a flourishing of life together between men and women including the flourishing of life in **State and society**. It is therefore not by accident, that

the Biblical revelation affirms the foundational role of marriage and family in several of the **TEN COMMANDMENTS** (Commandments 4, 6, and 10).

- 9) It follows from these facts of creaturely life that marriage and the family are the **natural core community of the State and society**. This insight the Christian faith shares, regardless of dogmatic and other religious differences, with most non-Christian religions and cultures.
- 10) The flourishing coexistence of man and woman, parents and children in the family is not only important for the State and society, but also for the whole of **humanity** and its future. The family is an essential prerequisite for **fulfilling the divine mandate for cultivation and preserving the earth** from one generation to another according to God's commandment (Gen. 1:28) and for building a civilization based on justice and love and human dignity, which protects human dignity and the dignity of man and woman as husband and wife against all kinds of threats.

### C. The biblical witness about man as a normative and reasonable element of revealed truth [Nr. 10–12]

- 10 We are aware that the aspects that we described regarding the Biblical witness to creation have always been controversial within and outside the church, and have been, and are, threatened by human egotism. All too often God's good and creative will has been obscured even by Christians through failure or indeed has been trampled upon. Such failure is no reason for judgmental moralism, but an occasion for showing mercy and love (Luke 6:36). But every failure does not alter the fact that the will of God, especially in the Ten Commandments, builds and preserves human well-being and happiness through the millennia. This has also been confirmed globally in the life experiences of people from different cultures and in numerous empirical studies. It must also be said that no human failure can ever place in question the fundamental validity of God's revelation and commandments (which has, in fact, been sufficiently confirmed through experience and reason)



**11** We therefore see in **these foundational Biblical convictions mandatory truths** that are non-negotiable for the Church of Jesus Christ, because they are grounded in the Biblical self-revelation of the triune God. Also in human experience these have proven reasonable, useful, and sensible: God has revealed them to people in the Bible out of love, so that they can conduct themselves according to his creative will.

We thank God for the goodness, beauty, and glory of his creation and for the good order of creation which serve the common good of all. The worship and witness of the church will not cease to praise and confess the revelation of God the Creator, even when this witness is contradicted and rejected by an increasing number of people today. As members of the Church we are committed to his praise and public confession for the sake of **God and man**, because we are convinced of the truth and lasting validity of the Biblical view of creation and hence see human life, human dignity, and humanity under threat, should this biblical witness be abandoned.

**12** All the above-mentioned Biblical beliefs of the Christian Churches have been held in common by all Christians (in the sense of a *magnus consensus*) well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite doctrinal differences by Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox. They have likewise **found confirmation** within the pre and extra-Christian natural law tradition. This common witness is now under threat as never before, particularly under the influence of certain Protestants groups which, under the influence of the *Zeitgeist*, have abandoned this common witness and hence deepened the existing divisions among the Churches. Not only is the **ecumenical unity** effected among the Churches, but also the internal unity within the different Churches. With respect to the witness of the Biblical account of creation there is now a painful split throughout the Churches of Europe and North America. This makes a common witness of Christians and the Churches in the face secular culture and non-Christian religions less and less possible.

## II. PRESENT ATTACKS ON MAN AS GOD'S CREATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GENDER THEORY

What we lament before God [Nr. 13–28]

### A. Threats to Human Life Before Birth [Nr. 13–14]

- 13** Human life is no longer widely seen to be a special creation of God, for whom the clear commandment has been given, “You shall not kill” (Ex. 20:13). In the Biblical understanding life even before birth stands under God’s care and special protection (Ps. 139:13ff, Jer. 1;5, Lk. 1:46). Today human life is often understood in terms of a false autonomy of self-determined existence. People in Europe and in North America today are alarming prepared to sacrifice the dignity of the human person’s right to life before and immediately following birth to this ideal **of self-determination and self-realization**.
- 14** Despite laudable efforts to preserve the non-human creation (protection of animals, vegetation, ecology and climate), and despite the high value given to human rights and the rule of law in general, **human life before birth** is threatened in many ways:
- For example, many people consider that the abortion of unborn children as a legitimate expression of a woman’s claim to self-determination. We bewail that among almost all democratically developed countries abortion is now tolerated by law. For decades the mass abortion of the unborn has been tolerated in silence, even claimed as a right. Every year, according to statistics, over 40 million children worldwide fall prey to this mass killing. For a long time abortion has become the leading cause of death across the globe, outperforming hunger, diseases, accidents and suicides. As Christians, we cannot resign ourselves to this situation. **We lament the countless children who have already fallen victims to this mass killing, and we call for an end to these legally permitted and tolerated killings.**
  - Particularly deplorable is the prevailing practice today of “detecting” and aborting sick and disabled children by means of prenatal diagnosis. We do not want to minimize the burdens of caring for severely disabled children. Nevertheless, we must say clearly: **A society which questions the right to life of sick and disabled children before birth undermines its ethical and constitutional foundations.** Where the right to life for unborn children with disabilities (if only potential disabilities) is abandoned, the same right can hardly be sustained in the long term for those who have been born with similar

