

# The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and the Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church

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**Please Note: This is a draft document. It is currently in preparation.**

## 1:0: Introduction

Most people today interpret the *Gospel of Thomas* as a collection of independent sayings without any narrative text. *The Gospel* itself claims that these were sayings of Jesus which were collected by the Apostle Thomas. Considerable disagreement surrounds the *Gospel's* origins: however a consensus is developing which claims that at least parts of it come from an early date.

Two particular possibilities must be considered. One is that the Gospel could be in the style of a first century Jewish Midrash<sup>3</sup>, the second is that it may have been compiled by later Christian groups<sup>4</sup>. Two forms of Midrash are normally encountered, the Midrash halakha on the Jewish religious laws; which usually forms a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Midrash aggadah which contains commentaries on non-legalistic rabbinic literature. This investigation examines the *Gospel of Thomas* through the lenses of the Midrashim traditions.

The current approach of regarding the Gospel of Thomas simply as a series of independent sayings would be unlikely in first century Judaism, for the Gospel is more likely to be presented in accordance with the contemporary Midrashim conventions, where statements in a running commentary may be connected by hidden links. In these, knowledge was also kept secret, and keys are needed to unlock the meanings of the texts.

This paper summarises the results of a prior scientific and theological study conducted by the author which seeks to reconcile the conclusions of its scientific investigation with the theology of the

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Biography <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Available Online at: Gilchrist, S. (2019): "*The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> In Judaism, the midrash/midrashim is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture. The purpose of Midrash was to resolve problems in the interpretation of difficult passages of the text of the Hebrew Bible using rabbinic principles of hermeneutics and philology to align them with the religious and ethical values of religious teachers.

<sup>4</sup> The 52 texts discovered in Nag Hammadi in Egypt include 'Secret' gospels poems and myths which attribute to Jesus sayings and beliefs which are very different from the New Testament. (See for example: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>). Such texts were compiled by "Gnostic" groups. A copy of the Gospel of Thomas was found among these documents. However, apart from the first sentence in the Gospel which claims that: "*These are the Secret Sayings of Jesus*", there is little evidence to associate the Gospel with the core of Gnostic beliefs. The Gnostic movements and traditions largely started to expand during the second century AD.

Christian Church. The scientific elements of this study confirm that the gender and sexually variant conditions are driven by the search for identity and not reward. This means that as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must be encountered within the gender and sexually variant communities, as in the population at large. That in turn can be expressed in the form of a moral duality, where those gender and sexually variant people who live true to their own identities in ways that conform to the highest standards of their own societies should be highly regarded, while those who do the reverse must expect to be severely condemned for their acts. That is contradicted by the traditional teaching of the Church which regards every form of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being intrinsically disordered, acts of grave depravity, and always engaged in for the rewards of inappropriate sex. This defines the fundamental contradiction between science and theology, which is shown to exist<sup>5</sup>.

Particular attention is paid in this analysis to determining how this contradiction arises, and it is demonstrated that it is due to changes in the theology of the Church. Roman Society viewed sexual behaviour through the prism of subjection and domination. It was the privilege of this domination which gave permission for sexual abuse in society. That was seen most notably in same-sex intercourse, where the submissive citizen who was penetrated was the person who was condemned: it was not the perpetrator of the act. From the outset Christianity vociferously and aggressively condemned these abuses. However the need to obey and gain acceptance in Roman society and to obtain the respect of the Roman authorities which Peter and Paul strongly emphasise in their Epistles and Letters, meant that Christianity could not attack without reservation the institutional structures of society which enabled the abuses to take place. In such a climate it is not surprising that all awareness of the moral duality inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour was lost. Nothing could change for as long for as the Christian Church dominated the social values of society. However in the eyes of many, the social and cultural transformations in Western societies over the last fifty years have demolished the presumptions upon which the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexually variant behaviour has been based<sup>6</sup>.

So far this discussion has concentrated on the scientific and theological arguments. It would not be complete if other reasons were not considered. It is easiest to use the doctrine developed in Article 2357 of the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This states that: "*Tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life*"<sup>7</sup>. Leviticus 20:13 applies the death penalty to both participants for engaging in consensual same-sex intercourse. Evangelical Christian writers such as Gagnon<sup>8</sup> are right when they point out that the prohibition in Leviticus applies to all acts of same-sex anal penetration. However the prohibition is directed towards the active partner (the male who lies with...)<sup>9</sup>. The various reasons for this prohibition are examined and there are discussed in detail elsewhere<sup>10</sup>. It is shown that the Rabbis applied the prohibition in this way for four main reasons<sup>11</sup>. The first was that same-sex relationships cannot result in procreation. The second was stability in marriage: in a society where arranged and early marriages were the normal practice, the sexuality

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<sup>5</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> These prohibitions can still have considerable weight in societies where gender discrimination occurs or where gender differentiation in terms of required behaviour is legally or socially enforced.

<sup>7</sup> Catechism (1997): *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

<sup>8</sup> Gagnon, Robert A. J. (2002): *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Abingdon Press: ISBN-10: 0687022797: ISBN-13: 978-0687022793

<sup>9</sup> Even though both participants are condemned to death, the wording of actual prohibition: "And with a male you shall not lie the lyings of a woman" is directed against the perpetrator as the active partner. In a gender unequal society all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour, for any purpose challenge the social divisions of that society. Men of equal status who adopt either role in same-sex intercourse equally disrupt the good order of society; and in societies such as Judaism, without the powers of empire behind them an equal penalty may be expected to apply.

<sup>10</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016f): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> See section 4:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

of each of the partners was not taken into account. The third was the disruption of the social order: in a society where men and women are treated unequally, because the gender based power structure is challenged by all same-sex and cross-gender acts. The fourth is for power and control: this comes through the debasement of citizenship, the use of same-sex rape to enforce subjection and domination between unequal individuals and societies, and to humiliate a beaten enemy.

Additional reasons may be put forward for the condemnation of all same-sex intercourse. A major feature of gender complementarity, (which has already been noted), is the way in which it separates the male from the female roles: any form of gender and sexually variant behaviour, for any purpose challenges this distinction. The "Good Order" of any gender and socially unequal society is disrupted by such acts. It has also been indicated that discrimination against gender and sexually variant people is a socially led phenomenon. The absence of reproductive consequences can make it a substitute for abusive heterosexual sex. The cultural chasms between subject and dominant societies also bring very different results. In Ancient Greece the love of young boys, and the acceptance of same-sex stimulation as part of an educational process, contrasts with the great abhorrence of same-sex intercourse in Jewish society. This may be a reason for the extremities of the condemnations that are applied. Peter and Paul do not call directly on the teaching of Christ in demanding respectability of the Church<sup>12 13</sup>. Paul makes use of Leviticus in his condemnations of same-sex intercourse in Romans 1:18-27<sup>14</sup>, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:1. Thus the purpose of Paul's condemnations in these passages is likewise limited to the interpretation which is given to Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 itself<sup>15</sup>. However there is no doubt about the strength of the demand.

The command for Jews to populate the world in Genesis 1:28 was very seriously taken, but Judaism did not define that as the only purpose of the sexual act. Contraception was permitted in certain situations<sup>16</sup>, and Onan was advised to spill his seed on the ground<sup>17</sup>. There is no condemnation of masturbation in the bible: although Onan's act is sometimes taken in this way the Rabbis severely condemned masturbation as a waste of semen. Nevertheless Judaism and Christianity, including Paul permitted intercourse without the expectation of reproduction as a way of building up family life.

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<sup>12</sup> See section 8:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b); *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

<sup>13</sup> See section 12 of Gilchrist, S. (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*

<sup>14</sup> Romans 1:24-27: "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error". (NRSVA). See also sections 7:12 and 8:8 of Gilchrist, (S. 2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*. This is unequivocal but it must also be seen in the context of the time.

<sup>15</sup> Paul's main condemnations are contained in Romans 1:18-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10. In these passages Paul refers back to the Jewish interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to give authority to his teaching. Therefore the extent of these condemnations is limited to what the prohibition contained in Leviticus meant to first century society. It is shown in this analysis that this prohibition related to anal penetration alone (by extension same-sex intercourse), and to no other same-sex act. Same-sex love could be expressed freely in these relationships provided that act was avoided. It is additionally shown that the reasons for the prohibitions in Leviticus were because of the abuses of power in individual relationships and also between subject and dominant societies. Paul also set his condemnations in the context of the worship of the creature rather than the creator and the resulting sexual abuse. As it is shown in this analysis, when issues of abuse of power and sex are absent, and within loving committed and faithful same-sex relationships, there should be no automatic prohibition of any same-sex act of sex. It is further shown that this is identical to the teaching of Jesus. However these matters are of strong contention amongst biblical scholars and more complete descriptions are given in other documents. See sections 7:14 and 8:12 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process* and Gilchrist, S. (2013a) *An Unfinished Reformation*: for more complete accounts.

<sup>16</sup> See section 4:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

<sup>17</sup> The Bible never explicitly mentions masturbation or states whether or not masturbation is a sin. The Catechism of the Catholic Church condemns masturbation in Part 3: "Life in Christ;" Section 2: "The Ten Commandments;" Article 6: "The Sixth Commandment;" Topic: "Offences against chastity. This describes it as a sin of lust. The scripture most frequently pointed to in regards to masturbation is the story of Onan in Genesis 38:9-10. Some interpret this passage as saying that "spilling your seed" on the ground is a sin. However, that is not what the passage is saying. God condemned Onan not for "spilling his seed" but because Onan refused to fulfil his duty to provide an heir for his brother. Talmudic literature condemns "spilling seed in vain" as it leads to unnecessary spilling of semen, or the impure thoughts of women other than the man's lawful wife. See section 4:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

The fact that Jesus and John were not in heterosexual marriages; when it was the duty of every man to procreate is likely to have posed greater challenges to that obligation than the prohibitions of Leviticus itself. The attitude of Jesus to the distractions of family life did not support the drive for procreation<sup>18</sup> and the Christian traditions of celibacy also departed far more from the spirit of the command to procreate than Judaism ever did<sup>19</sup>.

However the social reasons are also strong. The theme developed in this account is that power differences between subject and dominant groups give permission for the abuse of sex. There are many other examples that could be cited: one is the Christian attitude to slavery in the New World during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, where the professions of piety by their masters could be contradicted by the sexual abuses they imposed on their slaves. The differences in power structures and attitudes which existed between the governing classes and people who were subjected to colonialization by empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries facilitated abuses of sex. Legally enforced discrimination on the basis of race continued in the United States until the early nineteen sixties; and apartheid existed in South Africa until 1994. The 1927 and 1957 South African Immorality Acts illustrate how under apartheid this discrimination was applied to both religion and sex. However the most significant instance for the purpose of this analysis comes from the relationships between Judaism and Greco/Roman society in the first century. The power differences and the cultural clashes between these two societies meant that anal penetration was perceived as a plaything and a reminder of who was in charge in the dominant society, but it resonated with absolute horror in the subject one.

Traditional interpretations of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 consider it to be the condemnation of temple prostitution and cultic practices in surrounding societies. While this did occur, that is rejected in this analysis<sup>20</sup>. It is concluded that there are three possible principles underlying the prohibitions contained in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. The first is the impediment to procreation, the second comes from its use to enforce subjection and domination in gender and socially unequal societies, the third is to promote the stability of family life, and the fourth is because of an intrinsic horror of the act of sex. Of these reasons it has been shown that the requirement of procreate is no longer absolute because of the actions of Jesus in challenging the distractions of family life and the doctrines of celibacy in the Christian Church. The third reason, that the prohibition could be due to an intrinsic horror of the act of sex, is also denied by the very specific first century Jewish interpretation of this prohibition and by the freedom of expression which is given to all other same-sex acts. These considerations only leave the protection of family life and the power struggles associated with subjection and domination as the reason which is relevant to this analysis; and that is confirmed in the conclusions this study presents. The message of Jesus in the Gospel was not to seek protection for his own family members. Instead was one of rejecting them for the sake of the Gospel Message (Matthew 12:46-50): "*While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*" This rejection of the earthly family was one of complete dedication to the Gospel to the Gospel Message: it was not over aspects of sex. The same type of dedication to the Gospel Message is found in the descriptions of "The Solitary Ones", where again there is no reference to sex. It is shown elsewhere in this analysis and in this account that a paradigm shift took pace in Christian Teaching in which the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse which were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality.... and would have been known to Jesus, have been turned into the unchangeable

<sup>18</sup> See sections 3:1:9 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

<sup>19</sup> See sections 3:1:5 and 3:3:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

<sup>20</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015e): "*Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

condemnation of the sexual act<sup>21</sup>. Jesus is commonly understood to have said nothing to condemn or approve of same-sex relationships. Therefore the present teaching of the Church on gender and sexually variat behaviour, as it acknowledges relies entirely on its own traditions

This analysis notes that the abuse of power gives permission for the abuse of sex. This and the cultural clashes must be properly considered when examining the purposes of the acts.

After many centuries of suppression, people today can now see for themselves the moral duality and the full range of moral expression which is inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour. They can also made distinctions between loving same-sex relationships and close same-sex friendships without having to consider the sexual acts. There is no toleration of any form of abusive sex. It is demonstrated that the present day teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexually variant behaviour comes from the adaptations which the Church had to make to survive in Roman society and not from the teaching of Jesus himself.

As a consequence a paradigm shift has been created in Christian teaching in which the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse which were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality.... and would have been known to Jesus, have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act<sup>22</sup>. These changes give rise to what is regarded as the present day teaching of the Catholic Church on gender and sexually variant behaviour<sup>23</sup>. This doctrine which separates the abuses of power from the abuses of sex has also made it easier for the Churches to vociferously condemn the sexual abuses within their own organisations without attending the abuses of power that give rise to them<sup>24</sup>. It is also demonstrated that the present day teaching of the Catholic Church, and the equivalent teaching which is adopted by other churches also medically misdiagnose these conditions and great harm can be done because the incorrect methods are applied.

A major challenge faced in this investigation has been the need to analyse and peer through documents and sources which were written for and intended to promote the theology of the Church as it was developed in the Roman world. If this handicap is to be overcome an independent source is needed. The *Gospel of Thomas* lies outside these traditions. Current studies argue that at least parts of the Gospel of Thomas date from a time before the Canonical Gospels were written. In this analysis an early date for the Gospel is affirmed. By conducting an equivalent redaction on the *Gospel of Thomas* it may be possible to get an independent verification (or otherwise) of these results

Considerable care should be taken in the use of any document which has been condemned as heretical and apocryphal by mainstream Christian traditions. Therefore in this analysis the *Gospel of Thomas* is examined in order to assess how it relates to the prior research. The differences between the Petrine, Pauline and Thomasine approaches are examined. It must also be emphasised that this

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<sup>21</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> As exemplified in Article 2357 of the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, which condemns all forms of homosexual and by extension all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour, regardless of purpose, as: "Relationships between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved".

<sup>24</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf> also Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf>

examination of the Gospel is used to add to the understanding that is gained. It does not replace any part of the previous work. However significant advances in understanding are gained. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 and Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas, it is further affirmed that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. Under the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant all sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention, there is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act, and there is no toleration of abusive sex. The results of this investigation have significant implications in other areas for present day Christianity because of the additional insights that are obtained.

A summary of the prior research is given in sections 2:0 and 3:0 of this document. Section 4:0 examines the provenance and dating of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Section 5:0 assesses if this Gospel should be considered as a Christian document or a Jewish text. In section 6:0 a full commentary on the *Gospel of Thomas* is provided. Section 7:0 examines the origins and evidence for the history and accuracy of the Gospel by comparing the results of the commentary on the *Gospel of Thomas* with the results of the prior research. Section 8:0 considers the relationships between culture, gender and sex which are explored in the Gospel, including attitudes to gender and sexually variant conditions. Section 9:0 discusses aspects of the theology which is presented in the Gospel of Thomas and its implications for present day Christianity and the church. In section 10:0 conclusions and recommendations are presented and it considers the implications for the present day world.

## 2:0: Prior Research

There are two separate investigations contained in this study. The first is an independent scientific examination which links the early contagious internally generated physiologically based driving forces which dominate early development to the externally focussed cognitive processes which come to direct development in later life<sup>25</sup>. The results of this research confirm the worldwide consensus of scientific opinion which regards both gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as naturally expected variations of the human condition, that are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life. It also confirms that these conditions are driven by the search for identity and not reward. It additionally shows that as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must be encountered within the gender and sexually variant communities, as in the population at large<sup>26</sup>. That can be expressed in the form of a moral duality, where those gender and sexually variant people who live true to their own identities in ways that conform to the highest standards of their own societies should be highly regarded, while those who do the reverse must expect to be severely condemned for their acts<sup>27</sup>. This scientific consensus

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<sup>25</sup> This article summarises an extended programme of neurophysiological and psychological research. For more detailed descriptions, (with references to sources) see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-PaperPersonality.pdf> also Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-InfluencesPersonality.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2015): "*Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf> (copy under revision available on the web). Also Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/207P-ReassessmentPsychologyExtended.pdf>

<sup>26</sup>For a background see Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. (2015): "*Homosexuality*"; First published Tue Aug 6, 2002; substantive revision Sun Jul 5, 2015 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/homosexuality/>

<sup>27</sup> The relationship between transgender people and religion varies widely around the world. Religions range from condemning any gender-variant behaviour, to honouring transgender people as religious leaders. Views within a single religion can vary considerably. Buddhist scripture does not distinguish same-sex sexual activity from heterosexual activity. In Thai Buddhism, being katoey (an umbrella term that roughly maps to a range of identities from male to female transsexuality to male homosexuality) is seen as being part of one's karma. In Shinto, Shirabyōshi, female or transgendered kami are associated with same-sex love or gender variance. They are linked to Shinto priests of the same name, who are usually female (or occasionally transgender) and perform ritual dances in traditional men's

conflicts with the traditional theology of the Christian Church, which considers the expression of all gender and sexually variant identities and the subsequent self-identification, to be a consequence of intrinsically disordered behaviour of grave depravity which invariably pursues inappropriate rewards and sexual desires. Therefore that reward driven understanding fundamentally contradicts the experiential evidence and the current scientific knowledge which regards these conditions as identity driven instead. This contradiction has major consequences since the medical methods for managing identity driven and reward driven conflicts and characteristics are almost opposite to each other<sup>28</sup>. Great harm can be caused by the medical misdiagnoses that are made<sup>29</sup>.

## 2:1: First Century Issues

The scientific investigation demonstrates that the existence of this moral duality is fundamental to this identity driven gender and sexually variant behaviour. This means that the full range of moral expression can be observed at any time in every society where gender and sexually variant relationships are permitted. That freedom of expression existed in antiquity in Greek society. Rather than being determined on a gendered basis, the distinction in these societies was made between the approval of the noble pursuit of love and the condemnation of the carnal abuse of sex. However it is essential important to note that this freedom was restricted by the abuses of power in these grossly socially and gender unequal societies. That gave permission for the extreme abuses of sex. Thus gender and sexual abuse was condemned because of abusive intention and purpose. The most notable abuse of power was in male same-sex intercourse. This is the condemnation which is used in place of the horror of sex, and when this is understood the contradiction between science and theology disappears. First century Roman society viewed sexual activity through the prism of subjection and domination, notably in same-sex acts of sex. High degrees of sexual purity were demanded in actions between Roman Citizens, but with slaves and non-citizens a male Roman citizen was much more able to do what he liked<sup>30</sup>. Sexual abuse was rife. Statues, ornaments and pictures of erect male phalluses were freely used to warn any non-Roman individual against any form of disruption or attack.

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clothing. In African religious beliefs the Akan people of Ghana for example, have a pantheon of gods that includes personifications of androgynous of transgender deities. The indigenous population of Australia have a shamanic religion, which includes a pantheon of gods, and the rainbow serpent god Ungud has been described as androgynous or transgender. Third gender, or gender variant, spiritual intermediaries are found in many pacific island cultures. The pre-Christian Philippines had a polytheistic religion, which included the transgender or hermaphroditic gods Bathala and Malyari, whose names means "Man and Woman in One" and "Powerful One" respectively. Two-Spirit People is an umbrella term that is now sometimes used what were previously known as berdaches. These are indigenous North Americans who fulfil one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many Native Americans and Canadian First Nations communities. Two-spirit people were both respected and feared in many tribes. They frequently became practitioners of tribal medicine. Although success could bring high status they could be likely to be suspected of witchcraft in cases of failed harvest, or the death of a tribal member

<sup>28</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/205P-ManagementTechniquesInGenderDysphoria.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> See for example the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church (2017), *Part 3 Life in Christ*. Article 2357: Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. Article 2358: The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. Article 2359: Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm)

<sup>30</sup> These topics are covered in detail in the following Papers: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*An Unfinished Reformation*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2011): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>; and Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

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When the scientific and theological principles which underlie this investigation are applied to Judaism the same relationships between power and sex are found. However cultural differences play an important role. Unlike the ascetic practices of the Greek philosophers, Judaism adopted a didactic approach. In its study of the Talmud, pairs of scholars or students worked together in Chavruta partnerships to learn, discuss and debate shared texts. This “Zugot” or “Pairs” approach was prevalent from the time of the exile until 70 AD. The rabbis inside the academies repeatedly encouraged their students to adopt ever increasing degrees of intimacy. No rules for first century Chavruta partnerships are found which establish any boundaries that approve of intense heterosexual friendships on the one hand, and disapprove of homosexual relationships on the other<sup>31 32</sup>. Indeed these concepts would not have been understood. The deeper the relationship the more valued the chavruta partnership became, and it is reported that the bonds between such same-sex partners could often be stronger than those in a heterosexual marriage<sup>33</sup>. The history of Judaism is littered with close-knit relationships in which today’s definitions of heterosexuality and homosexuality cannot be applied. In these socially and gender unequal societies these partnerships had to be relationships between two equals. Anal penetration was the boundary that could not be crossed and people who offended against this were harshly condemned for a “lack of respect”<sup>34</sup>. Parallels to these Jewish Rabbinic partnerships are found in liturgies which sanctify partnerships of Adelphopoiesis or “Brother Making” from an early date in the Christian Church<sup>35</sup>

An extended examination of this prohibition of same-sex intercourse is given in the accompanying papers<sup>36</sup>. It is well attested within first century Jewish sources that the specific prohibition in Leviticus applied to same-sex anal penetration by men alone and not to any other sexual acts<sup>37 38</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> For example In the Avot de-Rabbi Hathan it is recommended that a Chavruta partner should be someone with whom one can “eat and drink, read and study, sleep, and share secrets of the Torah and personal secrets” together. (As reported in Maimonide’s commentary on the Mishnah: Avot 1:6 aseh lekha rav). See section 3:2:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>. The special nature of the love expressed between Jesus and John in the Gospel of John would have been unremarkable for a Chavruta partnership of the time: Judaism is also littered with a history of close rabbinic partnerships in which today’s definition of heterosexuality and homosexuality cannot be applied. Full arguments are also presented in Gilchrist, S. (2011) “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>. Greenberg, Steven; (2004) “*Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*” The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3 gives a very complete account. Liturgies for ceremonies of Adelphopoiesis or “Brother Making” can still be accessed. These services have existed in Christianity from a very early date. A detailed description of these is given in section 3:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>. Also, in section 4:5:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> In these documents a comparison is made between these Christian relationships and those expected in the first century Jewish Rabbinic partnerships. The close correspondence suggests that they represent relationships which have been carried over into the Christian Church.

<sup>32</sup> The relationship had to be seen to be between equals to maintain the social statuses of both partners. They were not necessarily exclusive. Marriage was almost compulsory in Judaism and Rabbis would go home to their wives.

<sup>33</sup> For a full account see section 2:5 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> The word chavruta, like marriage, came to be used in the singular to describe two people in a relationship. The Talmud (Yevamot 62b) states that 12,000 pairs (sic) of students of Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (ca.50–ca.135 AD) died of plague between Passover and Shavuot, “because they did not treat one another with respect”. The context of the passage indicates that each pair of students formed a chavruta. The text also implies that this plague was diphtheria, but this may be a disguise for sexual misbehaviour, and for the massacres that took place after the Jewish Revolt in 70 A.D. See section 3:2:3 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: “*An Unfinished Reformation*”. <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> See Sections 2:0: Overview and Section 8:2: *The First Millennium* of Gilchrist, S. (2011) “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> See section 3:6 of: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> There is little controversy within the rabbinic tradition about the meaning of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. These passages are translated in various ways but the basic meaning has always appeared to be quite clear: “And with a male you shall not lie the lyings of a woman, it is an abomination.” A similar phrase, “The lying of a male”, appears in Numbers 31:18 and this is understood to mean what women experience in intercourse, i.e. that of penile penetration. The lyings of a woman are plural because she may be penetrated vaginally or anally but a man, who does not have a vagina, is singly penetrable anally. This Midrashim interpretation makes it clear that the passages in Leviticus only prohibit the act of same sex anal intercourse. There is no condemnation of lesbian sex whatever since penile penetration



For subject societies such as Judaism these actions of domination by members of a conquering society were horrific. However gender discrimination was also present in Judean society: and inside this society the same concerns about humiliation and domination continued to apply<sup>39</sup>. This is shown to be why the penetrator and the penetrated partners are both condemned in Leviticus 20:13: although in Leviticus 18:22, only the penetrator is accused<sup>40 41</sup>. There is no corresponding condemnation of same-sex behaviour between women, for these issues of power, subjection and domination were not considered to be relevant.

The first century definitions of gender and sex also differed greatly from those of the present day. Instead of the biological and chromosomal definitions used in today's society the distinctions between male and female were largely made on the capacity to act. Eunuchs could be considered a "third sex". According to a discussion between two of the most senior Jewish sages of the first generation after the fall of the Temple in AD 70, the prohibitions in Leviticus were not considered to apply to a boy below the age of nine years and one day, because he has not yet "become a male" and could not experience the domination or humiliation enforced by this sexual act<sup>42</sup>. In Chapter 18 of the book of Leviticus the Israelites are encouraged not to do as the Egyptians and Canaanites<sup>43</sup> do: (Leviticus 18:3 and 20:23) and in the halachic<sup>44</sup> literature it is consistently shown that the abuse of power was the reason given for the prohibition of same-sex intercourse, not an intrinsic horror of the act. That corresponds with information from other sources. Thus any examination of this prohibition, its history, and its specific nature, must look at the relationships between power and sex.

## 2:2: Christian Interpretations

The revolution that Jesus brought was never one that was promoted by violence: it was one that was promoted by love. Nevertheless Jesus expected violence against himself and its followers because of the power and disruption of the message he brought<sup>45</sup>. As a powerless group in a powerful Roman society Christianity could seek to survive by fulfilling the Gospel message in full within its own Community, while being witnesses of the Gospel message of love to those outside it. Peter and Paul constantly urge respect for the Roman authorities. This meant that Christianity could not directly attack the institutional structures of Roman society. However it could still mount vociferous attacks on the individual abuses of power and sex. The high degrees of intensity with which these condemnations were pursued are clearly evident in the early Christian literature, and full details of these are given in the associated papers<sup>46</sup>. Because of the intensity of these

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is not possible. See Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> A Jew who allowed himself to be penetrated by another male Jew could also be disparaged, since equivalent issues of status would still be involved. For a discussion see: Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> See section 4:4:1 "Power and Sex in Same-Sex Acts" of Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> It is commonly assumed that these were condemnations of temple prostitution and sexual abuse in surrounding societies. However this does not stand up well when a historical assessment of these societies is undertaken which uses external sources from Ugarit and elsewhere. See Gilchrist, S. 2013: "An Unfinished Reformation". Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Sanhedrin 54b: [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_54.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_54.html) and [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_55a.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_55a.html). See also: 4:4:1 Power and Sex in Same-Sex Acts in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> For an extended discussion on Canaanite practice see Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Jewish religious literature ordinances and law including that not included in the bible itself.

<sup>45</sup> See Luke 12:49: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" Matthew 10:34 also states: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword". Also Saying 10 in the Gospel of Thomas

<sup>46</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>. For a summary and references to other papers see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Summary of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/223P-SexGenderSummary.pdf>.

condemnations and the denunciation by the Christian Church of all sex, any awareness of the moral range and moral duality inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour was lost. Cultural differences and the different attitudes to celibacy were also important. The driving forces behind the Jewish condemnations have been shown to be concerned with the abuses of power in grossly unequal societies. However Greek religious traditions advocated celibacy to avoid the distractions of sex<sup>47</sup>. The consequence of these influences is this is that the paradigm shift in Christian teaching has taken place. By the time of the fourth century Church Christian condemnations focussed on the evils of sex, and first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse which were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality in the first century world.... and were known to Jesus, have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act<sup>48</sup>.

These assertions of power are today ignored in the traditional teaching of the Christian Church, which condemns all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour, regardless of its intention and purpose, as acts of grave depravity, intrinsically disordered; contrary to the natural law, and which choose the sexual act to the gift of life. Not only is the moral duality which is inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour denied by this traditional teaching, the disregard for the abuses of power within this teaching means that the protections which were offered to the underclasses of society through the gender challenging nature of the Goddess cults are also unrecognised<sup>49</sup>. It has also made it easier for the Christian church to dismiss the abuses of power within its own organisation that give rise to the abuses of sex<sup>50</sup>. Cultural differences also mean that what was regarded as acceptable in one society may be rejected in another. Because of these denials, Christian tradition simply regards the Goddess cults as hotbeds of sexual abuse, and any other role is dismissed<sup>51</sup>.

An extended social, theological and historical analysis has therefore been conducted to determine how and why the contradiction between science and theology occurs. This investigation considers the development of tribal, sexual and gender identities and the relationships between power, gender and sex. Five perspectives are employed. The first perspective examines the traditional Church teaching in the light of the understanding developed by this neurophysiological and psychological study. The second perspective works backwards within Church history and traditions in an attempt to determine what the earliest doctrines adopted by the Christian Church had been. The third

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<sup>47</sup> See section 5:2 of this document. Also section 8:3 "Celibacy": in Gilchrist, S. (2011) "Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Some commentators today presume that the cult of Cybele, as a Goddess religion, would be concerned primarily with maternal interests. However there is one important element to consider and that is the need to assert female status in a male dominated society. The three goddesses who stood at the head of the goddess cults in the three different cultural regions of the Middle East, - Cybele, Bahuchara Mata, and Inanna/Ishtar all shared important traits. All of the goddesses were credited with the power to inspire divine madness that could include the transformation of gender. In all of the three regions the respective goddess-inspired priests were believed to belong to a distinct gender category, and all of the goddess religions transgressed the patriarchal roles and structures of society just as much as their castrated male followers did. Their mythologies clearly placed them outside the patriarchal domestic sphere. Despite the common reference to all of these goddesses as "Mother" by their worshippers, there was much in their nature that exceeds and confounds the present-day connotations of maternal values. This gave a role for the cults which a present day women's liberation activist might value. The Greek rites and processions show Cybele as an essentially foreign and exotic mystery-goddess, who arrives in a lion-drawn chariot to the accompaniment of wild music, wine, and a disorderly, ecstatic following. The literary sources add their own descriptions of joyous abandonment to the loud and overwhelmingly percussive music of tympanon, castanets, clashing cymbals and flutes; and of frenzied "Phrygian dancing", which appears to be a form of circle-dancing by women. This was carried out to the roar of the "wise and healing music of the gods". This arrival of Cybele in a chariot pulled by lions is therefore a statement of power and authority. It is not a statement of submission and instead of the present day assumptions of the pursuit of sexual licence the public processions may instead be intended to enforce the authority of the cult. They may also be expected to challenge the normal social order, and the need to provide protection from male predation is evident in the myths of the cult. The evangelising activities of the male priests who had sacrificed their masculinity to the worship of the Goddess also presented major challenges to the social structure of society, but at the same time, through their act of sacrifice they affirmed the power of the Goddess herself. See: Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf> also Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> This is extensively discussed in the papers that have already been referred to

independently examines the social and the cultural backgrounds of the Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Jewish societies in which Christianity and the early Church had first been formed. In the light of the first three perspectives, the fourth perspective seeks to ascertain the teaching of Jesus himself. The second and the third perspectives adopt reverse standpoints to examine the history and the theology of the Christian Church. The final perspective examines the relevance of these issues to present day life. By comparing the results of the social, theological and historical investigations with the results of the scientific study new insights can be gained on bible texts. Full accounts of these studies can be found in the associated papers<sup>52</sup>.

### 3:0: Implications

#### 3:1: Review

Section 2:0 of this document describes the paradigm shift which has occurred Christian teaching. Because of this a contradiction between science and theology has been created. This is examined in this study. It is further established that both the contradiction between science and theology and the paradigm shift have developed because of changes in the theology of the Church.

It is demonstrated in this investigation that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexually variant behaviour fails on several counts. The first is that it medically misdiagnoses these conditions, the second is that it fails to recognise the identity driven nature of the gender and sexually variant conditions, the third is caused by its denial of the full range of moral values and commitments which are shown to exist, and the fourth is that they are presumed to be a lifestyle choice.

#### 3:2: Medical Misdiagnosis

In the scientific part of this study it is demonstrated that the physiological, neurological and psychological aspects of brain development act together to form a finely tuned system in which the maximum amount of individuality, possessiveness, intelligence and inquisitiveness, together with the minimum degree of energy expenditure is generated. In a process where the maximum possible degree of individuality and human potential is created, it is shown from a statistical point of view alone that a proportion of people who have gender and sexually variant identities will be formed without any internal or external cause. It also confirms that these conditions are driven by the search for identity and not reward. A consequence is that transsexuals develop a gender allegiance which is contrary to their biological sex, but this is at least as firmly held as those for whom their gender identity and allegiance follow a normal path, indeed it may be argued that the gender allegiance and identity which is felt by transsexuals should be even stronger because it has had to be fought for all along the way. Therefore the results of the author's research and the scientific consensus both regard gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as naturally expected variations of the

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<sup>52</sup> For accounts of the social, historical and theological studies, see the following papers: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/226P-ConsiderScience.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Reform and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/008B-ReformChristianChurchArticle.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

human condition, which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life.

This result challenges some long standing perceptions of psychology. It also challenges the traditional understanding of the Church. Giving children the freedom to explore their gender identity only enables them to find it. It does not enable them to choose it. This is because the core elements gender identity, (which can best be described as the unconscious knowing of one's place in society), becomes unchangeably fixed at a very early age<sup>53</sup>. For a full account of how these developments take place, see Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*<sup>54</sup>. A Christian doctrine which denies these development processes and condemns all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as reward driven behaviour and disordered acts of grave depravity, or denounces it as the failure to live up to Christian ideals, does not make a good start. The guilt and self-loathing which is created can be enormous. The medical misdiagnosis this doctrine makes has a totally destructive effect, because the wrong methods of management are applied<sup>55</sup>.

### 3:3: Gender Theory and the Catholic Church

One of the many positive things about the Pontificate of Pope Francis is his advocacy of the pastoral care of gender and sexually variant people. Pope Francis has also changed the tone of the debate on these conflicts in his comment *"If someone is gay and searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"*<sup>56</sup> In May 2018 Pope Francis in a private conversation is reported to have said to a gay man: *"Juan Carlos, that you are gay does not matter. God made you like this and loves you like this and I don't care. The Pope loves you like this. You have to be happy with who you are"*<sup>57</sup>. However Pope Francis still insists that there can be no change in the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church<sup>58</sup>. Instead of the past focus being on condemning all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour regardless of purpose, the present day condemnations now concentrate on the attacks which gender nonconforming activities are presumed to make, first to destroy the stability of society, and second through the challenges they impose on the doctrines of gender complementarity which are embraced by the Catholic Church.

This Catholic teaching on *"Gender Theory"* states that God creates human beings male and female<sup>59</sup>. It further declares that: *"This sexual difference and complementarity is within every person, for we all belong to families and draw our very existence from this complementarity. It is within the family that our lives first take shape and our identity is nurtured. Today we are faced with an ideology of gender which, (in the words of Pope Francis): "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual difference, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically*

<sup>53</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2013): *"Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf> also in: Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Medical misdiagnosis paper

<sup>56</sup> McElwee, Joshua: (2016): *"Francis explains 'who am I to judge?'"* National Catholic Reporter January 10 2016: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-explains-who-am-i-judge>

<sup>57</sup> Kirchgassner, Stephanie. (2018) *"Juan Carlos Cruz, who was sexually abused, says pontiff told him God did not mind that he was gay"* The Guardian 20 May 2018: [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/20/pope-juan-carlos-cruz?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/20/pope-juan-carlos-cruz?CMP=share_btn_fb)

<sup>58</sup> In an interview with America Magazine, Pope Francis revealed his pastoral approach toward the LGBT community in the following terms: *"A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: 'Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?' We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being"*. For more details see: Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> *"God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them"* (Gen. 1:27).

separated from the biological difference between male and female. Consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time". .Pope Francis goes on to say: "It needs to be emphasised that "biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated."<sup>60</sup> (*Amoris Laetitia*: (56))."<sup>61</sup>

There are three key presumptions which underlie this Catholic understanding. The first of these is that gender identity is a matter of choice. The second is the biological essentialism which demands that gender identity must be associated with biological sex. The third is the statement that God created "male and female", which is always interpreted as being exclusively either "male or female", and is never considered in inclusive terms. That last presumption is contradicted in the Jewish understanding of this expression which is discussed in section 5:1 of this document. In this Catholic teaching on "*Gender theory*", any departure from the male and female stereotypes leads to the destruction of the family and to dissolute sex. The attitude which makes "*Gender complementarity*" an official doctrine additionally means that any form of departure from the stereotypically male or female behaviour for any purpose challenges the institutional frameworks of socially and gender unequal societies. Both of these departures from the cultural normalities can be seen as disordered actions which threaten the social status and the stability which these societies require. However all of the three presumptions which underlie this teaching are rejected by the scientific arguments. The author's own analysis and the social, theological and historical reasons for the development of these Christian teachings are described in detail elsewhere<sup>62</sup>.

A crucial element in this research is the need to distinguish the teaching of Jesus from that of the Roman Church. The *Gospel of Thomas* can play an important part in this by providing an independent approach. The social and the cultural backgrounds of the Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Jewish societies in which Christianity and the early Church had first been formed are examined. In section 8:0 of this document it is shown that there were significant differences in approach. From each of the scientific, theological and historical points of view it is demonstrated in this investigation that the traditional teaching and doctrines of the Christian Church on gender and sexual variation are built on a false foundation. In place of the radical approach in the teaching of Jesus, for its survival and to enable it to take the Gospel message to the world, today's Christianity has adopted a form of gender complementarity which was amenable to Roman culture within which the Christian Gospel could be expressed<sup>63</sup>. That would lead to major misuses in the later Church, and strong gender discrimination occurred<sup>64</sup>. The consequences of the medical misdiagnosis and the contradictions with the scientific understanding are still present in the perception of "*Gender Theory*", as it is currently understood by the Catholic Church. The refusal of the Catholic Church and the Church of England in particular to consider any possibility of change to these traditional doctrines: "*as they have received them*" is destroying the credibility of Christianity in the present day world.

### 3:4: Social interactions

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<sup>60</sup> Catholic Bishops (2018): "A Statement on Gender from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales": 20 April 2018 [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Bishops-Plenary-Meetings/Plenary-April-2018/Statement-Gender](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Bishops-Plenary-Meetings/Plenary-April-2018/Statement-Gender)

<sup>61</sup> Pope Francis. (2016): "*Amoris Laetitia*": Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of The Holy Father Francis to Bishops, Priests and Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples and all The Lay Faithful on Love in the Family". 19 March 2016 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Summary of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/223P-SexGenderSummary.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> This required expressing to the Gospel message in full while conforming to the demands of society outside it. That ideal is expressed by Paul in Galatians 3:28: "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*". For a powerless church in a powerful society this moderation and adaptation was needed to ensure the survival of the Church. This is discussed in more detail from section 7:0 onwards

<sup>64</sup> See section 2:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): *An Unfinished Reformation*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

The thesis presented in this study is that it is not Christianity which is responsible for creating the persecution of gender and sexually variant people: instead that is driven by social divisions in society. However it is the collusion of the Church with this secular scapegoating of gender and sexually variant people which leads to the extremes of abuse. It is also demonstrated that these transformations have brought the Church to collude with the secular demands of society rather than to challenge them. Not only has this collusion reinforced the secular prejudices of such discriminatory societies; it gave and it still gives religious legitimacy to them. All awareness of the identity driven nature and the full range of moral expression in gender and sexually variant behaviour, which is totally recognised in the teaching of Jesus has been lost because of the need to combat the gross abuses of power and sex in Roman society and later to protect the institutions of the Church. It is therefore concluded that the source of the contradiction must come from changes in the theology of the Church. The correct restoration can only be made if the moral duality disclosed in this neurophysiological study and in the teaching of Jesus is used. This demands that the same criteria of use and abuse are applied to all aspects of gender and sex. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, it demands that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. All sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act, and there is no toleration of abusive sex.

As minority groups, gender and sexually variant people exist on the margins of society. Often in these societies only the voices of the abusers are heard. Therefore one of the greatest challenges that transgender and gender and sexually variant people must face is dealing with the misinformation that occurs. An absolute and urgent requirement must be to ensure that society as a whole can develop an understanding of gender and sexually variant conditions which is medically, socially and theologically correct.

However in place of examining these disagreements with the seriousness they deserve, the Church of England has determined that any future developments can only take place within its existing doctrine as "*The Church of England has received it*". Pope Francis has also made it clear that there can be no possibility of change to the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. This is not just a matter of disagreement. It is the refusal to engage in these issues, together with the imposition of these embargos and the historic failure to involve any openly gender and sexually variant people in the working parties and the decisions that Churches make, which is blighting many people's lives<sup>65</sup>.

### 3:5: Transformation and Tradition

A major challenge and achievement which was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into the dominant culture of the Greco/Roman state. This meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and the sexual values which were characteristic of Greco/Roman male dominated society. That additionally meant challenging

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<sup>65</sup> Some of the more recent papers by the author which reflect this refusal are: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*What Science and History Says about the Traditional Teaching on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/239P-WhatScienceAndHistorySays.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2017j): "*Religious and Secular Scapegoating of Transgender People: and its impact on the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/238P-SecularScapegoating.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2017i): "*Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2017f): "*Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2017e): "*Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2014): "*Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversoryAndCrisis.pdf> These papers also highlight the vulnerability to abuse that is created by a doctrine which ignores the abuses of power when it is used to condemn sexual abuse.

and usurping the power structures which are formed inside the powerful and dominant societies by placing the concern for the victims and the suppressed first on the religious and the social agendas of their cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality which is founded on compassion, nurturing and love. The continual testimony to the place of women amongst the followers of Jesus and his own serious teaching and treatment of them was a break with tradition which has been described as being without any previous precedent in first century Judaism. His interactions with women broke many of the taboos of purity and respectability which Judaism enforced, and the fairness with which he treated them is entirely appropriate for the present day world.