disabilities. Such a society, no matter how high its technological standard may be, is on the path to brutality and barbarism.

- c. Another example of prenatal killing is the widely used type of “contraception” which in reality in many cases does not hinder the conception but the implantation of an already fertilized egg into the uterus (e.g. IUD, the “morning after” pill etc). Since human life begins with fertilization, the effect of this particular contraception to prevent implantation is to kill human life at its earliest stages. **We deplore that today, such forms of killing during pre-implantation are often no longer even regarded as the killing of a human being, since the biological beginning of human life in the fertilization of the egg by the semen is ignored or otherwise not recognized.**
- d. Another ethically reprehensible dealing with unborn life takes place through the techniques of **in vitro fertilization**. Many embryos are conceived, but they have little chance of survival; or they are destroyed in the PID process (in some countries), prior to implantation because they do not have certain “quality characteristics.”<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Threats to Human Life After Birth** [Nr. 15]

**15 Human life after birth** is now increasingly threatened in certain industrial countries also. Assisted suicide has already been legalized in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg and there are current initiatives for it to be introduced in other European countries. After the widespread loss of protection for the unborn, this would constitute another breach in the cultural dam protecting the human right to life and further promote the “culture of death” (John Paul II) in Europe. Just as it is forbidden to kill people at the beginning of human life, so it is also forbidden to do this at the end of life. Through all these killings, human beings arrogate to themselves the place of God the Creator, the sole Lord of life and death. In the case of euthanasia, such an intervention is particularly reprehensible, given the huge advances palliative medicine has made in recent decades, which specializes in caring for terminally ill and dying people. The international hospice movement, in which many Christians participate, is trying to implement its findings as an alternative to euthanasia. Even in a secular culture the Christian Churches are by no means

<sup>7</sup> With regard to the ethical issues involved in IVF and related developments, see *Donum Vitae* (Instruction on respect for human life in its origin and on the dignity of procreation: Replies to certain questions of the day) issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 22nd February 1987; and also the Instruction *Dignitas Personae* (on certain bioethical questions). ## 14-22, issued 8th September 2008.

alone in their advocacy of decent care for the terminally ill, as opposed to the conscious act of terminating life by assisted suicide. Thus far the call for a euthanasia in Europe and throughout the world has not prevailed. **We therefore call on all Christian Churches to commit themselves to stem the tide and do all that they can to prevent the acceptance of assisted suicide.** At the same time, it is important to accept the huge challenge to stand as Christians by the side of the growing number of the dying and terminally ill in our society – and to give them testimony to the hope of faith and to provide **help for a dignified death** that takes into account spirit, soul and body.

## **C. Threats to Humanity through the Ideology of Gender Theory** [Nr. 16–24]

- 16** In addition to the aforementioned, devastating threats to man as God’s creature, threats of a different kind to human nature and to humanity’s creaturely nature have intensified in recent years and decades. Such threats do not endanger people with physical death, but they seek to distort the created nature of human life as willed by God to such an extent, that we almost have to talk about an attempted abolition of man. The ten characteristics of humanity’s created nature outlined above [1. 1-10] are - as the following observations show - threatened today in a way that has no parallel.
- 17** A chief element in this process over the last 20 years has been the ideology of gender theory. This movement, which has radicalized aspects of feminist thought and the gay movement, has laid the axe to the root of the Judeo-Christian view of human nature in that it denies the duality of the sexes and the polarity of man and woman. What is more, this movement has begun implementing a so called “gender mainstreaming” program which is being put in place in an outright totalitarian manner.
- 18** The following excursus is to give a short outline of the main ideas that gender theory proposes.
- 1) **The core belief of gender theory** is that a person’s gender not a naturally given, biological condition (“sex”), but ultimately a sociological construct and a selectable human identity (“gender”). According to this view, there is no natural distinction between man and woman, despite obvious physical appearances. Instead, it is assumed, a person’s gender depends on the preference of the respective person that chooses from amongst a multitude of non-fixed gender-identities. According to the gender ideology, a person’s respective sexual orientation is already constitutive of gender identity – a view that