Celibacy and continence were advocated in different first century societies for different reasons. Common to all societies was is their containment of moral and sexual abuse. However that must be interpreted in line with the cultural values that each society expects. A further reason in Judaism concerned the subjection and domination involved in same-sex intercourse. For Jesus, celibacy was a way of committing to the Gospel message by avoiding the distractions of family relationships and similar diversions in life. For the Greek philosophers the absence of passion in sexual relationships was a way of promoting the greatness of thought. Self-castration was also a mark of religious devotion by removing the distraction and climaxes of sex. The gender disrupting activities of the Goddess cults with their self-castrated male priests provided a voice for the underclasses against the male domination of first century societies<sup>66</sup>. For a powerless Christian movement in first Century society the focus needed to be on attacking the abuses of power which led to the abuses of sex. However Peter and Paul demanded respect for the Roman authorities. Therefore, while Christianity continued to attack the abuses of power at an individual level which led to the abuses of sex with great vigour, it could not directly attack the structures themselves. References to these abuses of power do not appear in the New Testament texts. Neither Jesus nor John is understood to have married. In a first century Jewish society where heterosexual marriage was almost compulsory and when close rabbinic partnerships were formed, even the slightest suggestion that Jesus and John had same-sex intercourse would have been a great danger for the Church. As the Christian Church gained power and influence it could more easily create its own abuses. These transformations reached a zenith when Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. By the end of the fourth century the paradigm shift described in section 2:2 of this document had taken place so that the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse which were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality in the first century world.... and were known to Jesus, have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act<sup>67</sup>.

That paradigm shift was further reinforced by Aquinas who later developed the present day teaching on homosexuality and by extension on gender and sexually variation which is still adopted by major denominations of the Christian Church<sup>68</sup>. Unlike the previous concerns, Aquinas condemned all sexual relationships outside marriage as being in pursuit of lust and inappropriate sex. The public ministry of women had also been written out of the history of the Church. The approach which this author has adopted is to conduct a redaction of the currently accepted Christian documents, doctrines and traditions. This makes use of the results of these scientific investigations and the independent studies of Judaism and the surrounding first century societies to try to separate the doctrines which depend on Church tradition from the teaching of Jesus himself. However all of this material has come under the influence of the developing Roman Church. What is really needed is a document which is as far as possible independent of this influence. That can be offered by the

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<sup>66</sup> For accounts of how this took place, see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2013): *An Unfinished Reformation*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2011): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*An Unfinished Reformation*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

*Gospel of Thomas*. By carrying out a similar redaction on the Gospel of Thomas it is shown in this study that greater insights into the early development of Christianity and the teaching of Jesus can be obtained.

#### 4:0: Provenance and Dating of the Gospel of Thomas

The provenance of the *Gospel of Thomas* is a major issue<sup>69</sup>. The *Gospel according to Thomas* possesses a very different tone and structure from the other New Testament apocrypha and also the four Canonical Gospels. Unlike the Canonical Gospels, it is not a narrative account of the life of Jesus; instead, it consists of sayings that are attributed to Jesus, sometimes these are stand-alone; at other times they are embedded in short dialogues or parables. Since its discovery, many scholars have seen it as evidence which supports the existence of a lost so-called Q source, which was also a collection of sayings of Jesus, without any account of his deeds or his life and death<sup>70</sup>. If these are not the same, the Q source and the *Gospel of Thomas* may have had a similar form. The earliest fragments of the Gospel that have so far been found are dated to between 130 and 250 AD<sup>71</sup>. It was discovered near Nag Hammadi in Egypt in December 1945<sup>72</sup>. This Coptic-language text contains 114 sayings of Jesus<sup>73</sup>. Almost half of these resemble those found in the Canonical Gospels. It is speculated that the other sayings were added from either Gnostic, or other oral traditions, not recorded elsewhere. Its place of origin may have been in Syria, where traditions related to the Apostle Thomas were strong. From the dating of this material the *Gospel According to Thomas* is therefore an early Christian non-canonical or apocryphal Gospel of the sayings of Jesus, which many scholars believe provides insight into the early oral Christian tradition that existed before the written canonical Gospels were compiled.

Assigning any date to the *Gospel of Thomas* is very difficult because it is hard to know precisely how its origin should be defined.<sup>74</sup> Scholars argue that this is because the Gospel is a collection of sayings (*logia*) without a narrative framework, and individual sayings may have been added to it gradually over time<sup>75</sup>. Some have proposed a date which is as early as 40 AD or as late as 140 AD, depending upon whether the Gospel of Thomas is identified with the original core of the sayings of Jesus, or from the Greek or Coptic texts, or from citations in other literature. Valantasis dates Thomas to 100 to 110 AD, with some of the material coming from the earliest period, which is dated from 30 to 60 AD.<sup>76</sup> Porter dates the Gospel of Thomas to much later, at 250 AD<sup>77</sup>. The earliest surviving written references to the *Gospel of Thomas* are found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome (c. 222 to 235)<sup>78</sup> and Origen of Alexandria (c. 233)<sup>79</sup>. A statement which parallels Saying 22

<sup>69</sup> Patterson, Stephen, J: (2015): "The Gospel of Thomas and the historical Jesus": Chapter 13 in: Gregory, Andrew F; Tuckett, Christopher Mark; Nicklas Tobias (eds): (2015): "*The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*". Oxford Handbooks in Religion and Theology Oxford University Press, 2015 ISBN 019964411X, 9780199644117

<sup>70</sup> Q source (also Q document, Q Gospel, Q Sayings Gospel, or Q from German: Quelle, meaning "source") is a hypothetical written collection of primarily Jesus' sayings (*logia*). Q is part of the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark. According to this hypothesis, this material was drawn from the early Church Oral Tradition. Estimated Range of dating is between 40-80 A.D. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/q.html>

<sup>71</sup> Thomas fragments: The Oxyrhynchus Papyri are a group of manuscripts discovered during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Bernard Pyne Grenfell and Arthur Surridge Hunt at an ancient rubbish dump near Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, modern el-Bahnasa.

<sup>72</sup> For information on the Nag Hammadi sources, see: Meyer, Marvin (Ed) (2007): "*The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Texts*" Harper Collins: ISBN-10: 0061626007: ISBN-13: 978-0061626005

<sup>73</sup> Gospel of Thomas: (With linear translation linked to Crum's Coptic Dictionary and Plumley's Coptic Grammar). Ecumenical Coptic Project online edition, 1998 ff. <http://freelyreceive.net/metalogos/files/thomas.html>

<sup>74</sup> Valantasis, Richard (1997): "*The Gospel of Thomas*". London; New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-11621-X. p. 12

<sup>75</sup> Patterson, Stephen J.; Robinson, James M.; Bethge, Hans-Gebhard (1998): "*The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age*". Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International. ISBN 1-56338-249-0. p. 40

<sup>76</sup> Valantasis, Richard (1997): "*The Gospel of Thomas*". London; New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-11621-X. p. 20

<sup>77</sup> Porter, J. R. (2010). "*The Lost Bible*". New York: Metro Books. p. 9: ISBN 978-1-4351-4169-8.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, Steven R. (2010): "Hippolytus's Refutatio and the Gospel of Thomas: " *Journal of Early Christian Studies* Volume 18, Number 2, Summer 2010 pp. 305-326 | 10.1353/earl.0.0326 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/383543>



in the Gospel of Thomas appears 2 *Clement*, which is usually given a date from AD 140-160<sup>80</sup>. However that could have come from other lost Gospels, such as “*The Gospel to the Hebrews*” and the “*Gospel of the Egyptians*”, which were known to be extant at that time. Additional discussions on dating and relevance of the Gospel of Thomas can be found in section 2:3:4 “*An Apocryphal Challenge*” of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”<sup>81</sup>. Examining the attitudes to gender and sex that are taken in the “*Gospel of Thomas*” may help to determine the time of its writing. If this is shown to be early, it may throw additional light on how the development of attitudes to gender and sexuality progressed within the Christian Church. These issues are further addressed in Section 5:1 of this document and in Section 8:0: “*Cultural Clashes, Gender and Sex*”

#### 4:1: Overview

It is clear that the origin and the reliability of the *Gospel of Thomas* has been the subject of intense discussion. Today there is a general consensus among scholars that the *Gospel of Thomas* dates to the very beginnings of the Christian era, and that it may well have had its first appearance before any of the four traditional canonical Gospels. During the first few decades after its discovery several scholars have argued that the *Gospel of Thomas* was a late-second or third century Gnostic forgery and some those arguments are referred to in this document. However, most scholars now agree that because of its early date, this Gospel opens a new perspective on the first expressions of the Christian tradition. The Gospel is available in different translations: for details of the most common translations see: *The Gospel of Thomas Collection* in The Gnostic Society Library<sup>82</sup>. The translation by Thomas O. Lambdin is one that is frequently consulted<sup>83</sup>. This study uses a translation by Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson<sup>84</sup>. However different translations will be referred to in the text. There are therefore two ways of looking at the *Gospel of Thomas*, one is by treating it as an early Christian document with later additions, the second is to consider its structure and format to be of the form of a Midrash which records the teaching of Jesus and interprets it according to the Jewish tradition. In this analysis the approach taken is to treat it as a Midrashim text<sup>85</sup>.

#### 5:0: A Christian Document or a Jewish Text?

The Gospel of Thomas starts with the following words: “*These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke, and that Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down*”. The presumption is made that the term “Secret Sayings” defines these as later Christian Gnostic Texts in which secret keys are needed to unlock the meaning of such texts<sup>86</sup>. However it is argued in these investigations that the document should instead be identified with the Jewish Midrash tradition, where the Rabbis also demanded the use of secret keys to hide the meaning of their own texts<sup>87</sup>. This changes the whole perspective. If the Gospel was a later Christian gnostic text the perspective that it presents it would reflect a time

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<sup>79</sup> Origen (C233): “*Homilies on Luke*” Volume 94 of “The Fathers of the Church” Translated by Joseph T. Lienhard Publisher CUA Press, 2010 ISBN 0813211948, 9780813211947

<sup>80</sup> “For the Lord himself, being asked when the kingdom would come, replied, ‘When two shall be one, that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female’” (2 *Clement* 12).

<sup>81</sup> section 2:3:4 “*An Apocryphal Challenge*” of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> The Gospel of Thomas Collection, The Gnostic Society Library : [http://gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl\\_thomas.htm](http://gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl_thomas.htm)

<sup>83</sup> *Gospel of Thomas*: Translation by Thomas O. Lambdin: <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html>

<sup>84</sup> *The Gospel of Thomas* Translated by Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson: <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/bible-versions-and-translations/the-gospel-of-thomas-114-sayings-of-jesus/>

<sup>85</sup> Owens, Lance S. (accessed 2018): “*The Gospel of Thomas and the Hermeneutics of Vision*”: [http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth\\_hermen.htm](http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth_hermen.htm)

<sup>86</sup> Owens, Lance S. (accessed 2018): “*The Gospel of Thomas and the Hermeneutics of Vision*”: [http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth\\_hermen.htm](http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth_hermen.htm)

<sup>87</sup> New Testament Narrative as Old Testament Midrash

Robert M. Price [http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art\\_midrash1.htm](http://www.robertmprice.mindvendor.com/art_midrash1.htm)

after the Crucifixion and Resurrection had taken place. However, if it is a Midrash, the discernments it presents would peer backwards into the earlier history and traditions of Judaism itself.

What is of particular relevance is what is absent from the Gospel itself. There is no reference to the Crucifixion, the Last Supper and the Lord's Prayer. Even though there is reference to the "Solitary ones", this occurs in a way which is entirely concerned with the need to spread the gospel message and it does not connect to gender and sex. While Peter is mentioned in the Gospel, Paul is not, although both were instrumental in introducing the church to the Roman world. Another element is the impression that these are "Given issues". There is no need to defend their absence, or pretend otherwise. That would be the case if the sayings in the Gospel date from a time before these events took place. These are challenging perceptions which need to be looked at even if much scholarly opinion might not consider it at the present time. That demands an internal study of the texts. A full commentary on the Gospel is given in section 6:0: of this document. Far from being a random collection of sayings it is shown that strong linkages between them exist.

The authors of aggadah Midrashim used particular techniques to justify and support their beliefs. At times they would use very creative ways to interpret the text to arrive at their reading. These texts abound with wordplay, puns, alliteration, and allegory. Letters of key words are shifted and vocalizations are changed which allow the word or phrase to assume different meanings. The text itself is said to exercise little control over its interpretation. As a consequence there can be no single meaning. The doxology at the beginning of the *Gospel of John* is perhaps one example. Thus the meanings themselves lie in the perceptions of the interpreters. Therefore understanding moves away from the literalism expected in present day society towards a more allegorical and subjective approach<sup>88</sup>. Contrasts are drawn between different sections to elucidate deeper meanings from the texts and many of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* are grouped in this way. The first Christian teaching made use of the idiom of the *Didache*, which is translated as the "Two ways"<sup>89</sup>. These two ways were the "Way of darkness" and the "Way of light". There is also a parallel in the attitude to the moral duality implied in gender and sexual behaviour, where the distinction was made between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex. This way of separating goodness from evil was common to Jewish Greek and Christian traditions. It is strongly present in the *Gospel of Thomas*, where "The way of light" led to fulfilment and life. "The way of darkness" led to dissolution and death<sup>90</sup>.

## 5:1: The One Becomes Two and the Two Becomes One

Another strong element in the gospel is that of "the two becoming one". For example, saying 11(d) states: "On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?" In Saying 22 (parts d and e) Jesus said to them: "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below -

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<sup>88</sup>Eilber-Schwartz, Howard (1987): "Who's Kidding Whom?: A Serious Reading Of Rabbinic Word Plays" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume LV, Issue 4, 1 December 1987, Pages 765–788, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/LV.4.765>

<sup>89</sup> The "Didache" is considered the first example of the genre of the Church Orders of Service. The first section (Chapters 1-6) begins: "There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways." Lightfoot and Holmes, note that: "The Two Ways material appears to have been intended... as a summary of basic instruction about the Christian life to be taught to those who were preparing for baptism and church membership. In its present form it represents the Christianization of a common Jewish form of moral instruction. Similar material is found in a number of other Christian writings from the first through about the fifth centuries, including the Epistle of Barnabas, the Didascalia, the Apostolic Church Ordinances, the Summary of Doctrine, the Apostolic Constitutions, the Life of Schnudi, and On the Teaching of the Apostles (or Doctrina), some of which are dependent on the Didache." (See: Holmes, Michael W.(2006) "Apostolic Fathers in English", Baker Academic; ISBN-10: 0801031087 ISBN-13: 978-0801031083, and The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings. Trans. by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer. 2nd ed. Edited and revised by Michael W. Holmes. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.)

<sup>90</sup> It is present in the Qumran texts and other Jewish Religious traditions. See Kampen, John (2011): "Wisdom Literature: Volume 14 of Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls" Publisher Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011 ISBN 0802843840, 9780802843845: Also McKenna, Margaret Mary: (1981): "The two ways' in Jewish and Christian writings of the Greco-Roman period: a study of the form of repentance parenesis" University of Pennsylvania: <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AA18117811/>

that is, to make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female will not be female". In saying 87 (parts a, and b) Jesus also says: "Wretched is the body that depends on a body. And wretched is the soul that depends on these two." In saying 106(a) Jesus states: "When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man". The same parallels are found in other early Church literature: "For the Lord himself, being asked when the kingdom would come, replied: "When two shall be one, that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female" (2 Clement 12).

## 5:1:1: The Gender of Adam

Most readers of the biblical account of the creation of people assume that the first human being created was male<sup>91</sup>. However the Bible's account of human creation does not endorse that view<sup>92</sup>. The ambiguity in it has led to some fascinating Midrash interpretations of Genesis 1:26-27, which recounts God's creation of humankind. This passage states: "And God said, "Let us make man [Adam] in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Here there is no evidence that the word Adam must denote a male: indeed, the explanatory phrase, "male and female He created them" with the change from singular to plural can be read as identifying what the gender of this Adam actually was. Many rabbinic passages conclude that Adam belonged to both genders. For instance in the "Leviticus Rabbah" on Leviticus 12:2<sup>93</sup>, Rabbi Samuel b. Nahman said: "At the time that the Holy One, Blessed Be He created Man, He created him as an Androgynos". Separately Rabbi Berachya and Rabbi Chalbo and Rabbi Samuel b. Nahman said: "At the time that the Holy One, Blessed be He created man, He created him from one end of the earth until the other". Resh Lakish (Rashi) also asks that, if Genesis 1 records the creation of males and females from Adam, how is it that in Genesis 2, which immediately follows, Adam has no partner? Rabbi Samuel deals with this by saying that Adam was one being that had both genders<sup>94</sup>. Some Midrashim try to answer the dilemma by arguing that there were two Eves<sup>95</sup>. Therefore in these traditions the picture of Adam that is presented before Eve is one of a person who combines the best of both genders. Thus the "One became Two" when Eve was created. The Midrashim on Eve support this same view<sup>96</sup>. In an extension of this tradition "the "One also becomes Two" for every child at birth. Adam was the first to receive the promise of resurrection (See Genesis Rabbah 21:7, on Psalms 17:15). The picture of Adam before the "Fall" is that of an angel in Heaven. The picture of Adam after the Resurrection is that of the same angel<sup>97</sup>. Therefore the "Two again become One"

<sup>91</sup> Marston, Justin: (2000): "Jewish Understandings of Genesis" 1 to 3 *Science & Christian Belief* (2000), 12, 127–150

<sup>92</sup> See parallel traditions in the Genesis Rabbah commentary to Genesis 2:21 (Midrash Rabbah: Genesis. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, Vols. 1–2. London: Soncino Press, 1983. ISBN 0-900689-38-2: Genesis: In Two Volumes Translated by Rabbi dr. H. Freedman <https://ia800500.us.archive.org/13/items/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp.pdf> ), Midrash Psalms' commentary to Psalm. 139:5 p90-94,( Meyer, Kenneth.; Deshen, Rachel Salmon: (2010): "Reading the Underthought: Jewish Hermeneutics and the Christian Poetry of Hopkins and Eliot": Publisher, CUA Press, 2010 ISBN 0813217423, 9780813217420) and Midrash Yalkut Shim'oni's commentary to Ex. 26:20. (Yalkut Shimoni: Midrash al Torah, Neviim u-Khetuvim. Yarid ha-Sefarim, Jerusalem 2006)

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl07.htm>

<sup>94</sup> There are two points of view regarding man's nature presented in the two Biblical stories of man's creation. They are brought out more forcibly in the Haggadah. "Both worlds, heaven and earth, were to have a share in man's creation; hence the host of angels were consulted by the Lord when He said, "Let us make man" (Genesis 1. 26, and Genesis Rabba viii.) His (Mankinds) body reached from earth to heaven [or from one end of the world to the other] before sin caused him to sink" (Hag. 12a, Talmud tractate Sanhedrin 38b). "He was of extreme beauty and sunlike brightness" (B. B. 58a). "His skin was a bright garment, shining like his nails; when he sinned this brightness vanished, and he appeared naked" (Targum Yer. Gen. iii. 7; Genesis Rabba xi.). When God said: "Let us make man in our image," the angels in heaven, filled with jealousy, said: "What is man that Thou thinkest of him? A creature full of falsehood, hatred, and strife!" But Love pleaded in his favour; and the Lord spoke: "Let truth spring forth from the earth!" (Genesis Rabba viii.; Midrash Tehilim viii.).

<sup>95</sup> See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith>

<sup>96</sup> Kadari, Tamar: (2018): "Eve: Midrash and Aggadah" Jewish Women's Archive <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/eve-midrash-and-aggadah> (accessed March 2018):

<sup>97</sup> Angels appear on earth as messengers of God. They are neither male nor female in a human sense, because they belong to a different order of beings. Judaism defines different hierarchies. Although they are portrayed as cherubs or androgynous figures of great beauty when biblical writers try to describe angelic appearances, they consistently use masculine pronouns and male attributes

when heaven is reached. However angels are neither male nor female in a human sense, because they belong to a different order of beings. The pictures of Adam and Eve during this earthly life are complementary parts of the same person who is reunited after resurrection occurs.

What is being presented is gender transcendence, not gender equality and it is not androgyny. It should also be understood in the context of the “One Sex” model of antiquity<sup>98</sup>. This transcendence is a wholeness which demands that all people without difference, intersexed, male and female, those with different gender and sexual identities all can celebrate in equal and inclusive measure, the true love of God.

### **5:1:2: Gender divisions in First Century Society**

Instead of seeking this transcendence of gender, Peter and Paul use one of the Creation stories to give biblical authority to the gender complementarity which was needed for the Church to survive in the Roman World<sup>99</sup>. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35: *“As in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. Women should remain silent in the churches, they are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 1 Timothy 2: 9-15 says: “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. Finally 1 Corinthians 11:3-9 declares: “But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man”*. Paul focusses on the need for the early Church to be seen as a respectable organisation in Roman Society. Peter’s requirement to gain respectability in Roman society is set out in 1 Peter 3:1-8: *“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives<sup>100</sup>. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers”*

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<sup>98</sup> The “One Sex” model considered males and females to be the same, except that the sexual organs of one sex are turned inside out. Instead of being determined by biology, gender was largely determined by the capacity to act. Thus males, females, eunuchs, intersexed and others could each be identified as belonging to a different sex.

<sup>99</sup> There is debate over whether these statements are original to the texts or are later additions. For the purposes of this discussion they are treated as being original to the texts.

<sup>100</sup> Or at least what is attributed to Peter

Roman society, through its Gods, gave men and women citizens equal esteem but created very strongly differentiated roles that gave men authority in public life and women authority over house and home. In this strongly patriarchal society the submission of women to men was enforced. These restrictions however applied only to Roman citizens, and the freedom this gave to male Roman citizens to do with others much as they liked was a cause of great sexual abuse. This horrified Judean society. However in a separate paper by the author it is shown that the same social order existed within Judaism itself: (Gilchrist, S. (2015): *“Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”*<sup>101</sup>). It also exposes the disagreements about the extent to which the laws of the Torah should be implemented within the early Church. It is further argued that the doctrines of gender complementarity which today are adopted by many Churches were carried over from the Judean tradition, instead of endorsing the message that Jesus brought. Using the Creation story and the history of the submission of Judean women to justify the transformation that was needed to integrate into Roman society bypassed the teaching of Jesus, who broke every taboo on the roles and status of women in Judean society, and who treated men and women completely as equals throughout his ministry and his earthly life.

### 5:1:3 Dealing with Contradiction

There is a stark contrast between these two interpretations. Of particular concern is the way in which Peter and Paul use the story of Adam and Eve to reinforce their arguments for a gender complementarity which endorses the dominance of men over women and defines the social roles, which men and women are required to adopt. That contradicts the gender transcendence and the symmetry between men and women which the traditional Jewish interpretation of this story in the form of: *“The One Becomes Two and the Two Becomes One”*. In Galatians 3:28 Paul highlights his own contradiction when he says: *“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”*. Here, Paul was not talking about heaven: he was talking about how people should live their lives on earth. Paul also makes use of the theme of the *“Two becoming One”* in 1 Corinthians 6:16. He states: *“Or don't you know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”* That unity of male and female is even more strongly expressed in Saying 22 of the Gospel of Thomas. In Mark 10:6-9 Jesus also uses the concept of *“The two becoming one”*: he says: *“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* The corresponding core message in the Gospel of Thomas appears in Saying 22, together with the other sayings in the Gospel which ring the changes on the theme of *“Two becoming one”*. These look back toward the androgynous unity that existed before the diversity that is found in worldly creation and it applies it to the then contemporary world. Sayings 11, 16, 22, 61, 87, 106, and 114 also bear on this theme of unity<sup>102</sup>. The comprehensive way in which Saying 22 and Saying 114 are written in the Gospel of Thomas makes it clear that there can be no place in the teaching of Jesus for anything other than the transcendence of gender which treats both men and women as fully equal in every aspect of life.

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<sup>101</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015): *“Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> Support for this inclusive interpretation is given in Saying 11(d) Gospel of Thomas, which states: *“On the day when you were one, you became two”*, and in saying 106(a), where Jesus states: *“When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man”*. The *“One before birth becomes Two”* at birth. Then in marriage the *“Two are Made One Flesh”*, with the *“Two Becoming Fully One”* in the completeness of heavenly life.

Two contradictory pictures of Paul are presented. Most people attribute the gender transcendence described by Paul in Galatians 3:28 to belong to a period of early idealism arising from the time when the end of the world was believed to be imminent. The second picture comes later because of the increasing need to conform to the demands of Roman society, since the expected end of the world and the *Second Coming* of Jesus was delayed. This contradiction lessens greatly if it is postulated that both may co-exist. That is discussed in detail in Section 4:3:2: “A Pragmatic Approach” of Gilchrist, S. (2016): *“Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”*<sup>103</sup>. Although Jesus clearly prepared himself and his followers for violence against themselves to the extent which demanded of them the degree of commitment to the Gospel message that required the avoidance of the distractions of marriage and family life, there was no place for violence to be engaged in by his followers. The opposite armament of sacrificial love was the approach he employed. In a Jewish society with ferment for violent revolt, that had to be a carefully managed. The same challenges faced Peter and Paul when bringing the Gospel message to the Roman world. An indication of the way this could be achieved is evident in Paul's letter to Philemon. Paul does not demand that the contract of slavery should be broken but he asks his master to treat the slave as an equal partner in the love of Christ<sup>104</sup>. Today nobody (one hopes) would use the letter to Philemon to justify slavery. For both Peter and Paul, obtaining the respect of others in Roman society was necessary for the survival of the Church. As with the attitude which Paul took to slavery in the Letter to Philemon, it would seem that the Gospel message should be expressed in full within the Christian Community while conforming to social expectations outside it<sup>105</sup>. Once it had gained sufficient influence it could then transform the world. Thus the radical teaching of equality and oneness in the gospel message could be kept alive, while accommodating the pressures of society around it. Reasons for adopting of this approach are discussed in other parts of this investigation and they are found in the Gospel of Thomas and in the Canonical Gospel texts<sup>106</sup>.

In Mark 12:14-17 Jesus responded to the trap the Pharisees set for him: *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* A version of this story also appears in Luke, and it again appears as saying 100 in the Gospel of Thomas. However in Thomas it is accompanied by sayings 98 and 99 which expand on this theme. Saying 98 states *“The kingdom of the Father is like a person who wanted to kill a powerful person. He drew the sword in his house (and) stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough). Then he killed the powerful one.”* This is one of only two places where Jesus qualifies his teaching. In the discussion by Jesus in Matthew 19:12, on marriage and eunuchs an equivalent qualification is shown to be applied in those instances when

<sup>103</sup> Section 4:3:2: “A Pragmatic Approach” in Gilchrist, S. (2016): *“Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> It would appear that the initial aim of the Church was to accept that gender complementarity had to be endorsed for relationships with outside society, but within the Church and the Christian Community, complete gender transcendence was still to be maintained. A parallel to this is found in the letter to Philemon, where the author deals with the issue of the runaway slave who is about to go back to his master after they have both been converted to Christianity. The letter asks for the slave to be accepted by his master on Christian terms. However, instead of asking for the emancipation and the release of the slave, the author supports the social conventions on slavery in society. The slave remains a slave, who is subject to his master, but now within the Christian community the slave and master are to be treated completely as equals and brothers, and this is because all are one in Christ.

<sup>105</sup> From the prior research work described in sections 2 and 3 of this document. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, this demands that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. Under the teaching of the New Covenant all sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act, and there is no toleration of abusive sex.

<sup>106</sup> See section 4:3 Christian Interactions in Gilchrist, S. (2016): *“Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

transgender and gender and sexually variant conditions are considered. This will be examined further in section 6:0: “*Culture, Gender and Sex*” of this document. It is also discussed in other papers associated with this investigation<sup>107</sup>.

As a powerless group in a powerful society these adaptations enabled the Christian church to move forward inside Roman society. Change would occur as its mission and influence increased and through this it could come to transform the world. Both Peter and Paul had met early in Paul’s ministry, presumably to agree mutual support, but each had different expectations for the Church<sup>108</sup>. Although Paul in this analysis saw the need to conform to the gender roles expected in the gender unequal societies as a stepping stone towards the full realisation of the gender transcendence and gender equality of the Gospel message (and is still pilloried for it), Peter, with his reference to the submission of the Holy Women of the past, and his definition of women as the weaker partners, considered the adoption of this gender complementarity to be an end in itself. A different approach is taken in the Gospel of Thomas, and that is discussed in section 8:0: of this document.

### 5:1:4: Disagreement and Challenge

Christianity emerged in the Roman Empire during a period of cultural conflict, economic dislocation, political change and migration from the countryside to the cities. Not only was there a lack of unity in society, there was a lack of unity in the embryonic Christian Church. The Council of Jerusalem<sup>109</sup>, or

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<sup>107</sup> See also Section 3:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> Paul says that his initial interaction with Peter came upon his own initiative. He “*went up to Jerusalem to inquire of Cephas (Peter)*” (Galatians 1:17) to visit him for fourteen days. What happened during the meeting is unclear: On the one hand, Paul could be saying that he visited Peter with the intent of becoming acquainted with him and his experience in the Gospel. On the other hand, Paul may be saying that he went to give an account to Peter of what his own experience in the Gospel had been. Since this was their first meeting, a bit of both may have occurred. Based on the information Paul shares in Galatians 1-2 this initial meeting appears to have taken place around 37-38 AD. Their pathways into faith and leadership in the church were very different: Peter, the Galilean fisherman and Paul, the rising Jewish scholar and leader. In Acts 9-15, Luke complements what Paul says. In his second letter Peter mentions Paul and commends his writings, even though they contain things he considers “*hard to grasp*” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Some have considered Peter to be the person who acted as a bridge between James the Just, who was strongly supportive of maintaining the Jewish traditions in the Torah, and Paul who was not. Galatians 2 indicates the nature of the conflicts that existed. The next episode in Paul’s account in 2 Galatians presents a painful contrast to the expression of fellowship in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Having just heard about the “*right hand of fellowship*” extended to the circumcised and uncircumcised in Galatians 2:2:9, in verse 11 Paul publically opposed Peter to his face. (Galatians 2:9-14: “*and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’”). The question therefore has to be asked: Was the conflict between the two groups really resolved, and how could this conflict between Paul and Peter occur so soon after they had reached an agreement to support one another? Apparently that is exactly what certain men with connections to James did when they arrived in Antioch. Who were these men? Were they actually sent from James? Or were they members of James’s circle in the church but without a direct commission from James? Paul cloaks them with anonymity but he seems to lay on James the responsibility for their disturbance in the church in Antioch. The clue is in Paul’s explanation in verse 12 that Peter separated himself from the Gentiles *because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group*. This account exposes the simmering tension in the early Church between those who were determined to maintain the Laws of the Torah and those who supported the transcendence of gender in the teaching of Jesus. Because of its derogation of Peter and the strong emphasis of the transcendence of gender, the Gospel of Thomas fits the character of a riposte to those who sought to maintain the Jewish traditions of the Torah in the Christian Church. Although Peter and Paul agreed to support each other, there appears to be different endpoints in their strategies. It is argued that the conservatism of Peter and his difficulty in accepting women as full equals in the Church has led to the continuation of the doctrines of gender complementarity derived from the Jewish tradition. However Paul, who did not consider himself bound by this Jewish tradition, advocated the full transcendence of gender and the equality of men and women in the Christian Church.*

<sup>109</sup> The Council of Jerusalem is generally dated to 48 AD, roughly 15 to 25 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, between 26 and 36 AD. Acts 15 and Galatians 2 both suggest that the meeting was called to debate whether or not male Gentiles who were converting to become followers of Jesus were required to become circumcised. Circumcision was considered repulsive during the period of Hellenization of the Eastern Mediterranean. The conclusion of the Council was to ask the Gentiles to conform only to the “Seven Laws of Noah”: 1. Not to worship idols. 2. Not to curse God. 3. To establish courts of justice. 4. Not to commit murder. 5. Not to commit adultery or sexual immorality. 6. Not to steal. 7. Not to eat flesh torn from a living animal. Any non-Jew who adheres to these laws because they were given by Moses is regarded as a righteous gentile, and is assured of a place in the world to come

the Apostolic Council, was held in Jerusalem around AD 50<sup>110</sup>. The primary issue related to the requirement of circumcision of the Gentiles, but other important matters were involved. The dispute was between those, including the followers of the "*Pillars of the Church*", led by James, who believed that the Church must fully observe the Torah, i.e. the rules of traditional Judaism, and the groups who opposed them, including Paul the Apostle and others, who disagreed and believed there was no such necessity. The Gospel of Thomas derogates the role of Peter, presumably because of the gender complementarity that he advanced in line with these Judean traditions, while on the other hand it very strongly endorses the transcendence of gender, and the full equality of men and women in God's love which it attributes to the teaching of Jesus, in all matters of behaviour and gender and sex.

Saying 13 in the Gospel of Thomas has parallels in Matthew 16:13-20 where Jesus asks the disciples to describe who they think he is. In the bible passage it is Peter who declares that Jesus is the Messiah. In the equivalent saying in the Gospel of Thomas, Peter is dismissed as a "Wise Messenger" and Thomas instead is given that perceptive role. The saying most often quoted is Saying 114: Simon Peter said to them: "*Let Mary [Magdalene] go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.*" Jesus said: "*Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male spirit, similar to you.*" (But I say to you): "*Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.*" This saying is often rejected because of the seeming biological impossibility. However in first century society gender was largely determined by the capacity to act. Gender transformations and their threats, metaphorical or not were used as political and social weapons to manipulate people in society. To "Make Mary Male" was to give her full equality with all of the apostles, in social roles, in public and private ministry, and in every other act.

This is not the only instance where Peter had difficulty in accepting women as fully equal in the Church<sup>111 112</sup>. There were many factions active in the early Christian movement. This included its followers in Corinth where there were arguments between those who were for Peter, Apollos or Paul<sup>113</sup>. There were also divisions between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, which included those who believed that the followers of Jesus should continue to completely fulfil the Laws of the Torah and those who did not. A further division occurred between those, such as Paul, who accepted the

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<sup>110</sup> See Acts, chapter 15.

<sup>111</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1974): "*Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*", pp. 153-154. Eerdmans Pub Co: (Jun 1974). ISBN-10: 0802815758 ISBN-13: 978-0802815750. It is concluded in this investigation that the gospel of Thomas should be assigned an early date. However it should be noted that Bruce argues that the gospel of Thomas is instead a later Christian Gnostic text. However Bruce writes that: "*Peter expresses impatience at the presence of Mary Magdalene in their entourage. [In Pistis Sophia, when Mary has expounded the 'mystery of repentance' and been congratulated by Jesus for her insight, Peter protests: 'My Lord, we are not able to bear with this woman, speaking instead of us; she has not let any of us speak but often speaks herself' (54b). In the John Rylands University Library of Manchester there is an early third-century Greek papyrus fragment (P. Ryl. 463) of a Gospel according to Mary (Magdalene), in which the disciples discuss revelations which the Saviour is said to have given exclusively to Mary. Peter is unwilling to believe that the Saviour would have committed privately to a woman, truths which he did not impart to his male disciples, but Levi rebukes him and defends Mary*"

<sup>112</sup> Grant Robert M. and Freedman, David Noel. (1993) "*The Secret Sayings of Jesus*", pp. 143-144: Barnes & Noble Books; First Edition edition (January 1, 1993). ISBN-10:1566192749 ISBN-13: 978-1566192743 In this investigation it is concluded that the gospel of Thomas should be assigned an early date. However it should be noted that Grant and Freedman presume that the gospel of Thomas is a later Christian Gnostic text. They write: "*As in the Gospel of Mary (pages 17-18 of the papyrus) and in Pistis Sophia (chapter 146), Simon Peter is not enthusiastic about the presence of Mariham (mentioned in Saying 21), just as in John 4:27 the disciples of Jesus are amazed because he is speaking with a woman. Male and female must become one (Saying 23 and Commentary). Jesus will 'draw' her (John 12:32) so that she will become 'one spirit' with him (1 Corinthians 6:17). She will become a man; just so, Ignatius of Antioch says that when he receives the pure light he will 'become a man' (Romans, 6, 2; for another parallel to Ignatius see Commentary on Saying 82). In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, women must become men. This is again an analysis which assigns the Gospel of Thomas to a much later date and presumes that saying 114 demands the obliteration of all sex*"

<sup>113</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:10-17: "*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas (Peter)"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*"



need to interpret the Christian message in a way that met the needs of Roman Society, and those for whom no such compromise was appropriate. The evidence for all these arguments and disagreements is present in The Gospel of Thomas even though Paul is not mentioned in it. The Gospel of Thomas is attributed to the Apostle Thomas who took the Gospel to India from AD 53 to the time of his martyrdom in AD 72. It is therefore possible that the Gospel of Thomas is an independent account. If this Gospel does rely on Pauline influence and presence, it may date from between AD 49 and AD 58, corresponding to Paul's visits to Jerusalem. If Paul is not the originator of these challenges, this part of the Gospel of Thomas may have an even earlier date.

### 5:1:5: Inclusion or Exclusion?

The Bible never divides the sexes in terms of male or female: the inclusive term male and female is always used. That is true from the first stories of creation right up to the statement by Paul in Galatians 3:28: *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"*. It has been seen that this inclusion is given even more emphasis in Saying 22 of the Gospel of Thomas, also in 2 Clement: *"For the Lord himself, being asked when the kingdom would come, replied: "When two shall be one, that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female" (2 Clement 12:2-5)*. Clement expands this to demonstrate that complete unity both of body and soul is involved<sup>114</sup>. These three sources, Paul, Thomas and Clement agree<sup>115</sup>. This transcendence of gender is also present in the image of the risen Jesus in the Early Church. A corresponding pattern is found today in the Ethiopian and Nubian Coptic Churches where, in the pictures of the Stations of the Cross before the Resurrection, Jesus is presented as a caring but totally male figure. However after the resurrection, his image is transformed to one of a gender transcending angel instead<sup>116</sup>.

Instead of interpreting the expression *"male and female"* in inclusive terms, current Christian teaching takes the reverse approach. In *A Statement on Gender from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales*<sup>117</sup>, the Bishops said: *"Our teaching is that God creates human beings male and female: "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Genesis. 1:27). This sexual difference and complementarity is within every person, for we all belong to families and draw our very existence from this complementarity. It is within the family that our lives first take shape and our identity is nurtured"*. In this teaching, the creation of the male and female as separate and complementary beings is seen as being part of God's divine plan from the outset. (This is also discussed in Section 3:2 of this document). However that divine plan was changed because of the isolation of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Before that change, Adam was neither male nor female, but belonged to all genders, as the symbol of the unity of humankind. The divisions and disagreements in the early Church are highlighted in this analysis

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<sup>114</sup> 2 Clement:12:2-5: *"For the Lord Himself, being asked by a certain person when his kingdom would come, said, When the two shall be one, and the outside as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male or female. Now the two are one, when we speak truth among ourselves, and in two bodies there shall be one soul without dissimulation. And by the outside as the inside He means this: by the inside he means the soul and by the outside the body. Therefore in like manner as thy body appears, so also let thy soul become manifest by its good works. And by the male with the female, neither male nor female, he means this; that a brother seeing a sister should have no thought of her as a female, and that a sister seeing a brother should not have any thought of him as a male"*

<sup>115</sup> It is also present in other Middle Eastern societies of antiquity. At the time Eve was created the all-encompassing Adam was split in two. Therefore the previously androgynous and all-encompassing Adam became male at the same time as the female Eve was created. When the Kingdom is heaven is entered the two again become one. Judaism and early Christianity always use the inclusive terms "male and female". The present teaching of many Churches which split the genders into "Male or Female" and which regards every form of behaviour which departs from the male and female stereotypes as a "Falling from Grace", is not present in the teaching of Jesus. It arises from the misuse of power and the enforcement of the doctrines of gender complementarity that have been imposed by the traditions of the Christian Church (see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"Summary of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/223P-SexGenderSummary.pdf>

<sup>116</sup> Personal Communication

<sup>117</sup> Catholic Bishops (2018): "A Statement on Gender from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales": 20 April 2018 [www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Bishops-Plenary-Meetings/Plenary-April-2018/Statement-Gender](http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Home/News/Bishops-Plenary-Meetings/Plenary-April-2018/Statement-Gender)

and it is the conflict between these Jewish traditional values and the early Christian understandings that must be looked at if full understanding is to be gained<sup>118</sup>.

The Catholic Church may correctly claim that its teaching is inherited from the Apostle Peter. However in section 5:1:2 in this investigation it is argued that the role taken by Peter, and divisions in the early Church about how fully the commands of the Torah should be implemented, had bypassed the teaching of Jesus, who had broken every taboo on the roles and status of women in Judean society: and who treated men and women completely as equals throughout his ministry and his earthly life. It is further established in this study that the present teaching of the Church on gender complementarity is a continuation of that which was practiced in Judaism, which was then adapted to fit the needs of the early Church and the first century Roman world. The research work conducted by the author demonstrates that these transformations have occurred through changes in the theology of the Church. The strength of opinion which is expressed in the Gospel of Thomas suggests that this was a major issue which could at that time have caused schism in the Church.