contributes to the assumed plurality of identities. This diversity of orientation/identity is summarized in the formula LBGT (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transsexual ) or LGBTTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersexual and queer). All of these sexual orientations in gender theory are considered to be **equivalent alternatives to heterosexuality**, which finds its traditional concrete expression in marriage and the family. This new conception of sexuality as a multi-plurality of self-determined forms that undermines the duality of man and woman involves a basic multiplicity of sexual life-styles that are likewise to be considered as equivalent to the traditional marriage and the family.

- 2) The **intellectual initiator** of this ideology is the American professor for rhetoric and philosophy, Judith Butler. Her book, "Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity," published in 1990, has been foundational for an intellectual understanding of gender theory. By repealing the prohibition of incest and the elimination of all "heterosexual signatures" in every sphere, Butler calls for the elimination of gender polarity as the norm (i.e. being man and woman, fatherhood, motherhood). She also advocates the de-normalization of heterosexuality, marriage and the family, and claims to expose their supposed natural status as either a fiction or as a linguistic construct.
- 3) The **influence of Butler's gender theory** among the industrialized countries in the West was and is enormous. In recent years gender theory has had a strong impact, aided by green and leftist political lobby groups, resulting in the establishing of numerous university chairs and research centers in so-called Gender Studies. Under the guise of so-called "science", gender theory has exerted an enormous influence on society, above all in terms of the nurturing and education of adolescents. All of this in spite of the fact that the scientific claims for gender theory are highly dubious and far from being universally accepted. The influence of this ideology on the mentality of young people should not be underestimated, although there has been some resistance in the name of common sense.
- 4) Another effect of gender theory includes **a deliberate subversion of traditional language into a so-called gender-neutral language**. All supposedly male terms and idioms are weeded out in an attempt to construct a linguistics that is gender neutral. For example, terms such as father and mother are replaced by the gender neutral term "parent". This loaded language has become quite normative and already determines the linguistic forms of laws and administrative regulations. More and more this use of language has been implemented with a gesture of manipulative authority and has taken hold on society as a whole.

- 5) Indoctrination through and into gender theory is of particular concern where it affects the **sexual education of children**. The concept of "Sexual Diversity Education" which is partly being introduced into the standards of the World Health Organization, is downright outrageous. Already small children are encouraged to practice sexual stimulation, and children in general are instructed in "sexual self-determination" and are taught to accept any diverse forms of sexual behaviors as authentic and legitimate.
  - 6) Also of note is the **socio-political** impact of gender theory (though in no way democratically legitimated), which is still vastly underestimated by many. It takes place at the UN level, in the EU and at national levels. In Europe and in the West generally, gender theory determines policy making in a rather comprehensive way. Gender theory's fundamental denial of sexual duality and the polarity of human nature has socio-political consequences of a truly cultural revolutionary character. In the State's educational institutions, heterosexuality and the special status of marriage as an exclusive community of male and female are set aside as the foundation for a human and sustainable State. Instead, all non-heterosexual forms of life are decreed to be of equal validity. The radical impact of gender ideology is shown, amongst other things, by the fact that in the last 14 years in 20 countries the institution of marriage has been legally opened to homosexual partners. This, in spite of the fact that throughout history marriage has been understood to be an exclusive community of male and female.
- 19** By radically questioning maleness and femaleness, motherhood and fatherhood, marriage and the family, gender ideology offers grounds for criticism not only from a theological perspective but also in non-religious terms, for example, in empirical and philosophical terms. The ethical and individual consequences of gender ideology can also be shown to be problematic, irrespective of specifically Christian convictions. **As responsible citizens we vigorously protest the outright totalitarian ways by which the gender ideology is being advanced in Europe and in the world. We strongly object to the program to reeducate people being advanced by gender ideology, considering it as an attack on freedom, democracy and the rule of law.**
- 20** As much as we Christians are grateful for the many rational, though not specifically Christian, objections to **gender theory on the basis of science, philosophy and ethics, our main affirmation is that gender ideology is incompatible with the human image found in Biblical revelation**. We also affirm the sexual duality of man and woman as basic to human nature (see above 9.2). Not only specific Biblical references,