A concubinus in ancient Rome was a young male slave who is sexually exploited as a sexual partner by his master who was usually a young unmarried male. These relationships were expected to precede the role of marriage where the adult male demonstrated his masculine authority as head of the household. In the Roman army, Centurions were not allowed to marry or to consort with the local women. One of accepted functions of a Centurion's slave was to provide a similar sexual role. In such a situation the normal pattern would be that of a powerful master dominating a powerless slave. In the story of the Centurion and slave in Matthew 8:5-13 and in Luke 7:1-10, this story of power is replaced by a story of love<sup>119</sup>. The Centurion loved the Jewish nation and loved his slave. When he approached Jesus to ask for the slave to be healed Jesus responded by praising him and saying: *"I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."* Clearly from this passage Jesus had not previously met the Centurion. Nor did Jesus query the relationship between the Centurion and slave, despite the sexual expectations that would have been present. Two criteria may be relevant. The first is that Jesus may be interpreting Jewish Law, particularly Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, in accord with his teaching in the New Covenant, where the Law is to be fulfilled in line with its purpose and intention, not the prohibition of the act. The second is the first century interpretation which Judaism itself applies to these passages. This is described in sections 2:1 and 2:2 of this document. In Chapter 18 of the book of Leviticus: (Leviticus 18:3 and 20:23) the Israelites are encouraged not to do as the Egyptians and Canaanites<sup>120</sup> do and the halachic<sup>121</sup> literature consistently shows that the abuse of power was the reason given for the prohibition of same-sex intercourse, not an intrinsic horror of the act. Furthermore the prohibitions in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are considered not to apply when these abuses of power are absent. That is discussed in

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<sup>118</sup> There are two conflicting creation stories in Genesis. In one of these all humankind was created on the same day. In the second Eve was created after Adam. In Genesis, 1 on the sixth day of creation God had just finished creating all the living creatures that move along the ground, God paused and evaluated his work, *"And God saw that it was good"* (Genesis 1:25). The next stage is described in Genesis 2:7 *"And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being"*. However creation was still not complete. After placing Adam in the Garden, God observed that there was still something missing. *"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'"* (Genesis 2:18). Adam was very happy to see Eve, and his language "at last" indicates that he was waiting for such a companion (Genesis 2:23). In Genesis 2: 23 and 24 the man (Adam) said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh". So with the creation of Eve *"The One became Two"*. Isaiah also writes *"Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name"* (Isaiah 49:1). At birth *"The one becomes two"* Then in marriage the *"Two are Made One Flesh"*, with the *"Two Becoming Fully One"* in the completeness of heavenly life.

<sup>119</sup> For a full account see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> For an extended discussion on Canaanite practice see Gilchrist, S. (2015): *"Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> Jewish religious literature ordinances and law including that not included in the bible itself.

Section 2:1 of this document<sup>122</sup>. On its own, one might not read too much into the story of the Centurion and the slave, but when all of these considerations are taken together they support the conclusion that when the abuses of power are absent, there should be no condemnation of any loving and committed heterosexual or same-sex act of sex.

It is important to note that in this investigation the Gospel of Thomas is only used as an independent source to test and validate (or otherwise) the results of previous research. That research is summarised in sections 2:0 and 3:0 of this document where, from each of the scientific, theological and historical points of view it is demonstrated that the traditional teaching and doctrines of the Christian Church on gender and sexual variation are built on an incorrect foundation. In place of the gender transcendence and radical approach which is present in the teaching of Jesus, it is shown that Christianity adopted a form of gender complementarity which was amenable to Roman culture within which the Christian Gospel could be expressed. This was needed for its survival and to enable it to take the Gospel message to the world (section 3:3). It is also the result of a pragmatic approach which is discussed in section 5:1:3 of this document and elsewhere<sup>123</sup>. It is further concluded and supported in the Gospel of Thomas, that the correct restoration can only be made if the moral duality disclosed in the neurophysiological studies which form part of this investigation and in the teaching of Jesus is used. This requires that the same criteria of use and abuse are applied to all aspects of gender and sex. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, this means that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. Also, in line with the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant, all sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention, there is no automatic condemnation of any heterosexual or same-sex act of sex, and there is no toleration of abusive sex.

## 5:2: Sex, Celibacy and the “Solitary Ones”

How celibacy and same-sex intercourse were dealt with differed greatly across the various first century Mediterranean cultures and states. Ancient Greek civilization developed two forms of celibacy for men: one was the sacerdotal celibacy of the priest; the other, the ascetic celibacy of the philosopher. Priests of various cults, such as the followers of Isis, were required to abstain from sexual activity in order to be qualified to practice the sacred rituals. The philosopher Pythagoras and his followers were devoted to study, and practiced celibacy and vegetarianism. They, Epictetus and others regarded celibacy as important to avoid distractions and allow the mind to focus clearly on the complex task of scholarly inquiry. Plato famously promoted nonsexual love as superior to sexual love, since the pursuit of philosophy should avoid the passions of sex. Amongst their own circles and societies the self-castrated priests of the Goddess cults could be given greater esteem than ordinary celibates because of the irreversibility of their acts<sup>124</sup>. Self-castration was commonly practiced across first century societies as a mark of religious devotion and to avoid the distractions of sex<sup>125</sup>. All forms of sexual abuse were strongly condemned, but there is no commandment in the

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<sup>122</sup> Sanhedrin 54b: [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_54.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_54.html) and [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_55a.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_55a.html). See also: 4:4:1 Power and Sex in Same-Sex Acts in Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> See Section 4:3:2: “A Pragmatic Approach” in Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>124</sup> For full descriptions of the roles of the Goddess cults see: Gilchrist, S. (2015): “Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>; Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> For detailed accounts see: Gilchrist, S. (2011): “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>, Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An

New Testament that Jesus' disciples had to live in celibacy. Instead of this Thomas describes those who sought to follow this path as *"The Solitary Ones"*... without any reference to sex or to any sexual act. That contradicts previous understandings in which the pursuit of continence and celibacy was perceived to be concerned with the pursuit or the avoidance of sexual acts.

It is concluded in this investigation that sexually oriented interpretations have been imposed on the *Gospel of Thomas* because of the assumptions that have been made about the rejection of all sex<sup>126</sup>. In section 2:1 of this document it is shown that these concerns in first century Judaism were about the abuses of power which led to the abuses of sex. Same-sex intercourse was prohibited for this reason and not the horrors of sex. With the exception of Jesus and John most, if not all, of the original Apostles were married and some had children. Jesus did not speak in negative terms of the body in the New Testament. The general view on sexuality among the early Jewish Christians was quite positive. While the Jewish sect of Essenes practiced celibacy the general practice of the Jewish community by that time prescribed marriage for everybody: and at an early age. Matthew 19:12<sup>127</sup> is often interpreted as an argument for celibacy; however the references to eunuchs in this passage have to be considered in the context of the self-castration required by the demands of certain first century religious beliefs. See section 8:0: *"Cultural Clashes, Gender and Sex"* in this document for a full discussion of these issues.

The emphasis in the teaching of Jesus is that the type of celibacy which he sought was the state of solitariness that was needed to enable total commitment to the Gospel message. That is discussed in Matthew: 10:34 and Matthew 12: 48-50<sup>128</sup>. The same passages also appear in the *Gospel of Thomas*. In addition the *Gospel of Thomas* refers to the *"Solitary Ones"*. This term appears in sayings 16, 49, 56 and 75. In Saying 49 in the *Gospel of Thomas* Jesus says: *"Blessed are the solitary ones, the elect. For you will find the kingdom. For you come from it (and) will return to it."* It is generally considered that Jesus did not marry and this removed the distractions of family life. Emphasising the *"Solitary Ones"* avoided the distractions of impeding relationships: not the distractions of sex<sup>129</sup>. Further discussion on this topic is given in the commentary on Saying 100 which is to be found in section 6:0 of this document. It is notable that Thomas never calls this *"celibacy"*: it is always referred to as the *"Solitary Ones"*. It is clear that this call to celibacy (or its equivalent) is entirely concerned with the need to be totally committed to the Gospel message. In this *Gospel*, on both counts there are no references or concerns in any of these passages about sexual passions or the horrors of sex.

Instead of concentrating on marriage, the focus for Jesus was on heavenly relationships. In saying 104 Jesus declares: *"But when the bridegroom comes out of the wedding chamber, then let (us) fast and pray."* In Matthew 12:48-50 Jesus says *"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"* Pointing to his disciples, he said, *"Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."* Although Jesus did not institute the

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*Unfinished Reformation*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>: Gilchrist, S: (2013): *"Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> There is a major difference in outlook between the *Gospel* and later literature. See the following paragraphs. Later books like the *Book of Thomas the Contender* and *Acts of Thomas* were written at a time when the Church and the Gnostic literature took an approach which focussed on the evils of sex.

<sup>127</sup> Matthew 19:12: *For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."*

<sup>128</sup> This rejection by Jesus appears in various passages in the *Gospels*. Take Matthew 10:34: *"Think not that I have come to bring peace to the earth; it is not peace I bring but a sword. I have come to set son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law; a person's enemies will be the members of his own household."* Matthew 12: 48-50: *"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"* And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, *"Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."* *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."*

<sup>129</sup> Some argue that he might have, or did.

sacrament of marriage he nevertheless spoke favourably about it. His conversations about it were principally in the context of the need for absolute fidelity in relationships<sup>130</sup> and in divorce (see Matthew 19 and John 8:4-11). By referring to the “Solitary Ones”, Thomas goes further than the references to family which Jesus makes. Thomas also sees marriage as a distraction from pursuing the Gospel message and he calls the “Solitary Ones” the elect. While there are many passages in the bible which celebrate the institution of marriage, Paul’s own statement on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, similarly indicates that marriage on earth is a “second best” choice<sup>131</sup>.

### 5:3: Cultural Differences

There is a crucial difference between the types of learning and study promoted by the Greek philosophers and the Judean sages. The Greeks argued that social detachment and the avoidance of sexual passion was essential to develop the highest form of philosophy, and this focus on sex was the reason for the celibacy they sought. The Judean sages took the opposite approach, which encouraged intimate and deep relationships in order to promote the intensity of discussions and the depth of thought. There was no tradition of celibacy in Judaism, although some groups, such as the Essenes did practice it for periods in their lives. The abstention demanded by Jesus was not for the promotion of philosophy and study; it was for commitment to the Gospel instead. Recognising these differences is essential if a full understanding is to be gained and it is why different attitudes to sex are adopted in the two traditions.

That also argues for an early date for the Gospel of Thomas. From early in the Second century, encratic teaching<sup>132</sup> had become a major influence in the Syrian Church. This teaching declares that salvation can only be gained through complete abstinence from sex. By this time the paradigm shift in Christian teaching had also begun to take place whereby the condemnation of sexual abuse because of abuses of power in society was replaced by the disapproval of all sex. The only exception was the procreative act. There are therefore major differences in outlook between the “*Gospel of Thomas*” and later books in the Thomasine literature. The later books such as the book of “*Thomas the Contender*” and the “*Acts of Thomas*” show strong evidence of encratic teaching with its disapproval of sex, while in contrast, the emphasis in the Gospel of Thomas on the “*Solitary Ones*” as being the elect, concentrates on the need for commitment and separation to maximise the spreading of the Gospel message. Compared with those later books in the Thomasine literature, there is in the *Gospel of Thomas* an innocence of sex.

Who the books were written for must also be considered. Peter and Paul brought Christianity to the Roman world. Thomas brought Christianity to the Persian Empire, and the perpetual state of conflict between the two empires encouraged the independent development of each Church. The Apostle

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<sup>130</sup> Mark 10:11-12:11 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” Matthew 5:27-28:27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart”. Matthew 5:31-32: 31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Luke 16:18:18 “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”. Matthew 19:9: 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

<sup>131</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, “Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion”.

<sup>132</sup> Encratite: member of an ascetic Christian sect led by Tatian, a 2nd-century Syrian rhetorician. The name is derived from the group’s doctrine of continence.

Thomas by a common understanding preached the Gospel message in India from AD 53 to the time of his martyrdom in AD 72. In their description of the early Indian Church, Thomas Aykara and John B. Chethimattam<sup>133</sup> state: “*Yet Christianity, in one form or another, stuck..... the apostle [Thomas] would not have met the challenges faced by missionaries in the Greek, Roman, and Jewish world: St. Paul had to fight the Judaizers on the one hand and the highly developed philosophical ideas of the Greeks on the other. Against the Jews he had to show how Christ’s salvific work marked a complete break with the legalistic approach of Judaic religion while against the Greeks he had to show that the Cross of Christ which was foolishness for them was God’s wisdom . . . In India St. Thomas did not have any such special challenges to meet*” This meant that in India the Gospel of Thomas could go straight to the point by stating the teaching of Jesus in its fullness in without having to consider the transformations in society that Paul needed to make. The kernel of that teaching is contained in Saying 22 and Saying 114 of the Gospel of Thomas, and Paul re-iterates the same teaching In Galatians 3:28. However the rest of the Paul’s Epistles and Letters in the New Testament concentrate on the need to gain the respect of Roman society, together with the compromises and the adaptations which were needed to conform to its culture, and to bring the fullness of the Gospel message to the Roman world. There are other issues of significance in this interpretation, and these are discussed in section 8:0 of this document. The elevation of Peter and as the perceptive one and the derogation of Thomas as “*the doubter*” in the Canonical Gospels, when it is compared with the elevation of Thomas as the perceptive person and the derogation of Peter as “*the wise messenger*” in the Gospel of Thomas, suggests that these issues caused significant disagreements in the early Church.

#### 5:4: Same-sex relationships

In section 2:1: it is shown that Judaism adopted a didactic approach to learning, where pairs of scholars or students worked together to learn, discuss and to debate a shared text. The rabbis inside the academies repeatedly encouraged their students to adopt ever increasing degrees of intimacy. In section 2:1 it is also noted that no rules for these partnerships are found which establish any boundaries that approve of intense heterosexual friendships on the one hand, and disapprove of homosexual relationships on the other. The history of Judaism is littered with close-knit rabbinic partnerships in which today’s definitions of heterosexuality and homosexuality cannot be applied. In these socially and gender unequal societies these also had to be relationships between two equals. Anal penetration was the boundary that could not be crossed and people who offended against this were harshly condemned for a “lack of respect”<sup>134</sup>. This is the culture that Jesus grew up in. Therefore it is of interest to speculate who the main learning partner of Jesus might have been. The identification of John as “*the disciple who Jesus loved*” in the Gospel of John, would seem a reasonable guess<sup>135</sup>. An examination of the passage in John 21:15-17,<sup>136 137</sup> suggests that this was

<sup>133</sup> This is discussed in section 8:0 of this document. The Gospel of Thomas is understood to have circulated principally in the Syriac Christian Community. There are strong traditions which indicate that Thomas brought this Syriac Christian tradition to India and that he was martyred there in AD 72. Unlike Paul, who needed to make these adaptations for Roman society, in Syria and India, and in line with the gospel of Thomas, the immediate adoption of the Gospel Message was sought. The reference to this passage is taken from Strain, because the book no longer appears to be in print. (See: Strain, Janna Y (2013): “*This I say not as one doubting*”: Traditions of the Apostle Thomas from the Beginning of the Common Era through 800” Illinois Wesleyan University: [https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=religion\\_honproj](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=religion_honproj). Also: Aykara, Thomas A. and Chethimattam

John B. (1989): “Church of St. Thomas in India; It’s History, Problems, and Hopes.” The *Journal of Dharma* 14.1 (1989): 62-73. Also: Aykara, Thomas A. and Chethimattam John B. (1986): “Living Flame: Church of St. Thomas in India : Its History, Problems and Hopes” Editor Thomas A. Aykara Contributor John B. Chethimattam Publisher: Syro-Malabar Religious Conference (SMRC), 1986

<sup>134</sup> The word *chavruta*, like marriage, came to be used in the singular to describe two people in a relationship. The Talmud (Yevamot 62b) states that 12,000 pairs (sic) of students of Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (ca.50–ca.135 AD) died of plague between Passover and Shavuot, “because they did not treat one another with respect”. The context of the passage indicates that each pair of students formed a *chavruta*. The text also implies that this plague was diphtheria, but this may be a disguise for sexual misbehaviour, and for the massacres that took place after the Jewish Revolt in 70 A.D. See section 3:2:3 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: “*An Unfinished Reformation*”.

<http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> For further information see Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

not just Platonic love<sup>138</sup>. This created a potential difficulty for these socially and gender unequal societies where male same-sex intercourse was used as a means for the enforcement of power, humiliation and domination. Even the slightest suggestion that this could happen, no matter if it was unfounded, could be a disaster for the Church. The virginity of John is repeatedly emphasised in the early Christian literature, and this continues to be given emphasis today, mainly in the Orthodox churches<sup>139</sup>.

A doctrine of celibacy for the priesthood was pursued with great vigour by the Christian Church for these three reasons, the need to give full commitment to the Gospel message, the necessity to combat the abuse of power and sex in same-sex intercourse, and the requirement for the Church to defend itself against the same allegations. For the laity the prohibition of same-sex intercourse was the major demand. However that did not stop the expression of love in same-sex relationships. Close partnerships between early saints such as Sergius and Bacchus were encountered<sup>140</sup>. Another close bond was that between Bernard of Clairvaux and Malachy of Armagh<sup>141</sup>, and it was Bernard who encouraged Aelred of Rievaulx in his writings. The Councils of Elvira and Ancyra laid great emphasis on the celibacy of the priesthood: (bestiality was condemned in one of these councils but neither condemned consenting same sex acts of sex)<sup>142</sup>. Paul sets his own condemnations in the context of sexual abuse. That becomes more evident when they are considered in line with the first century attitudes to gender and sex<sup>143</sup>. The first real condemnation of consensual same-sex acts for any purpose (as distinct from those pursued for sexual abuse) can be attributed to Augustine in the fourth Century<sup>144</sup>. The Carolingian Kings continued this policy. Writing

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<sup>136</sup> In John 21:15-17 Jesus uses the word agape on the first two occasions when he asks Peter if he loves him, to which he receives an affirmative but uncommitted response. Peter uses the word phileo when he replies both times. However on the third occasion Peter's response becomes enthusiastic when Jesus reframes his question by using the word phileo instead.

<sup>137</sup> The present day Church interpretation defines the word agape as the spiritual self-sacrificing ascetic and non-sexual love through which Jesus calls Peter to love His Church. In this present day interpretation Jesus uses the word agape on the first two occasions when he asks Peter if he loves him, but Peter responds each time with the word phileo, meaning brotherly love or love of family or friendship instead. The current Roman Catholic Teaching as affirmed by Pope Benedict in his encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) argues that the difference in meaning between these two verbs for "love" signifies that when Jesus uses the word agape he is calling Peter to the higher form of love for the Church. However Peter is not yet ready to commit himself to the kind of self-sacrificing ascetic type of love for the Church that the current definition of agape represents. In English both of phileo and agape are translated in the same way as "love" and the real meaning of this passage is hidden in translation. Some scholars contend that the use of the two words, phileo and agape for "love" means nothing significant. However it is also known that John never uses double words or double-meaning words without some hidden significance, and Jesus indeed plays on the differences in meaning between the two words in this passage. First century readers of the Greek Septuagint would also read these as separate words and thus would understand the word play involved in this passage.

<sup>138</sup> The full argument is presented in section 6:2 *Agape and Love* in Gilchrist, S. (2011) "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships*". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf> See also section 3:4:1 "Jesus and John" of Gilchrist, S. 2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> The nature of the love between Jesus and John is discussed further in section 6:2 of: Gilchrist, S. (2011): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf> Also Section 3:4 Relationships in Gilchrist, S. 2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*Sergius and Bacchus*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/029B-SergiusAndBacchus.pdf>

<sup>141</sup> Kitteredge, Cherry. (2017): "*Malachy of Armagh: Same-sex soulmate to Bernard of Clairvaux*": Nov 3, 2017: <http://gsprit.net/saint-malachy-same-sex-soulmate/>; Roberts, Christopher. (2008): "*Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage*". Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2008 ISBN 0567269671, 9780567269676

<sup>142</sup> The Canons of the Council of Elvira (ca306) condemn sexual abuse but they do not refer to consensual same-sex acts. Canon 71 for example states that "Those who sexually abuse boys may not commune even when death approaches". Another early condemnation of same sex acts is that by Saint Basil of Caesarea (330-379), who also wrote about the penalties to be applied to monks who interfered with young boys. In the year 314 the 16th Canon of the Council of Ancyra prescribed a penance of at least twenty year's duration for those who have engaged in bestial lusts. As well as the crime of bestiality some have taken this to refer also to homosexuality and to other same-sex acts. See section 8:2 *The First Millennium* in Gilchrist, S. (2011): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> See Section 4:5:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*". Access via: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm>. Paul's main condemnations are contained in Romans 1:18-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10. In these passages Paul refers back to the Jewish interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to give authority to his teaching. Therefore the extent of these condemnations is limited to what the prohibition contained in Leviticus meant to first century society. It is shown in this analysis that this prohibition related to anal penetration alone (by extension same-sex intercourse), and to no other same-sex act. Same-sex love could be expressed freely in these relationships provided that act was avoided. It is additionally shown that the reasons for the prohibitions in Leviticus were because of the abuses of power in individual relationships and also between subject and dominant societies. Paul also set his condemnations in the context of abuse. It is further shown that this is identical to the teaching of Jesus. See Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*An Unfinished Reformation*" for a more complete account.

<sup>144</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions, Book III, chap. 8

around 1160, Aelred<sup>145</sup>, the Cistercian Abbot of Rievaulx, encouraged his monks to express their love for each other, not just generally, but individually and passionately. He cited the example of Jesus and John as guidance. *He said; "Jesus himself, in everything like us, patient and compassionate with others in every matter, transfigured this sort of love through the expression of his own love. for he allowed only one - not all - to recline on his breast as a sign of his special love; and the closer they were, the more copiously did the secrets of their heavenly marriage impart the sweet smell of their spiritual chrism to their love"*. Here Aelred uses the word marriage. However Aelred was equally firm in his prohibition of same-sex intercourse<sup>146</sup>. Parallels to the first century Jewish Rabbinic partnerships are found from an early date in the Christian Church, and liturgies exist which date up to and beyond the first millennium. These sanctify partnerships of Adelphopoiesis or "Brother Making in the Christian Church"<sup>147</sup>. However, by the fourth Century the Christian Church had come to regard all sex as a necessary evil, which could only be justified by procreation. By this time condemnations based on the abuses of power had disappeared and these condemnations focussed instead on the temptations of Eve and the evils and distractions of sex. As the Church became more powerful it was more able to create its own abuses<sup>148</sup>. The extent of these is catalogued in the "Book of Gomorrah" produced by Peter Damian in 1051<sup>149</sup>.

The magnitude of these abuses and the rampant misappropriation of secular power by the Christian Church at this time was one of the features which led to the Cathar Revolt. This was violently suppressed in the Albigensian Crusade, but the Church also had to accede to the need for some change. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was a member of the Dominican Order, and this history set the background to his work. One of the reforms Aquinas introduced was to increase the freedom of sexual expression within marriage while at the same time denying all sexual relationships outside it. To do this Aquinas combined the principles of Natural Law which were developed by Plato, Aristotle and others with the then current theology of the Church. This work by Aquinas has become the foundation of the present day teaching. In it all reference to the abuses of power is now absent and the presumption is made that all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour irrespective of purpose, is in pursuit of lust and inappropriate sex. Conservative Christian groups who seek to enforce this teaching do not return to the teaching of Jesus, they return to a Christian message which met the needs of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Church<sup>150</sup>. This separation of power from sex at the time of Aquinas had the effect of removing or reducing the culpability of the Church from its previous institutional abuses. The same culture and separation is considered by the author to have led to the complacency and inadequate responses by the Christian Church to the issues of sexual abuse which take place inside its own structures in the present day<sup>151</sup>.

## 5:5 Current Controversies

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<sup>145</sup> Aelred was also superior of all the Cistercians in England. He wrote several books on spirituality, among them *Speculum caritatis* ("The Mirror of Charity" and *De spiritali amicitia* ("On Spiritual Friendship"). Copies of these are available in translation. His public works encouraged virginity among the unmarried and chastity (not abstinence) in marriage and widowhood, and he warns against sexual activity outside marriage. In all his works he treats same-sex and opposite-sex attraction as equally possible, and equally dangerous to the oath to celibacy. Consistent with this outlook is the value he places on all such relationships when they are given and received in love

<sup>146</sup> Aelred of Rievaulx: (ca 1160): "*Spiritual Friendship*": Translated by Lawrence C. Braceland, sj: Cistercian Publications:

<https://www.cistercianpublications.org/Products/GetSample/CF005P/9780879079703>

<sup>147</sup> See Sections 2:0: Overview and Section 8:2: *The First Millennium* of Gilchrist, S. (2011) "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>.

<sup>148</sup> See also section 8:3 "*Celibacy*": in Gilchrist, S. (2011) "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships*".

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>149</sup> Pierre J. Payer (ed.): (1982) *Book of Gomorrah: An eleventh century treatise against clerical homosexual practise*, Waterloo, Ont. Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

<sup>150</sup> This is discussed further in Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>151</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf>:

Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf>



The major controversies and arguments of today come from the pressures exerted by lesbian and gay people, and also from transgender people, who seek legitimacy for their identities and full acceptance in the Christian Church. Issues of gender and sexual variation are discussed more fully in section 7 of this document. A strong focus in this campaign is for “same-sex” marriage to be endorsed by the Church. The opposition of the Catholic Church to this is clearly set out by Pope Francis in “*Amoris Laetitia*”<sup>152</sup> in Paragraph 251 he stated: “*In discussing the dignity and mission of the family, the Synod Fathers observed that, “as for proposals to place unions between homosexual persons on the same level as marriage, there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family”. It is unacceptable “that local Churches should be subjected to pressure in this matter and that international bodies should make financial aid to poor countries dependent on the introduction of laws to establish ‘marriage’ between persons of the same sex”.*

In the prior research, which is summarised in sections 2:0 and 3:0 of this document, it has been noted that any departure from the male or female stereotypes which the Christian doctrines of gender complementarity demand disrupt the good order of such gender divided societies. As a consequence Christian teaching regards this behaviour as disordered acts. It has also been shown that a paradigm shift has occurred in Christian teaching in which the condemnations of same-sex intercourse that were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality in the first century world, and which were known to Jesus, have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act<sup>153</sup>. In addition it is demonstrated that great harm can be done when the medical misdiagnoses that rely on these presumptions are made.

Any Christian doctrine which insists on defining the expression “*male and female*” only as “*male or female*”, which solely allows these to be defined in exclusive terms, and which also believes that the whole moral fabric of society will be destroyed if the doctrines of gender complementarity, which the Church imposes are removed, does not give justice to the reality of the situation. That applies whether the impact is described in scientific, social, historical or theological terms. The consequences of changing the biblical expression “*male and female*” into one which can only mean “*male or female*” are to perpetuate the contradiction between science and theology, to give religious comfort for the secular scapegoating of gender and sexually variant people by members of outside society, to consider such people as having fallen from grace, to diminish their relationships and to deny them an unrestrained welcome and a full place in the Church.

These are issues that demand serious attention whether one agrees with them or not. However the Catholic and Anglican Churches in particular have refused to address these issues. The Church of England has determined that any future developments can only take place within its existing doctrine as “*The Church of England has received it*”. Pope Francis has also made it clear that there can be no possibility of change to the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, great emphasis on providing pastoral care of gender and sexually variant people is now being made. (See sections 3:2 and 3:3 of this document). Traditional Christian teaching argues that while it is not sinful to possess gender and sexually variant attractions and feelings, to act on them in any way becomes a sinful act, thus, in its Catechism the Catholic Church demands that celibacy is the only acceptable practice for gender and sexually variant people<sup>154</sup>. This means that the whole

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<sup>152</sup> Pope Francis. (2016): “*Amoris Laetitia*”: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of The Holy Father Francis to Bishops, Priests and Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples and all The Lay Faithful on Love in the Family*. 19 March 2016 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia\\_en.pdf](https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf)

<sup>153</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): “*A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>154</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraphs 2357-2359: Chastity and homosexuality: “(2357) Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained.

concept of sexual fulfilment which is the result of the outpouring of love between two people of the same sex is denied. That condemnation is made abundantly clear in “*Amoris Laetitia*”, as cited above.

The concept of “*Gender Theory*” as it is understood by the Catholic Church is outlined in Section 3:2 of this document. There are three presumptions which underlie it. The first of these is that gender identity is a matter of choice. The second is the biological essentialism which demands that gender identity must be associated with biological sex. The third is the statement that God created “*male and female*”, which is always interpreted as being exclusively either “*male or female*”, and is never considered in inclusive terms.<sup>155</sup> In this analysis all three of these presumptions are shown to be incorrect and the reasons for this are further examined in Gilchrist, S. (2017): “*No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice*”<sup>156</sup>. The blanket condemnation imposed by this Church concept of “*Gender Theory*” contradicts not just the research of this author, but also the scientific consensus, which regards these as actions as being for the fulfilment of commitment and identity rather than the rewards of sex. These scientific sources further determine that a moral duality must exist; in which gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies should be highly regarded while those who misuse these relationships ought to be very severely condemned for their acts. Unravelling this interpretation of “*male or female*” by returning to the inclusive term “*male and female*” which the bible uses, does not diminish moral standards in any way. It simply requires that the boundary between use and abuse be changed from one that condemns all gender and sexually variant behaviour irrespective of purpose, to one that applies identical criteria of use and abuse to all heterosexual, cross-gender and same-sex acts. There is no toleration of any form of abusive or immoral sex.

Same-sex intercourse has remained a particular concern because of its use to enforce domination and subjection in socially unequal and dictatorial societies. For as long as the Christian Church held monopoly over the social structure of society the traditional Christian doctrines could not be challenged. With the de-criminalisation of homosexuality people can now see for themselves the quality of relationships that can be formed. There is an inconsistency here because the people who are most earnestly seeking to make the lifelong commitments which are typical of a Christian marriage (as today understood) are people in the lesbian and gay community... while those who are running away from such relationships are heterosexual couples who often perceive hypocrisy in the Church. Instead of destroying family relationships, the acknowledgement and example of loving and committed same sex relationships should instead encourage heterosexual couples to form their own relationships and to develop the stability which promotes the values of family life.

These are arguments that give some reason for the suppression of the Gospel of Thomas by the Christian Church. This is because, like the results of the prior research by the author it replaces the traditional teaching of the Church involving the submission of women, and its doctrines on gender complementarity (as attributed to Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-8), with the gender transcendence and

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Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved. (2358) The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. (2359) Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection”.

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm)

<sup>155</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Summary of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/223P-SexGenderSummary.pdf>.

<sup>156</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): “*No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice*”. <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>

equality where “*all are as one in Christ*”. It also give light on how what is today regarded as the traditional doctrine on gender complementary developed, and how the inclusive expression “*male and female*” has become the exclusive one of “*male or female*” instead. The argument by Pope Francis that “*Gender theory*”, like nuclear weapons, is a danger to humanity, expresses the extent of his concern<sup>157</sup>. However the failure to face up to these issues suggests that the threat of nuclear destruction which he fears does not destroy the moral values of society. Instead it ravages the continuation of the Church. This discussion is continued in section 8:0: “*Cultural Clashes, Gender and Sex*” of this document where transgender and gender and sexually variant conditions are considered. It also examines how different traditions within the Church were formed.

## 5:6 Images of Change

The major challenge and achievement which was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into the dominant culture of the Roman state. That meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and sexual values which were characteristic of Roman male dominated society. This additionally meant challenging and usurping the power structures which are formed inside these powerful and dominant societies by placing the concern for the victims and the suppressed first on the religious and the social agendas of those cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality which is founded on compassion, nurturing and love. This is the cultural transformation that Christianity was challenged to make, and the strength of its challenge to the structures of society is expressed in the Gospel itself.

If Christianity was to finally succeed it was necessary to maintain the approach which required the full expression of the Gospel message inside its own communities as an example to those outside it. This demands that it acts as a beacon of light to all people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves. It also demands that such people are accepted in their own right. This simply requires that the boundary between use and abuse be changed from one that condemns all gender and sexually variant behaviour irrespective of purpose, to one that applies identical criteria of use and abuse to all heterosexual, cross-gender and same-sex acts. There is no toleration of any form of abusive or immoral sex. This investigation has highlighted the different approaches taken by the Judean, Pauline and Thomasine traditions. In place of the gender transcendence of the Gospel message, Christian teaching has come to regard the doctrines of gender complementarity which were needed for Christianity to survive in a socially and gender unequal society as the fundamental teaching of the Church. Instead of combatting the abuses of power and sex which were forced upon the powerless early Christian movement, also in place of expressing the full realisation of the Gospel message after it had obtained the power to do so, these adaptations were to find their full impact in the gender divisions and the authoritarianisms which have come to be enforced through the power and domination of the fourth century Church.

The corresponding image transformations have persisted. They are seen in the pictures in the Catacombs in Naples<sup>158</sup> and Priscilla in Rome<sup>159</sup>, through to the change in style evident in the monuments and basilicas in Ravenna built between 400 and 550 AD<sup>160</sup>. Jensen<sup>161</sup> notes that in

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<sup>157</sup> McElwee, Joshua. (2015): “Francis strongly criticizes gender theory, comparing it to nuclear arms”: *National Catholic Reporter (US)* Feb. 13, 2015 <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-strongly-criticizes-gender-theory-comparing-nuclear-arms>

<sup>158</sup> Rudgard, Olivia and Ward, Victoria: (2018): “*Early church found place for female bishops, experts claim*”: Daily Telegraph. 31 March 2018: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/31/early-church-found-place-for-female-bishops-experts-claim/>

<sup>159</sup> Vatican opens catacombs with virtual tour: <https://www.thelocal.it/20131120/vatican-opens-catacombs-with-virtual-tour>

<sup>160</sup> The images at Ravenna reflect the conflict between Arian and what is now regarded as mainstream Christianity. Arianism took the position that Jesus, as the Son of God, was created by God. It was popular throughout much of the Eastern and Western Roman empires, even after it was denounced as a heresy by the Council of Nicaea (325), who determined that the three elements of the Trinity, The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit, had co-existed from the start. Arian theology made it easier for separate images for the Father and Son to be created. Instead of this theology and the gender transcendent image created by the early Church, Nicæan theology and

most early Christian images of Jesus - whether painted on the walls of catacombs, carved in relief on sarcophagi or set in mosaic tiles - can be divided into these two general types of portraits: the beautiful, youthful, long-haired Jesus and the older, bearded Jesus. He also agrees with Thomas Mathews that the earlier fourth-century Jesus portraits borrow from two types of pagan deity portraits - those of the youthful, semi-divine miracle workers and those of the supreme, father gods<sup>162</sup>. This suggests that the change of image is one which reflects a change of context and power which occurred as the Church moved from a minority and persecuted group in society, to one which possessed a dominant role. Thus the bearded masculine and authoritative image of Jesus represents that required by an influential and dominant Church. The angelic and beardless Jesus is that of the healer, preacher and teacher who stands alongside a powerless and persecuted Church. The statement in Thomas and in 2 Clement: "*When two shall be one, that which is without as that which is within, and the male with the female, neither male nor female*", supports the gender transcendence that is present in the Gospel message. It does not support the gender divisions or the doctrines of gender complementarity of the later Church<sup>163</sup>.

### 5:3: Analysis

A major challenge has been the need to analyse and peer through documents and sources which are used and are intended to promote the theology of the Roman Church. That is true of the Gospels, Epistles and Letters in the New Testament. If this handicap is to be overcome an independent source must be used. The *Gospel of Thomas* lies outside these traditions. By conducting an equivalent redaction on the *Gospel of Thomas* it should be possible to get an independent verification (or otherwise) of these results.

In the Christian Tradition the description "*Secret or Hidden Sayings*" is usually taken to refer to what are usually second century Christ focussed documents that contain mystical adaptations and fanciful or unfounded elaborations of Christian teaching. For these the word "*Gnosis*" (Knowledge) is used. However these principles of hidden sayings are found in Judaism and predate Christianity itself<sup>164</sup>. None of these later adaptations appear to be present in the *Gospel of Thomas* and

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the doctrine of gender complementarity demanded a dominant image of a male Christ in Majesty presiding over a socially dominant Church.

<sup>161</sup> Jensen, Robert M. (2002): "*The Two Faces of Jesus – How the early church pictured the divine*", Center for Online Judaic Studies: Oct 2002. <http://cojs.org/the-two-faces-of-jesus/>

<sup>162</sup> Mathews, Thomas F. (1993): "*The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*": Princeton Univ. Press, 1993.

<sup>163</sup> In the prior research, which is summarised in sections 2:0 and 3:0 of this document, the same conclusions are reached.

<sup>164</sup> The rabbis of the Mishnahic era believed that it would be dangerous to record the deeper teachings in explicit, Mishnah-like or Midrash-like forms. Rather, they would be conveyed in a "*concealed mode*" and via "*paradoxes*". (Due to their value, these teachings should not become accessible to those "*of bad character*" and because of their depth they should not be made available to those "*not schooled in the ways of analysis*".) This mode of the transmission was nevertheless based on consistent rules and principles such that those "equipped with the keys" would be able to unlock their meaning; to others they would appear as non-rational or fantastic. Maimonides, in his preface to the tenth chapter of *Tractate Sanhedrin (Perek Chelek)*, (<https://www.mhcnyc.org/qt/1005.pdf>: see page 6 onwards) describes three possible approaches to the interpretation of the Aggadah. For a modern summary see: <https://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/vavechi/elkayam.html>. The first approach is to accept the Aggadah as literally true, without admission of any hidden, allegorical explanation - even where a literal interpretation runs counter to common sense. Maimonides is dismissive of this approach. The second approach is to assume that anything said by the Sages was intended literally, and to therefore reject, as impossible, non-rational or fantastic teachings (and to consequently consider the Sages as "*simpletons and ignoramuses*"). Maimonides does not entirely reject this rationalist interpretation, but he opposes an exegetical approach which denies the Aggadah a hidden rationality. "*The sages presented their sermons and their interpretations of the texts in a style by which the mind of a fool will reject them because of his way of thinking; it is improper to assign any deficiency to these interpretations and sermons - one may rather suspect that the deficiency is a result of his intellectual shortcomings*" (Commentary on the Mishnah: Introduction). The third approach which is described by Maimonides is to recognise that many Aggadot are intended to teach profound truths, and that the teachings thus operate on two levels: "*overt*" and "*hidden*". Thus any impossible assertion was, in fact, intended as a parable; further, where Aggadot can be understood literally, they may be taken on this level. This is, in general, the view of the Rabbis. "*It is proper...to carefully analyse [the Aggadot]...when any of these seem far-fetched we must immerse ourselves in the various branches of knowledge until we understand the concepts.*" In Luke 8:10 Jesus states: "*To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND*". If Jesus taught in ways which were in accord with these Midrashim traditions it would not be surprising that he had to take his disciples aside at times to describe what he meant. The cabalistic statement by Jesus "*Whoever has ears should hear*" which is found in the Gospels, including the Gospel of Thomas would suggest that he did take this approach.

statements that are made in the *Gospel of Thomas* which today sound ridiculous or impossible fall into place when the same techniques that are used elsewhere in this investigation to study the social, historical and theological histories are applied. A detailed examination of the *Gospel of Thomas* now follows. This is the author's interpretation. Other people may interpret elements in different ways ..... and that is because of the nature of the text<sup>165</sup>. The sayings are also compared with the Gospel texts.<sup>166</sup>

## 6:0: Interpretation

The Gospel of Thomas starts with the following words: "These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke, and that Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down"

(1) And he said: "Whoever finds the meaning of these words will not taste death."

*Commentary: The use of the term "hidden words" places this either in the form of a Jewish Midrash or a later Gnostic text. The early date ascribed to at least parts of it..... This is from 40 years AD<sup>167</sup>, suggests that it should be treated as a Jewish Midrash, rather than a later Christian Gnostic text. In either case, saying (1) implies that a key to the meaning is required before the Gospel can be understood. Otherwise the theology is orthodox and the doctrine is clear.*

*For example saying (1) has a parallel in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life". Also in John 8:51: 'Believe me when I tell you that if anybody accepts my words, he will never see death at all'.*

(2) Jesus says:

- (a) "The one who seeks should not cease seeking until he finds.
- (b) And when he finds, he will be dismayed.
- (c) And when he is dismayed, he will be astonished.
- (d) And he will be king over the All."

*Commentary: You do not find the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God finds you. Dismay and astonishment may come because the Kingdom of God is discovered despite your efforts, not because of them. It is through the Grace of God you are forgiven. You are not forgiven or saved because of strength of your achievements and the magnitude of the works that you do. See also sayings 92 and 95. You are also forgiven and saved because of your seeking and purity of spirit. The relationship between good works and faith is discussed in more detail from Saying 7 onwards.*

(3) Jesus says:

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<sup>165</sup> A wide variety of material, from the esoteric to the academic exists; See for example Merillat H.C: (1997): "The Gnostic Apostle Thomas "Twin" of Jesus": Xlibris: available at <http://www.gnosis.org/thomasbook/thomas.htm>: Patterson, Stephen J: (2017): "Gospel of Thomas" <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0047.xml>: Pagels, Elaine: "The Gospel of Thomas" <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/thomas.html> Davies, S: (2002): "The Gospel of Thomas annotated & explained": Skylight Paths Publishing; 1st Edition (1 Oct. 2002) ISBN-10: 1893361454 ISBN-13: 978-1893361454: Anon: "Gospel of Thomas Fully Interpreted": <http://lovethemeaningoflife.com/gospel-of-thomas-fully-interpreted/>: Michaels, Hannah: "The Gospel of Thomas Explained With Parallels and Commonalities from the New Testament Gospels" <https://hannahmichaels.wordpress.com/2015/08/04/the-gospel-of-thomas-explained/>

<sup>166</sup> Sources include: The Nazarene Way of Essenic Studies: <http://www.thenazareneway.com/thomasgospel.htm>

<sup>167</sup> Pagels, Elaine; (1979): "The Gnostic Gospels": New York: 1979

- (a) "If those who lead you say to you: 'Look, the kingdom is in the sky!' then the birds of the sky will precede you.
- (b) If they say to you: 'It is in the sea,' then the fishes will precede you.
- (c) Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you."
- (d) "When you come to know yourselves, then you will be known, and you will realize that you are the children of the living Father.
- (e) But if you do not come to know yourselves, then you exist in poverty, and you are poverty."

*Sayings 3 to 6 imply that the Kingdom of Heaven is beyond all physical representation. It is within us, outside of us and also outside time. This is a constant theme which is referred to in Sayings 11, 18, 19, 22, 50, 77, and 103. This concept is also present in the bible texts.*

*One corresponding Text: Luke 17:21 "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." For a general discussion on this topic of seeking, see saying 95*

*Sayings 4 to 6 also seem to take Isaiah 65:19-25 as their foundation: "And there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and my chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear "The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm in all my holy mountain, says the Lord""*

(4) Jesus says:

- (a) "The person old in his days will not hesitate to ask a child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live.
- (b) For many who are first will become last,
- (c) and they will become a single one."