but the entire biblical witness about humankind from the first to the last chapter assumes that the polarity of the sexes is constitutive of man created in love by God. Maleness and femaleness, fatherhood and motherhood, sexuality and fidelity, marriage and the family are endorsed orders of creation for the well-being of all people. They are, according to Biblical understanding, indispensable basic data of anthropology and the theology of creation, which data moreover are shared not only by Christians and the Christian Church, but by Judaism and beyond, by people of other religious beliefs. As Christians we see in these specifications of the Biblical revelation the foundation for an "ecology of man." On these understandings depends what it means to be truly human today. A questioning or destruction of this foundation leads to the abolition of humanity as God the Creator intended it to be. The duality of man and woman is in fact not only about reproduction which reduce it to a purely functional characteristic of the human species, but much more. It is a **reflection of the loving essence of the triune God** who calls humanity in his own likeness to a life of love. This love is a love that is given (Rom 5:5) not exclusively but yet in a special way in the coexistence of man and woman. This love becomes concrete in **marriage** as a community of love and shapes the **family**, the togetherness of parents and children, into an extended community of love. The two sexes of man and woman are a striking illustration of human vocation to a life in loving togetherness and mutual care. This vocation can only be pursued, if man and woman practice that unconditional love and fidelity to each other which finds in marriage its unique expression and if, in their sexual community, they are open in a special way to the emergence of new life. This particularly beautiful and lasting fruit of love in community bestows on man and woman the dignity of fatherhood and motherhood. In the life-context of conjugal love and procreation man and woman fulfill their respective vocations to love -- to a love that shows itself to be a true creative potency through cooperation with God in the creation of new life. The enlargement of marriage to a loving community of parents and children in the family makes clear how much the two sexes are the indispensable foundation for the realization of love in marriage and the family and as a foundation for the future of humanity as a whole that is worthy of human dignity.

**21** The denial of gender duality with its accompanying relativization of marriage and the family demonstrates how in gender theory the idea of personal freedom has replaced the vocation of love between a man and a woman. Ignoring the Creator's guidelines, gender ideology takes up the concept of personal freedom understood in terms of a libertarian self-design of human nature, in which the individual is encouraged to "choose" its gender

identity at will. This arbitrarily replaces God's will for a loving relationship of husband and wife and thoroughly fails to recognize love as the origin and goal of every Christian and truly human "ecology of man." At the same time, it ignores the love of God as the origin and goal of human existence. With the **separation of love and freedom** one denies the indissoluble coexistence of these two virtues which is characteristic of the nature of the triune God. Pope Benedict XVI warned (21.12.2012), "When freedom becomes the freedom of one's self-making, the Creator is necessarily denied. Ultimately the human being as God's creation, the image of God, is debased." The total lack of the dimension of love in gender ideology underlines just how distant this is from Christian thought, whose inner center - even there, where it concerns creation - is always the love revealed in Christ.

- 22** The suggestions mentioned above should be sufficient to show that gender theory completely misses the Biblical understanding of human beings as persons meant for community and as creatures whose vocation is love. **Thus gender ideology undermines the Biblical foundation of Christian ethics as a creation ethic and an ethic of love.** The Christian Church, if it is to be faithful to the Scriptures and what they profess, must reject gender theory in no uncertain terms. The goal of an "ecology of man" and gender ideology are mutually exclusive.
- 23** Gender theory obviously and blatantly denies human nature as God's creation by **ignoring the obvious sexual structure of the bodily nature of the human person.** Such physicality (with very few exceptions in cases of mal-formation), is either male or female. The Biblical witness of the two sexes is not a non-intuitive construct, something to be accepted on blind faith. It is based on what everyone has daily before their eyes. Its biological evidence, from what we can observe with our eyes to the microbiological structure of the body's cells, cannot be disputed with rational argumentation. Due to the unity of mind and body in each person, there are also significant psychological differences between the sexes that have been affirmed in a plethora of empirical studies.
- 24** **Given the aforementioned findings – and in the face of strong political pressure – Christianity today is called to a determined resistance to the gender mainstreaming agenda.** At the same time, Christians should strive **to overcome this ideology** by uncovering its errors (e.g. its hostility to creation) that not only contradict the Judeo-Christian conception of the human person but are also at odds with common sense. We therefore welcome the **unambiguous statements** by Pope