*Saying 4 again implies the Kingdom of Heaven is outside time.*

*Commentary: The understanding which is presented in sayings 4 to 6 is further confirmed by the many statements Jesus makes. There is also the strong association with becoming innocent like children. For example: Matthew 18:3: "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven". Matthew 19:14: "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these": Mark 10:14: "But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"". Luke 18:16: But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to me,*

*and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these". As in Isaiah 65:20: "No longer will there be in it (heaven) an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed". Heaven is a place where the two become one, young and old do not exist, male and female are also as one (see Saying 22), and as St Augustine concluded, "Heaven is outside time"<sup>168</sup>. Thus the Kingdom of Heaven is in you and with you at all times<sup>169</sup>.*

*Sayings 5 and 6 of the Gospel of Thomas are in accord with the passages in the Bible which declare that God already knows our innermost thoughts<sup>170</sup>.*

(5) Jesus says:

- (a) "Come to know what is in front of you, and that which is hidden from you will become clear to you.
- (b) For there is nothing hidden that will not become manifest."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 10:26 "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known". Mark 4:22: "For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light". Luke 12:3: "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known"*

(6)

- (a) His disciples questioned him, (and) they said to him: "Do you want us to fast? And how should we pray and give alms? And what diet should we observe?"
- (b) Jesus says: "Do not lie.
- (c) And do not do what you hate.
- (d) For everything is disclosed in view of <the truth>.
- (e) For there is nothing hidden that will not become revealed.
- (f) And there is nothing covered that will remain undisclosed."

*Commentary: It does not seem that Jesus often fasted. His critics condemned him for "eating and drinking" (Matthew 11:19). There is only one recorded instance in Scripture where Jesus fasted. This immediately followed his baptism (Matthew 3:13), which inaugurated Jesus' public ministry. The subject of fasting was not a central issue in the teachings of Jesus. He never commanded fasting or propounded any detailed regulations concerning the practice. Jesus answers this dismissal of fasting*

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<sup>168</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions, Book XI, Chapter XIII: In the eminence of thy ever-present eternity, thou predest all times past, and extendest beyond all future times, for they are still to come - and when they have come, they will be past. But "Thou art always the Self same and thy years shall have no end." Thy years neither go nor come; but ours both go and come in order that all separate moments may come to pass. All thy years stand together as one, since they are abiding. Nor do thy years past exclude the years to come because thy years do not pass away. All these years of ours shall be with thee, when all of them shall have ceased to be. Thy years are but a day, and thy day is not recurrent, but always today. Thy "today" yields not to tomorrow and does not follow yesterday. Thy "today" is eternity <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110111.htm>

<sup>169</sup> For the personal viewpoint of the author see the poem "Heaven" in Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Verses in Search of the Self: Poems and Commentary": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/301V-VersesSearchOfSelf-PoetryAnthology.pdf>

<sup>170</sup> That God knows our innermost thoughts is described many times in the Bible: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This means that "no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). There is nothing hidden from God. We all must give an account to Him on the day of His visitation or after death (Hebrews 9:27). Isaiah also writes "Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name" (Isaiah 49:1). As with the Gentiles "God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us" (Acts 15:8) so clearly, God knows our heart and declares "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds" (Jeremiah 17:10).

using an example: "The friends of the bridegroom have no reason to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, do they? But days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast." (Matthew 9:15). See also Saying 104 and 14. However in Matthew 28:20 Jesus says "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age". In Matthew 9:15 Jesus associates the act of fasting with mourning and separation from the Love of God. There is a parallel here with Saying 2 in the Gospel of Thomas, where it is through the Grace of God you are forgiven. Fasting may be important as a means of developing the resolution needed for any task, but you are not forgiven because of the magnitude of its works and you are not forgiven just because of the severity of any fast.

See also sayings 14 and 104

(7) Jesus says:

- (a) "Blessed is the lion that a person will eat and the lion will become human.
- (b) And anathema is the person whom a lion will eat and the lion will become human."

*Commentary: The lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah<sup>171</sup>. There is also an allusion to the lion of Judah in Revelation 5:5-6<sup>172</sup>. This is a saying which people have used to discredit the Gospel because of its seemingly preposterous nature. However it should be read in conjunction with the earlier sayings, and also in the way in which the allegory of the Lion and the Lamb is used in Isaiah 65:19-25: This passage states: "The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food". Where "They shall do no evil or harm in all my holy mountain, says the Lord". The eating of a communal meal was a key feature of the Jewish tradition. Thus the rationale, and the reference to eating, in this saying appear to image the heaven which is described in Isaiah 65:25. If so, this saying expresses the contrast between each person who eats to live at the feast of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the person who dies from being eaten by the greed, avarice and dissolution of the world.*

*What is notable about saying 7 is that it exclusively uses Old Testament ideas and imagery to allude to the essence of what was later instituted as the Last Supper and Communion Meal by Jesus before his death. These actions of Jesus are described in Luke 22:19:20, which says: "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you". This is the foundation for the sacramental nature of Christian belief.*

*However it is not enough to partake of this communion in pureness of spirit. Thomas also makes it clear that what comes afterwards is equally important. Sayings 41, 42*

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<sup>171</sup> According to the Torah, the tribe consists of the descendants of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. The Lion is the symbol of the Hebrew tribe of Judah. The association between Judah and the lion can first be found in the blessing given by Jacob to his son Judah in Genesis 49:9: "Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?" In a first century Jewish society which was fermenting for violent revolt, the reference to Isaiah in saying 7 of the Gospel of Thomas is heavy with political significance. That combined with the reference to eating both here, and in other sayings in the Gospel of Thomas can be taken at different levels. The communal (seder) meal in Judaism was a symbol of deliverance from the violence of the Egyptians. Jesus predicted that violence would come from his message but he is just as clear that a revolution created by violence is not the way. The revolution that is needed is one which attacks the abuses of power in society through the Gospel of Christian love

<sup>172</sup> "And one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.



and 108 make it clear that this sacrament will be taken away from you if it is not supported. The issues of sincerity and purpose are also addressed in Sayings 56, 60 and 80 where the “corpse” that is created is one arising from misdirected religious belief. This means that continued commitment is crucial, for its absence brings the destruction created by becoming the lion. However its presence brings the fulfilment of becoming a human who fulfils the ideals of heaven and human life.

The same distinction between eating and being eaten is found in other sayings of this gospel. See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment. See also saying 108. If the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are truly lifetime sayings of the teaching of Jesus, then the imagery and ideas of the Last Supper could not be used, because this event had not yet taken place. This means that this saying may provide additional information which supports the early provenance of the Gospel. Placing this saying here also leads into the next sayings which relate to the spread of the Gospel itself.

Note: Sayings starting with “Blessed are” are spread throughout the Gospel of Thomas, (7, 18, 19, 49, 54, 58, 68a, 69a, 69b and 103). Matthew seems to have collected most of these together in the “Sermon on the Mount”

(8)

- (a) And he says: “The human being is like a sensible fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea filled with little fish.
- (b) Among them the sensible fisherman found a large, fine fish.
- (c) He threw all the little fish back into the sea, (and) he chose the large fish effortlessly.
- (d) Whoever has ears to hear should hear.”

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 13.47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; 13.48 when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad".*

(9) Jesus says:

- (a) “Look, a sower went out. He filled his hands (with seeds), (and) he scattered (them).
- (b) Some fell on the path, and the birds came and pecked them up.
- (c) Others fell on the rock, and did not take root in the soil, and they did not put forth ears.
- (d) And others fell among the thorns, they choked the seeds, and worms ate them.
- (5) And others fell on good soil, and it produced good fruit. It yielded sixty per measure and one hundred twenty per measure.”

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13.3 “And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 13.4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 13.5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 13.6 but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. 13.7 Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 13.8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 13.9 He who has ears, let him hear”*

*Mark 4.2 “And he taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 4.3 "Behold! A sower went out to sow. 4.4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 4.5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it had not much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no*

depth of soil; 4.6 and when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. 4.7 Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 4.8 And other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 4.9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Luke 8.4 "And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: 8.5 "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. 8.6 And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. 8.7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. 8.8 And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

(10) Jesus says:

"I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes."

*Corresponding texts: Luke 12.49: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!". Matthew 10:34 states: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword".*

*Commentary: This saying again reflects those in the bible where Jesus predicts discord and disruption.*

*The whole of Matthew Chapter 10 is a commissioning statement. Sayings 11 to 20 in the Gospel of Thomas are also commissioning statements, but while Matthew 10 expresses this as the instructions given by Jesus, in the Gospel of Thomas it is instead Jesus who challenges the disciples themselves to tell him what their role should be. This commissioning section in the Gospel of Thomas seems to fit into four parts. In sayings 11 to 13 Jesus asks the disciples to tell him who they think he is. Saying 14 may be regarded as the commissioning itself. Sayings 15 to 20 reflect Jesus's own view of who he is, and what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. Saying 21 contains a discussion between Jesus and Mary Magdalene about how well the disciples have understood the Gospel message. For a general discussion on the challenges that Jesus makes, see Saying 112.*

(11) Jesus says:

- (a) "This heaven will pass away, and the (heaven) above it will pass away.
- (b) And the dead are not alive, and the living will not die.
- (c) In the days when you consumed what was dead, you made it alive. When you are in the light, what will you do?
- (d) On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"

*Commentary: This is a challenging statement to interpret. In Saying 10 Jesus makes it clear that the disciples of Jesus will face the darkness of persecution. Sayings 11(a) and 11(b) may reflect a world that is driven by disruption and separated from the Love of God. Thus the heaven promised in the message of Jesus passes away. One idea in this statement may reflect the "Two ways" teaching which contrasts the way of darkness with the way of light, and the question that Jesus perhaps asks in this passage is how, when facing that darkness, his followers can still be the messengers of light?*

See section 5:1 of this document for the way in which saying 11(d) about “the one becoming two” should be interpreted. Saying 11(d) asks questions about earthly leadership. Saying 12 makes it clear that they will have to rely on their own efforts to spread the Gospel message. That leads into Saying 13 where Jesus asks the disciples to tell him who his authority comes from.

See also saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment. Further discussion of this will be found in Section \*:.\* of this document, on “Representing the Divine”

(12)

- (a) The disciples said to Jesus: “We know that you will depart from us. Who (then) will rule over us?”
- (b) Jesus said to them: “No matter where you came from, you should go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

*Commentary: Owens<sup>173</sup> notes: Reference to James as an authoritative figure in saying 12 of the Gospel of Thomas has caused difficulty for scholars attempting to date the Gospel’s composition to a period after the first century. The community of James, historically associated with Jerusalem, ceased to exist after the Roman destruction of Palestine around 70 CE. If the text of the Gospel of Thomas was produced subsequent to that date, or if the version we now possess underwent later redactions with intent of conforming the text to theological and sociological views of a period foreign to the earliest formative years of Christianity, then why was this authoritative reference to James retained in the twelfth saying? And if the saying indeed dates to the earliest decades of Christian tradition, what significance does reference to James hold for interpretive readings of the Gospel?*

(13)

- (a) Jesus said to his disciples: “Compare me, and tell me whom I am like.”
- (b) Simon Peter said to him: “You are like a just messenger.”
- (c) Matthew said to him: “You are like an (especially) wise philosopher.”
- (d) Thomas said to him: “Teacher, my mouth cannot bear at all to say whom you are like.”
- (e) Jesus said: “I am not your teacher. For you have drunk, you have become intoxicated at the bubbling spring that I have measured out.”
- (f) And he took him, (and) withdrew, (and) he said three words to him.
- (g) But when Thomas came back to his companions, they asked him: “What did Jesus say to you?”
- (h) Thomas said to them: “If I tell you one of the words he said to me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me, and fire will come out of the stones (and) burn you up.”

*Commentary: This has parallels in Matthew 16:13-20 where Peter declares that Jesus Is the Messiah: “When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”” However the differences should be noted. According to the Gospel of Thomas, it is Thomas not*

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<sup>173</sup> Owens, Lance S. (accessed 2018): “The Gospel of Thomas and the Hermeneutics of Vision”: [http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth\\_hermen.htm](http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gth_hermen.htm)

*Peter who is credited with identifying Jesus as the Messiah. Alas we shall never know what the three words Jesus is stated to have said to Thomas were*

*This derogation of Peter is a consistent theme in the Gospel of Thomas. Pope Gregory condemned Mary Magdalene as a prostitute around 600 AD. However in 2016 Pope Francis reinstated as Mary Magdalene as the apostle of the apostles, (10.06.2016) thus giving her the same status as the male Apostles<sup>174</sup>. These differences expose arguments about the status of all women in the early Church.*

(14) Jesus said to them:

- (a) "If you fast, you will bring forth sin for yourselves.
- (b) And if you pray, you will be condemned.
- (c) And if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits.
- (d) And if you go into any land and wander from place to place, (and) if they take you in, (then) eat what they will set before you. Heal the sick among them!
- (e) For what goes into your mouth will not defile you. Rather, what comes out of your mouth will defile you."

*Commentary: Saying 14 contains some challenging ideas. It should be read in conjunction with saying 6 and 104. Saying 14 forms part of the commissioning of the disciples and it can be compared with Matthew 10: 9-15. This states: "Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts- no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town".*

*The issue of fasting is discussed in relation to Saying 6 and Saying 14(c). The statement "And if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits" is also challenging. However to give alms is an action which demonstrates the power of the giver over the weakness of the receiver, and it inhibits complete equality with the receiving group. Amongst many religious traditions it is the missionaries and priests of those religions who are expected to receive alms, rather than give them. As messengers of the "Good News" they become the servants of the people they meet.*

*The Early Church carefully separated its own acts of alms giving and support from spreading the Gospel Message. Acts 6:2-4 states: "So the Twelve summoned all the disciples and said, "It is unacceptable for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will appoint this responsibility to them and devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word". Almsgiving and support were very important in the Early Church but great care was also taken to ensure that the context was correct<sup>175</sup>.*

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<sup>174</sup>Vatican (2016): "Mary Magdalene, apostle of the apostles, 10.06.2016":  
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/06/10/160610c.html>

<sup>175</sup> For a discussion on The Early Church and Ideas About Alms-giving see:  
<http://www.apuritansmind.com/stewardship/earlychurchalmsgiving/>

*Other corresponding texts: Luke 10.8: "Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 10.9 heal the sick". Matthew 15:11: "Not that what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man". Mark 7:14 "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 7.15 there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." Paul, Romans 14.14: "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean".*

*It is also worth noting that the pattern of mission set by Jesus was not unique. Itinerant priests of the Goddess Cults also travelled in pairs throughout the Roman Empire, including Palestine, and offered shamanic and healing roles<sup>176</sup>*

*Sayings 15 to 20 are further descriptions of the authority given to Jesus and what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. They reflect on the concept of "two becoming one". They also reflect the statements in Matthew 22:14, "many are called but few are chosen" and John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life".*

*See also sayings 6 and 104*

(15) Jesus says:

*"When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your face (and) worship him. That one is your Father."*

*Commentary: See sayings 30 and 44 for further discussion*

(16) Jesus says:

- (a) *"Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the earth.*
- (b) *But they do not know that I have come to cast dissension upon the earth: fire, sword, war.*
- (s) *For there will be five in one house: there will be three against two and two against three, father against son and son against father.*
- (d) *And they will stand as solitary ones."*

*Saying 16 expands on saying 10*

*Corresponding texts: Matthew 10.34; "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 10.35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 10.36 and a man's foes will be those of his own household". Luke 12.51: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; 12.52 for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; 12.53 they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

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<sup>176</sup> See section 3:1:6: "Christianity and the Goddess Cults" in: Gilchrist, S. (2013a): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

*The “Solitary ones” are referred to again in sayings 49, 56 and 75. See Saying 100 for further information. For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112.*

(17) Jesus says:

“I will give you what no eye has seen, and what no ear has heard, and what no hand has touched, and what has not occurred to the human mind.”

*Corresponding text: Paul: 1 Corinthians 2:9: But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,”*

(18)

- (a) The disciples said to Jesus: “Tell us how our end will be.”
- (b) Jesus said: “Have you already discovered the beginning that you are now asking about the end? For where the beginning is, there the end will be too.
- (c) Blessed is he who will stand at the beginning. And he will know the end, and he will not taste death.”

*Commentary: “The Kingdom of Heaven is outside time”. The “One before birth becomes Two” at birth. Then in marriage the “Two are Made One Flesh”, with the “Two Becoming Fully One” in the completeness of heavenly life. See section 5:1 of this document for that interpretation.*

(19) Jesus says:

- (a) “Blessed is he who was, before he came into being.
- (b) If you become disciples of mine (and) listen to my words, these stones will serve you.
- (c) For you have five trees in Paradise that do not change during summer (and) winter, and their leaves do not fall.
- (d) Whoever comes to know them will not taste death.”

*Commentary: Some have suggested that the five trees of paradise represent the five human senses, all of which go to form the “tree of life”. Saying 19c may also refer to the trees that tradition says Noah planted for making the Ark. The analogy with stones is a common theme in the bible*

*Isaiah writes “Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name” (Isaiah 49:1). See section 5:1 for a discussion which is relevant to saying 19(a).*

(20)

- (a) The disciples said to Jesus: “Tell us whom the kingdom of heaven is like!”
- (b) He said to them: “It is like a mustard seed.
- (c) <It> is the smallest of all seeds.
- (d) But when it falls on cultivated soil, it produces a large branch (and) becomes shelter for the birds of the sky.”

*Commentary: The bible states that Jesus taught in parables. Saying 20 describes the parable of the Mustard Seed which is found in Matthew 13:31-32, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden*

plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." Also Mark 4.30: "And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 4.31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 4.32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."  
 Luke 13.18: "He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 13.19 It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

*Sayings 16 to 19 challenge literal interpretation. However a further reference to the dissention that the Gospel message will create is given in Saying 16. The stones in saying 19 can be associated with Saying 66 that describes the cornerstone which the builder rejected. This, together with the idea that Jesus and believers are living stones are metaphors which are used elsewhere, and it also present in 1 Peter 2:4-5<sup>177</sup>. These sayings (15 to 20) perhaps fit into the Jewish Midrash tradition of writing where literal interpretation is neither expected nor possible, so that the reader is required to reflect on the deeper meaning of the text.*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(21)

- (a) Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?"
- (b) He said: "They are like servants who are entrusted with a field that is not theirs.
- (c) When the owners of the field arrive, they will say: 'Let us have our field.'
- (d) (But) they are naked in their presence so as to let them have it, (and thus) to give them their field."
- (e) "That is why I say: When the master of the house learns that the thief is about to come, he will be on guard before he comes (and) will not let him break into his house, his domain, to carry away his possessions.
- (f) (But) you, be on guard against the world!
- (g) Gird your loins with great strength, so that the robbers will not find a way to get to you."
- (h) "For the necessities for which you wait (with longing) will be found.
- (i) There ought to be a wise person among you!
- (j) When the fruit was ripe, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand, (and) he harvested it.
- (k) Whoever has ears to hear should hear."

*Commentary; There is clearly an agenda in the Gospel of Thomas where Mary Magdalene is exalted, and Peter diminished. Care should therefore be given to any attempts to interpret this statement. However in the Gospels it is clear that the disciples only understood the full impact of the Gospel message after the resurrection took place. Sayings 21a to 21d would appear to recognise that earlier lack of understanding. Sayings 21e to 21k seem to identify the actions that were needed after the resurrection comes. See also saying 103*

<sup>177</sup> 1 Peter 2:4-5. "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 24.43: "But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into". Luke 12.39: "But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. 12.40 You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour." Mark 4.26: "And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, 4.27 and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. 4.28 The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 4.29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

*There is no reference to Sayings 21a to 21d in the bible texts*

(22)

- (a) Jesus saw infants being suckled.
- (b) He said to his disciples: "These little ones being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom."
- (c) They said to him: "Then will we enter the kingdom as little ones?"
- (d) Jesus said to them: "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below —
- (e) that is, to make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female will not be female —
- (f) and when you make eyes instead of an eye and a hand instead of a hand and a foot instead of a foot, an image instead of an image,
- (g) then you will enter [the kingdom]."

*Commentary: A great deal of attention is paid to this saying, not just because it refers to the attitude of Jesus to children and the Kingdom of Heaven, but also because of the close comparison it makes with the statement of Paul in Galatians 3: 28: "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". The saying in Thomas goes much further than this, for it declares that the two are one in Christ and that there can be no difference in any approach. It rejects the type of gender complementary identified by the Roman Church. The uncompromising nature of this saying demands that there is complete equality between men and women. Those scholars, who assume this saying (or the gospel) to be written at a later date, may argue that it demands the rejection of all sex.*

*A major achievement for Christianity was its transformation from a minority and persecuted movement from a conquered society into which was adopted by the Roman world. In the Epistles and Letters both Peter and Paul demand respect for the Roman Authorities, and that the respect for Christianity must be fostered in Roman Society. Peter, Paul and the Early Church have often been criticised for the adaptations they made. These are discussed extensively in the accompanying papers. In the Epistles and Letters, Paul appears to have given equal value to the ministry of both women and men; however he uses the argument that Eve was created from Adam to define their respective public roles<sup>178</sup>. His requirements seem*

<sup>178</sup> However the authority that they cite for this comes from Jewish tradition and an interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve. It does not come directly from the teachings of Jesus himself. Paul did indeed demand that the wife should submit to the husband and that she should be quiet and not speak in Church. For example the citation in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 states: "As in all the congregations of the Lord's people. Women should remain silent in the churches, they are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If



to be more concentrated on making the church appear respectable in Roman society through conforming to its social norms. Peter seems to take a much more internally focussed approach. It is Peter's approach which more closely matches that of the present day Catholic Church.