Francis<sup>8</sup> and his predecessor, Benedict XVI<sup>9</sup> against gender theory. Also to be noted in this context are the pastoral letters of the bishops of Slovakia, Poland, Portugal, Hungary, Croatia, and northern Italy, and by the Bishop of Chur in Switzerland. Furthermore, we refer to the ecumenical declaration, “Resist the Gender Ideology,” and other critical voices from other Christian authors and communities. It is all the more regrettable that in much Protestant theology and partly in the EKD [= the Lutheran Church in Germany] we find a rather uncritical posture towards, or even agreement with, gender ideology. This attitude was in part institutionalized in 2014, when the EKD opened a center for gender issues in Hannover. Because of trends and facts such as these, the basis is lacking – at least for the present and at least within (German) mainline Protestantism -- for the formulation of a common ecumenical view and position over against gender ideology, which the Church owes to contemporary society.

#### D. The Consequences of Gender Theory for Motherhood and Fatherhood, Marriage and Family, Sexuality and Procreation [Nr. 25–28]

- 25** No less deplorable than gender theory in and of itself as a ideological cul-de-sac are the consequences it engenders for the understanding of motherhood and fatherhood, marriage, family, sexuality and procreation, and hence for an “ecology of man”.
- 26** Since gender ideology denies maleness and femaleness as basic aspects of the human condition, **fatherhood** and **motherhood** also lose their significance for the understanding of what it means to be human. Fatherhood and motherhood cease to be foundational for the human condition and are reduced to the biological causation of new life. But according to the Bible, fatherhood and motherhood are more than roles assumed in the biological process of procreation. Rather, they are gifts from God which last a lifetime and determine evermore the being of the parents, endowing them with a permanent special dignity that involves rights as well as obligations. It obliges them, above and beyond everyone else and every institution of State and society, to provide for the education and nurture of their children. This parental responsibility does not cease when the children are grown up and marry and have children of their own. Sadly this natural

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., his General Audience on the 15th April 2015, where he lamented the “obliteration of sexual difference” which can be observed in gender theory: ([http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150415\\_udienza-generale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150415_udienza-generale.html)).

<sup>9</sup> In his Christmas address to the Roman Curia on the 21st December 2012, Benedikt XVI. spoke about “The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious.” ([http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20121221\\_auguri-curia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia.html))

parental responsibility that precedes that of the State is disregarded often today, when the State and society claim for themselves the pivotal role in the development and socialization of children from birth onwards (e.g. in terms of gender theory or other ideologies). Such a claim is diametrically opposed to Biblical anthropology, which grants the highest role in the education of children to fatherhood and motherhood (including also indirectly the grandparents) . This is obvious from the Fourth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12a). The postscript, “. . . that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives,” emphasizes the fundamental importance which this commandment has for a Biblical creation ethic. By contrast today, there is a loss of esteem for fathers and mothers, which in turn contributes quite considerably to an overall culture of shrinking respect for others, especially for older people in our society. Particularly painful in our societies is the lack of appreciation for motherhood and the serious consequences this has for the development and well-being of children. This lack of respect is evident, for example, in the fact that a mother’s option to forgo, either temporarily or permanently, earning an income of her own in the marketplace is met in our society with increasing social disapproval and, on top of this, economic disadvantage (through lack of pension, insurance etc.). **Therefore, part of an “ecology of man” must include a new grasp of the value of fatherhood and motherhood and its importance for society.** Here the Christian Churches could, and should, make an important contribution.

- 27** Closely related is the lack of appreciation for the **institutions of marriage and the family** in our societies – a development that was already taking place prior to the invention of gender ideology, but has now been palpably amplified by gender theory. Although marriage and the family are established by God in the Bible **as orders of creation**, such institutions are now being reduced in reputation or altered in their meaning to the extent that their very existence is threatened. Every single one of the constitutive aspects of the traditional understanding marriage (indissolubility, sexual exclusivity, an openness to having children, and the sexual duality of the spouses) – has now become a matter of dispute and disbelief. Gender theory, along with major currents within the homosexual movement are determined to abandon the sexual polarity of male and female that has been honored over the millennia as the basis of marriage and open up this institution to include non-heretosexual partners. As a result, opponents of such a redefinition of marriage are easily and swiftly accused of “homophobia” or discrimination – even if all they do is simply to affirm the traditional definition of marriage that has been shared not only by Christians and Jews but also by common human consensus for thousands of years. A similar thing happens with regard to the **family**. The traditional

understanding of the family as a natural (God-given) community of parents and their children, is being dissolved more and more, in that all possible or impossible forms of social units in which there are children present are now called "family" and considered principally of equal worth and status: whether they involve two or more partners, whether they are of different sexes or of the same sex, whether their relationship to the children are biological, adopted or of the foster type. **In view of these new developments, the Church has the mission to emphasize the unique character and importance of marriage and the family as sound orders of creation.** For millennia marriage and the family have proven to be institutions of remarkable stability: both in being themselves stable and long-living, and in providing stability for those who live within these institutions. It is lamentable that today they are often attacked, or at the very least their normality and their character as model is disputed, despite the fact that the German constitution along with the constitutions of many other countries place marriage and the family under "special protection." It has been found to this day that no other structures can equal the coexistence of parents and children for providing stability and development of life skills. Yet it must be noted that today both the traditional marriage and the traditional family are under threat with regard to the societal appreciation and legal protection they have rightly enjoyed up to this point. There is now strong political pressure to recognize same-sex unions legally and socially as being of at least equal in status with marriage, and even to "expand" the definition of marriage and the family to include such forms of life. **The Christian Churches by their doctrinal and confessional commitments cannot accept such annihilation of difference and the equalizing of marriage and homosexual partnerships. Because the order of creation of marriage and the family are, according to the testimony of the Bible, not human inventions but God-given foundations and institutions (thereby preceding the State and civil society!), humans cannot alter or manipulate these institutions at will. What is distinct according to the will of God should not be considered or treated by human beings as equal.**

Internationally, the last 25 years has seen the removal of the special status of marriage by the introduction of same-sex partnerships (since 1989), or so-called same-sex marriages (since 2001). In addition to this trend, childless partnerships have factually enjoyed a privileged position for decades. It is especially deplorable that in Germany and in other countries families with many children and corresponding financial burdens do not receive adequate financial assistance by means of tax and pension policies.

Unfortunately political leaders in Germany have brought no substantial improvement in the social and economic situation of the family in spite of repeated admonitions by the

Supreme Court. As Cardinal Meisner, former Archbishop of Cologne, has noted without any exaggeration: "No divine institution in our society is so unnoticed, even so despised, as the family by leading authorities, ranging from the highest representatives of the government to decisions by the courts." If one considers that marriage and the family are the foundations of State and society, and hence have a fundamental role for a future worthy of human dignity, this development can only be deplored. Here Christian insight and non-Christian wisdom traditions meet. Martin Luther noted that "the family is the source both of blessing and of its opposite for the nations." Confucius, a representative of Eastern Wisdom, says "If the family is in order, the State will be fine; if the State is in order, the people as a whole will live in peace." These remarks from people of different religions show by comparison, to what an extent our society today has abandoned the basis for a "human ecology."

**28** The same can be said of the **current trend to separate sexuality and reproduction.**

One consequence of this trend that has been going on since the 1960s, and has now been intensified through the impact of the gender ideology, makes itself felt in the demographic changes in Germany and in Europe with an unprecedented halving of the birth rate and a significant preponderance of mortality rates compared to birth rates. This trend has not only brought about alarming consequences with regards to destabilizing pension systems and the generational balance necessary to sustain economic and peaceful coexistence, it has also resulted in a general obliviousness to the difference in principle between hetero- and homosexuality. Heterosexuality, by virtue of the creative power of God's will, is open to new life and so guarantees the future of the human race. Homosexuality, being in principle incapable of procreation, is a form of sexuality that does not contribute to the future of a society in the same way. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it was this foundational difference, and not a debasing of those with homoerotic feelings, that formed the basis for the normative status of heterosexuality, a fact that is widely disregarded in today's discussions. Whoever looks on the emergence of new human life, and the added value of life associated with having children, as irrelevant for the wellbeing and future of a society, fails to grasp what is unique and exclusive about heterosexual love. It has nothing to do with homophobia, when we recognize the fact that all human beings, including gay people, owe their lives to the basic fact that God has endowed the sexuality of man and woman with this unique procreative potency to bring forth new human life by an act of conjugal love. Should not this fact persuade all people, including those with homosexual inclinations, that the sexuality of man and woman should be valued in a special way? The fact that marriage and the family as determined by the order of creation are for this reason

entitled to special respect as well as political and legal protection was manifestly stated in the 1948 General Declaration on Human Rights. **For any true understanding of an “ecology of man “ the ordination of human sexuality to the awakening new life (as confirmed by Scripture and the theology of creation) must remain an indispensable cornerstone.**



### III. THE NEED FOR A NEW REFLECTION ON THE BIBLICAL REVELATION AS A PRECONDITION FOR AN “ECOLOGY OF MAN”

What we ask of God and man [Nr. 29–34]

#### A. The lack of an “ecology of man” and its consequences for society [Nr. 29–30]

**29** Our analysis in Part Two highlighted the serious consequences of a lack of an “ecology of man” for society and the State, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded the German parliament in 2011 (see above 13-28). The importance attached to the preservation of the non-human creation now rightly enjoys the support of many political, social, and Church groups. By contrast, we note the alarming and massive threat to human life before and after birth, which even now have been given full legal recognition in many Western democracies (see above 13–15). In 1995 Pope John Paul II gave an impassioned warning and spoke of a “culture of death” in his encyclical *EVANGELIUM VITAE*. In some respects the situation has only become worse. By a nearly two-thirds majority, EU parliamentarians voted in favor of a so-called “human right to abortion” and commended this as a basic human right (10.3.2015). By so doing, the EU parliament did away with the most basic of all human rights – **the right to life** – and thus it propagated the idea of a Europe that, in undermining its own basic principles, has completely abandoned constitutional law and basic humanity . **As confessing Christians, representing different Church traditions, we protest resolutely against this decision which threatens to be lethal for the future of Europe both in the literal and figurative sense. This decision must of necessity be withdrawn.**

**30** Our analysis has also demonstrated that gender ideology threatens **the natural foundation of human existence**, with profound consequences (see 16-24). Gender theory is in some ways comparable to the ancient heresy of Gnosticism in that it devalues

as irrelevant core aspects of the bodily nature of human beings – sexual difference and polarity – instead of honoring them as part of God’s creative will for a sustainable human life, as the Judaeo-Christian tradition does. This leads to a further debasing of motherhood and fatherhood. Since the procreative potency of heterosexual unity is also not recognized, other forms of sexuality are claimed as supposedly equivalent alternatives. Particularly disconcerting is the attempt by gender theory to promote in public schools the ideological programming that goes under the heading “sexual diversity education”. If even pre-school children are encouraged in these programs to experiment with their sexuality in different ways, it is clear that the sexuality, which they are summoned to “explore” at such an early stage, cannot be relationship-oriented, but instead is centered round isolated physical pleasure. Also to be observed is that, due to the influence of gender theory, **marriage** and the **family** as God-given institutions for the flourishing of humanity, are about to lose their normative model character (Nr. 26–27). In this way, precisely those institutions are being weakened that are foundational for the well-being of children, for society, and human family as a whole and which have been acknowledged as worth special protection not only in the German constitution, but also in the constitution of the United Nations<sup>10</sup> and many other countries. By questioning the bipolar nature of human sexuality, of masculinity and femininity, fatherhood and motherhood, and through the relativization of heterosexuality, gender theory also places in question the foundation of humans as creatures and the wholesome existence of the divine order of creation for their benefit. In the long run, the consequences of all this will can only be devastating. Deeply worrisome also is gender theory’s comprehensive devaluation of the **procreative sexuality of men and women** in favor of other forms of sexual orientation, in which the capacity of fertility – thus the sustainability for the future – is missing. This is especially so, given the dramatic demographic changes that are already under way. In the long run, the continuing poverty of birth rates in industrial countries will pose a threat to social and humanitarian standards with respect to childhood poverty, the position of the elderly, the sick, and the poor. Given the decline in humanitarian care (with regard to affordable and time-intensive health care), we observe these developments as Christians and as responsible citizens with great concern. It only underlines the urgent need for a “human ecology.” **At the same time, we have to say No to the manifold alternative forms of life-styles by which supposedly “autonomous” persons revolt against or try to circumvent God’s order of creation.**

<sup>10</sup> See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), art. 16, par. 3. See also the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), art. 23.

## B. Renewed focusing on biblical revelation as precondition for a “ecology of man” [Nr. 31]

**31** We urgently need – Christians and non-Christians – a renewed attention directed to the Biblical revelation as a reliable foundation for a “human ecology.” We encourage non-believers and faith-seekers to take seriously the Biblical revelation as the basis for this “ecology of man”. Life according to the good order of creation is one that is useful and reasonable for all people. For us Christians, such a life is not primarily a duty or a burden, but rather the gracious invitation from God to us as humans to engage in such a life consistently and cheerfully, even when it is sometimes demanding and challenging. In this pursuit, we are helped by the certainty that we can depend on the merciful, gracious, all-powerful and supportive Creator of the universe who supports us in our vocation to become people who really want to do his will and are endowed with his strength and wisdom (Prov 2:7). We are aware that a mere reconsideration of the Biblical revelation on our part is insufficient, as long as we are left to our own devices. We are therefore grateful to God that we as Christians can reckon with the power of salvation won for us by Christ. God equips believers through the Holy Spirit with his own divine love (Rom 5:5). The apostle Paul has characterized this love in an unsurpassable and striking way in 1 Corinthians 13. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (vv 4–7). Despite the fragmentary, imperfect, and provisional nature of our actions, this love aims not only at preserving all creaturely life but rather at enabling it to flourish and develop. A proper “human ecology” is not only based on our compliance with the “external” order of creation. It is based more profoundly on the love of God who serves at the center of our heart and as our motivating power. Only this love can truthfully represent both our innermost structures as creatures and the nature of the triune God and lead us to conform ourselves to the divine archetype as created beings. It is this love that enables Christian life, even under the condition of human sin, to realize a life in harmony with the order of creation. Precisely then, when life according to God’s order of creation becomes a hard trial because of our sins, or, due to the “hardness of our hearts” (Mt 19:9), may even come close to being perceived as an “impossibility” (e.g., with regard to the indissolubility of marriage), we nevertheless can confidently expect help from God. For God’s love shows itself and especially “when it hurts” (Mother Teresa) or when painful sacrifices must be made. Even an “ecology of man” cannot simply revoke that reality which has been

damaged by the Fall, and which Jesus hinted at, when he referred to the daily “troubles” of human life (Mt 6:34). Still even in the provisional and fragmentary nature of our earthly existence there is the reality of grace which is effective for an “ecology of man” by virtue of the power that comes with the redemption and resurrection of Christ. God has opened this reality for us and he enables us to live according to the Biblical order of creation – a life to which we as Christians of different church traditions are called and called to invite others.

## C. The recovery of an “ecology of man” [Nr. 32–34]

- 32** For a credible recovery of an “ecology of man”, we Christians need a unity in faith and life, in truth and love. The commonality in conviction with regard to foundational issues regarding a theology of creation among the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Reformation Churches is sufficiently strong to make known the goodness and beauty of the order of creation and to testify even to the non-believing world that it can be lived. This witness is not based on our sinful human moral capacity but on the reality of God’s forgiveness and on his fatherly love, who makes it possible for his children, despite all breakdown and failure, to live a life of grace. It is his grace that empowers us.
- 33** Such a common witness in the current situation requires us to overcome our serious divisions and tensions. This is especially true with regard to the Protestant Churches where alternate forms of life and ideologies adverse to God’s creation (like gender theory) have emerged. Where divisions within individual Church traditions cannot be overcome, the confessing Christians within the different Churches should not hesitate to initiate conversations that lead toward **a common public confession of the apostolic truth** and to declare their oneness in the teaching of the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church”. This is all the more important, because we are confronted with ideologies that often work with massive political pressures which lack democratic transparency, fairness or tolerance. These ideologies not only contradict the truth. They also constitute a real danger to freedom. Above all, the ideologies must be challenged for God’s sake in the face of the immeasurable wisdom, glory and beauty of God’s creation – to whom we give praise now and forever.
- 34** We wish to bring this declaration to a close by quoting Psalm 8, that powerful, three-thousand-year-old hymn of praise to the Creator that could aptly be called a biblical “Magna Carta” for an “ecology of man”.



*Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

*You have set your glory  
in the heavens.*

*<sup>2</sup> Through the praise of children and infants  
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
to silence the foe and the avenger.*

*<sup>3</sup> When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,*

*<sup>4</sup> what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?<sup>[c]</sup>*

*<sup>5</sup> You have made them<sup>[d]</sup> a little lower than the angels<sup>[e]</sup>  
and crowned them<sup>[f]</sup> with glory and honor.*

*<sup>6</sup> You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their<sup>[g]</sup> feet:*

*<sup>7</sup> all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,*

*<sup>8</sup> the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.*

*<sup>9</sup> Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

*Glory be to the Father and the Son  
And the Holy Ghost.*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and forever will be.*

*AMEN.<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> New International Version.

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