Peter's requirement to gain respectability in Roman society is set out in 1 Peter 3:1-8: "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives<sup>179</sup>. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Both Peter and Paul sought the respect of the authorities and it can certainly be argued that this was necessary for the survival of the Church. For Paul, proud to be a Roman citizen, a code of Christianity which externally conformed to the social and gender divisions of Roman society, while expressing the full equality demanded by the Gospel within its own community was a legitimate adaptation for the Church. As the Church gained influence and acceptance, the true message of Jesus would then be spread to the world. Saying 98 in the Gospel of Thomas makes it clear that this could not happen instantly, and the analysis of Matthew 9 given in section 5:1:3 of this document makes the same point<sup>180</sup>. Further justification for that approach is seen in sayings 98 to 103 in the Gospel of Thomas and this principle is also discussed in section 3:1:4 "Gender Confrontations", in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus", also in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>. The approach that Peter adopts has a greater continuity with the Jewish tradition: that is discussed in another paper by the author: Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>.

Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas dictates that there is full equality between all men and women, therefore one cannot act in submission to the other. The statement by Paul in Galatians 3:28, agrees with this. The same principles "that the male and female become one" are found in other early Christian writing. However that understanding is broken by Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-8 where the wife is defined as the

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they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" The same requirement for submission appears in other passages by Paul. However Paul gives women full equality and status through his recognition of the quality and the extent of their missionary work and in the church organisation. Affirmations of this appear extensively in the Letters and Epistles. There is also Paul's statement: *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*". The focus with Paul appears to be about maintaining the respectability of the Church and conforming to the law in a grossly gender divided society. Unlike Peter; Paul does not identify the woman as the weaker partner. Although Peter is strongly criticised in the Gospel of Thomas, Paul is not, and that may reflect the differences in their approach.

<sup>179</sup> Or at least what is attributed to Peter

<sup>180</sup> See also section 2:1:5 *Augustine and the Reform Tradition* of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

*weaker partner in the relationship. Further statements which declare the Peter had difficulty in accepting women as full equals appear in other early Christian writing. It also appears in Saying 114 in the Gospel of Thomas itself. The implications of this are discussed later in this document. See also the commentary on Saying 114 for further explanation. Sayings 11, 87, 106 and 114 also have direct relevance to Saying 22.*

*Roman society, through its Gods, gave men and women citizens equal esteem but created very strongly differentiated roles that gave men authority in public life and women authority over house and home. Such an approach attacked the public role and ministry of women. However in their private premises, women contributed importantly to the development of the Church. The charge that the Gospel of Thomas makes against Peter is that he failed to fully embrace the gender transcendence and equality that Jesus presents. However it was the Gospel of Thomas and not the teaching of Peter that was suppressed. By the time of Tertullian the public ministry of women had been prohibited by the Roman Church<sup>181</sup>. The public ministries of Mary Magdalene and the other female followers who contributed greatly to the ministry of Jesus were also denied.*

*Those people who attribute a late date to the Gospel of Thomas have argued that this saying demands the rejection of all sex. The idea that women had an instant sex change at the moment of death in order to enter heaven as men was so prevalent in the fourth century Church that St Augustine devoted a complete chapter to this in his works.<sup>182</sup> However the evidence now available suggests indicates that this saying, and the Gospel of Thomas, must have originated at an early date. Since the Kingdom of heaven exists outside time this potential must apply to the living and the dead in the same way. Therefore this saying denies the type of imposed gender complementarity which has become part of the doctrines of many present day Christian Churches. It also indicates that the gender equality which is found in the teaching of Jesus would be acceptable in the present day world.*

*The corresponding Texts in the Gospels are only about children: (See also sayings 3 to 6): Matthew 18.3: "Verily, I say unto you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 18.4 Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 18.5 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me: Luke 18.16: But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 18.17 Verily, I say unto you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." The statement by Paul in Galatians 3:28 is the first to declare: "nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". For both Peter and Paul, obtaining the respect of others in Roman society was necessary for the survival of the Church. As with the attitude which Paul took to slavery in the Letter to Philemon, it would seem that the Gospel message should be expressed in full within the Christian Community while conforming to social expectations outside it. This was a key to its survival. But it was also its loss. Instead of a Christianity which expressed in full the gender transcendence and equality which is described in Galatians 3:28 and Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas, a Christianity which has*

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<sup>181</sup> See section 2:3:3 "The Genderisation of God" in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> Tertullian

<sup>182</sup> St. Augustine (354-430): *City of God, Chapter 17 of book XXII - Whether the Bodies of Women Shall Retain Their Own Sex in the Resurrection.* [Accessed 19/12/2012]. <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers2/NPNF1-02/npnf1-02-28.htm>

*been adapted because of the need to conform to the demands of Roman Society has become the doctrine of many sections of today's Church.*

*Sayings 23 onwards continue the theme of the Universality of God's mission and the importance of being a person who walks in that light. Saying 23 again reflects the statement in Matthew 22:14: "Many are called but few are chosen"*

(23) Jesus says:

- (a) "I will choose you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand.
- (b) And they will stand as a single one."

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(24)

- (a) His disciples said: "Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary for us to seek it.
- (b) He said to them: "Whoever has ears should hear!
- (c) Light exists inside a person of light, and he shines on the whole world. If he does not shine, there is darkness."

*Commentary: Jesus only answers the question in saying 24a with the cabalistic<sup>183</sup> response "Whoever has ears should hear!" In Sayings 1-5 it is demonstrated that the Kingdom of Heaven exists outside time and is greater than any physical representation. This also reflects the "Two Ways" teaching in early Christianity which separates the "Way of Darkness" from the "Way of Light".*

*Corresponding Text: Luke 11.34 "Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. 11.35 Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. 11.36 If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."*

*For a general discussion on seeking, see saying 95. See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment.*

(25) Jesus says:

- (a) "Love your brother like your life!
- (b) Protect him like the apple of your eye!"

*Commentary: Psalm 17:8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(26) Jesus says:

- (a) "You see the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam that is in your (own) eye.

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<sup>183</sup> Anything cabalistic has a secret, hidden meaning, which is characteristic of a Jewish Midrash

(b) When you remove the beam from your (own) eye, then you will see clearly (enough) to remove the splinter from your brother's eye."

*The parable in saying 26 is found in the Canonical Gospels*

*Commentary: Sayings 23 to 26 have parallels in the Canonical texts. It would appear that Jesus in Sayings 27 to 29 is comparing the attitude of people who live in the light of the Gospel (as described in Sayings 23 to 26) with the dissolute behaviour of humankind, and it is also a further exploration of the "Two Ways" approach. Sayings 28 to 30 focus on a religion which refuses to listen. Saying 27 implies that there should be no rejection of religion. What instead may be challenged by it, are the rules that religion creates. See saying 39 onwards*

*Corresponding Texts: "Matthew 7.3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 7.4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? 7.5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye". Luke 6.41: "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 6.42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye".*

(27)

- (a) "If you do not abstain from the world, you will not find the kingdom.
- (b) If you do not make the Sabbath into a Sabbath, you will not see the Father."

*Commentary: See Sayings 39 and 112 for the discussion*

*Sayings 28 and 29 are comments on the dissolute nature of humankind*

(28) Jesus says:

- (a) "I stood in the middle of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them.
- (b) I found all of them drunk. None of them did I find thirsty.
- (c) And my soul ached for the children of humanity, because they are blind in their heart, and they cannot see; for they came into the world empty, (and) they also seek to depart from the world empty.
- (d) But now they are drunk. (But) when they shake off their wine, then they will change their mind."

(29) Jesus says:

- (a) "If the flesh came into being because of the spirit, it is a wonder.
- (b) But if the spirit (came into being) because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders.
- (c) Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has taken up residence in this poverty."

(30) Jesus says:

- (a) "Where there are three gods, they are gods.
- (b) Where there are two or one, I am with him."

*Commentary: This is difficult to interpret on its own, since it may relate to the concept of the Trinity. It could also relate to the First Commandment "you shall not have other Gods before me". It might refer to the Roman Triad of the three dominant Gods. Alternatively it may reflect Matthew 18:20: For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." See saying 44 for further discussion.*

(31) Jesus says:

- (a) "No prophet is accepted in his (own) village.
- (b) A physician does not heal those who know him."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13.57: "And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and in his own house." Mark 6.4: "And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Luke 4.24: "And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country". John 4.43: "After the two days he departed to Galilee. 4.44 For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country".*

(32) Jesus says:

"A city built upon a high mountain (and) fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden."

*Corresponding Text: "Matthew 5.14: "A city set on a hill cannot be hid".*

(33) Jesus says:

- (a) "What you will hear with your ear {with the other ear} proclaim from your rooftops.
- (b) For no one lights a lamp (and) puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place.
- (3) Rather, he puts it on a lampstand, so that everyone who comes in and goes out will see its light."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 10.27: "What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops." Matthew 5.15: "Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house". Mark 4.21: "And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand?" Luke 8.16: "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light." Luke 11.33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light."*

(34) Jesus says:

"If a blind (person) leads a blind (person), both will fall into a pit."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 15.14: "Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Luke 6.39: "He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit".*

(35) Jesus says:

- (a) "It is not possible for someone to enter the house of a strong (person) (and) take it by force unless he binds his hands.
- (2) Then he will loot his house."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 12.29: "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house." Mark 3.27: "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house". Luke 11.21: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; 11.22 but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoil".*

(36) Jesus says:

"Do not worry from morning to evening and from evening to morning about what you will wear."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 6.25: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" Luke 12.22: "And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. 12.23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing".*

(37)

- (a) His disciples said: "When will you appear to us, and when will we see you?"
- (b) Jesus said: "When you undress without being ashamed and take your clothes (and) put them under your feet like little children (and) trample on them,
- (c) then [you] will see the son of the Living One, and you will not be afraid."

*Commentary: This saying reflects the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven and the association with children described in sayings 2 to 6*

(38) Jesus says:

- (a) "Many times have you desired to hear these words, these that I am speaking to you, and you have no one else from whom to hear them.
- (b) There will be days when you will seek me (and) you will not find me."

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 10:23-24: "Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it." Matthew 13:10-17 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" 11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. John 7:32-36 2 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him. 33 Jesus said, "I am with you for only a*

short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. 34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.” 35 The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? 36 What did he mean when he said, ‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come’?”

See Saying 62

For a general discussion on seeking, see saying 95

(39) Jesus says:

- (a) “The Pharisees and the scribes have received the keys of knowledge, (but) they have hidden them.
- (b) Neither have they entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to.
- (c) You, however, be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves!”

*Commentary: The Condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees by Jesus is very clearly identified in Matthew 3:7-10 and Mark’s Gospel: Mark 7:1-23: “Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles. So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.” Then he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’ But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban’ (that is, an offering to God) then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.”*

*Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.” When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. He said to them, “Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”*

*And in Matthew 3:7-10: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who*

warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

*Corresponding texts: Matthew 23.13: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in" Luke 11.52" Woe to you lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."*

(40) Jesus says:

- (a) "A grapevine was planted outside (the vineyard) of the Father.
- (b) And since it is not supported, it will be pulled up by its roots (and) will perish."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 15.13: He answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment*

(41) Jesus says:

- (1) "Whoever has (something) in his hand, (something more) will be given to him.
- (2) And whoever has nothing, even the little he has will be taken from him."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 25.29: "For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Luke 19.26 'I tell you, that to everyone who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'" See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment*

(42) Jesus says:

"Become passers-by."

*Commentary: Many different interpretations have been applied to saying 42 and it has been used to argue against the validity of the Gospel. However the saying should be read in conjunction with the sayings on either side of it. Saying 27 requires the followers of Jesus to keep the Sabbath but not the rules that Judaism imposes on it. Sayings 40 to 45 also follow the theme of saying 39. A religion and society which has lost the foundations of its faith becomes a decaying corpse. That idiom is also present in Sayings 56 and 60.*

*Saying 42 "Become passers-by", and also the statement in Mark that: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines, both imply that the rules doctrines, regulations and leaders of a religion and society that has lost its way should be bypassed if the true faith and belief is to be restored and to flourish again in the world.*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*



(43)

- (a) His disciples said to him: "Who are you to say this to us?"
- (b) "Do you not realize from what I say to you who I am?"
- (c) But you have become like the Jews! They love the tree, (but) they hate its fruit. Or they love the fruit, (but) they hate the tree."

*Corresponding Texts: John 8.25: They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Even what I have told you from the beginning. 8.26 I have much to say about you and much to judge; but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." Matthew 7.16 You will know them by their fruits. 7.17 So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. 7.18 A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Luke 6.43 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; 6.44 for each tree is known by its own fruit.*

*Sayings 39 to 43 are direct attacks on the Jewish Religious Authorities. The approach of Jesus was to bypass many of the rules and regulations they imposed.*

(44) Jesus says:

- (a) "Whoever blasphemes against the Father, it will be forgiven him.
- (b) And whoever blasphemes against the Son, it will be forgiven him.
- (c) But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither on earth nor in heaven."

*Commentary: This saying is perhaps of relevance to the nature of the Trinity and the Arian controversy in Christianity which raged up to around 600 AD. It implies that God the Father and God the Son should be treated as manifestations of the Holy Spirit. (See also sayings 15 "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your face (and) worship him. That one is your Father". Also saying 30: "Where there are three gods, they are gods. Where there are two or one, I am with him.") This is a classic problem for all religions who try to put a physical image on God. It also contrasts with Judaism where no image could be tolerated, and the name of God could not even be written. The doxology at the beginning of the Gospel of John is perhaps the best attempt to put an image on the Holy Spirit<sup>184</sup>. This passage also asserts the primacy of the Holy Spirit. That primacy would seem to be supported in the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas. This viewpoint clashes with the doctrine of the Trinity as defined in the Nicene Creed by the fourth Century Church, where the Holy Ghost (spirit), the Lord and Giver of life, proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets".<sup>185</sup> The order of priority is therefore reversed. The present doctrine of the*

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<sup>184</sup> John 1:1-5: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"

<sup>185</sup> The Nicene Creed, as promulgated by the First Council of Nicaea in 325 is as follows: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God,] Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth]; Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost (Spirit). [But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'- they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]" This was amended by the First council of Constantinople in 381, so that the section about the Holy Ghost now says: "And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who

*Trinity is largely a product of the second century Church<sup>186</sup>. Arguments about whom or what came first in the Arian controversy are irrelevant in a heaven which exists outside time. Rather the difference relates to the functions they were expected to fulfil. The Holy Spirit is the Godhead of abstraction, the God of Love, God the Father is depicted in the bible as the guardian of the Jewish nation, and God the Son is the suffering servant who stands totally alongside and completely identifies with people and all the trials of humankind. In Jesus that identification was made complete, and total commitment to this Gospel message, as in saying 45 onwards is required*

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 12.31: "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 12.32 And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come". Mark 3.28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; 3.29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin". Luke 12.10: And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.*

(45) Jesus says:

- (a) "Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs picked from thistles, for they do not produce fruit.
- (b) A good person brings forth good from his treasure.
- (c) A bad person brings (forth) evil from the bad treasure that is in his heart, and (in fact) he speaks evil.
- (d) For out of the abundance of the heart he brings forth evil."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 7.16: You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? 7.17 So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. Luke 6.43: "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; 6.44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 6.45 The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

(46) Jesus says:

- (a) "From Adam to John the Baptist, among those born of women there is no one who surpasses John the Baptist so that his (i.e., John's) eyes need not be downcast."
- (b) "But I have also said: Whoever among you becomes little will know the kingdom, and will surpass John."

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*proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets". The words in square brackets were left out.*

<sup>186</sup> Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, anglicised as Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 AD), was a prolific early Christian author from Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. He is the first Christian author to produce an extensive corpus of Latin Christian literature. He also was a notable early Christian apologist and a polemicist against heresy. Tertullian has been called "the father of Latin Christianity" and "the founder of Western theology." Though conservative, he did originate and advance new theology to the early Church. He is perhaps most famous for being the oldest extant Latin writer to use the term Trinity (Latin, trinitas), and giving the oldest extant formal exposition of a Trinitarian theology. Other Latin formulations that first appear in his work are "three Persons, one Substance" as the Latin "tres Personae, una Substantia" (itself from the Koine Greek "treis Hypostases, Homooousios"). He wrote his trinitarian formula after becoming a Montanist. However, unlike many Church fathers, he was never canonized by the Catholic Church, as several of his later teachings directly contradicted the actions and teachings that were adopted by the Church. See section: 2:3:3 The Genderisation of God in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 11.11; Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Luke 7.28: I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

(47) Jesus says:

- (a) "It is impossible for a person to mount two horses and to stretch two bows.
- (b) And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters. Else he will honour the one and insult the other.
- (c) No person drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine.
- (d) And new wine is not put into old wineskins, so that they do not burst; nor is old wine put into (a) new wineskin, so that it does not spoil it.
- (e) An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear will result."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 9.16: And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. 9.17 Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Mark 2.21: No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 2.22. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins." Luke 5.36: He told them a parable also: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 5.37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. 5.38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 5.39 And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.'"*

(48) Jesus says:

"If two make peace with one another in one and the same house, (then) they will say to the mountain: 'Move away,' and it will move away."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 18.19: Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. Mark 11.23: Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Matthew 17.20: He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."*

*See also Saying 106 Jesus said, "When you make the two one, you will become the sons of man, and when you say, 'Mountain, move away,' it will move away."*

(49) Jesus says:

- (a) "Blessed are the solitary ones, the elect. For you will find the kingdom.
- (b) For you come from it (and) will return to it."

*Commentary: Saying 50a reflects the introduction to John's Gospel, where the primacy of the Holy Spirit is also emphasised within it. Sayings 50 to 52 largely relate*

*to the foundations of Christianity, the nature of the Resurrection and the authority of Jesus. Saying 52 mirrors the “Two Ways” idiom where people follow the “Way of Darkness” and the “Way of Light”.*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(50) Jesus says:

- (a) “If they say to you: ‘Where do you come from?’ (then) say to them: ‘We have come from the light, the place where the light has come into being by itself, has established [itself] and has appeared in their image.’
- (b) If they say to you: ‘Is it you?’ (then) say: ‘We are his children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’
- (c) If they ask you: ‘What is the sign of your Father among you?’ (then) say to them: ‘It is movement and repose.’”

*The use of the words “movement and repose” are also intriguing. However Matthew 7:15-20 states: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them”. John 14:27 states “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”. Those who follow these teachings of Jesus become people of Light who enter the kingdom not because of the magnitude of their efforts, but because of God’s Grace. See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment. Perhaps the words movement and repose could be replaced by actions and peace.*

(51)

- (a) His disciples said to him: “When will the <resurrection> of the dead take place, and when will the new world come?”
- (b) He said to them: “That (resurrection) which you are awaiting has (already) come, but you do not recognize it.”

*Commentary: This saying goes to the heart of understanding what resurrection is and is meant to represent in the Judean and Christian tradition<sup>187</sup>. Judaism looked for the coming of a Messiah at the end of days which will lead a physical revolution to throw off oppressors, during which time the dead will arise<sup>188</sup>. Nevertheless the Torah also describes a number of previous instances where individual people have already been raised. That was also an important element in the ministry of Jesus. For Jesus and the Christian tradition, resurrection expresses the conquering of death through the power of God’s Love*

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<sup>187</sup> When Rabbi Gamliel was asked how he knew God would resurrect the dead he replied: “From the Torah: for it is written: ‘And the Lord said to Moses, Behold you shall sleep with your fathers; and this people will rise up’ [Deuteronomy 31:16]. From the Prophets: as it is written: ‘Your dead men shall live, together with my dead bodies shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead.’ (Isaiah 26:19); from the Writings: as it is written, ‘And the roof of your mouth, like the best wine of my beloved, like the best wine, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak’ (Song of Songs 7:9).” (Sanhedrin 90b [http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin\\_90.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_90.html))

<sup>188</sup> Traditional Jewish belief is that during the Messianic Age, the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Jewish people will be gathered from the far corners of the earth and the bodies of the dead will be brought back to life and reunited with their souls.

*Christian tradition also determines that this resurrection is only made possible through the atoning death of Jesus, and it is only available to those who know the risen Christ. Thus Paul states: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man": (1 Corinthians 15:20-21). "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."(1 Corinthians 15:14). Paul also tells us that the people who have never heard the Gospel need to hear the Gospel in order to be saved. This is consistent with Peter's testimony where he says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

*However both these views are contradicted in saying 51: Here, Thomas catches hold of the idea that resurrection is not an earthly physical event. Although the Gospels report miracles where Jesus (and others) raised people from the dead, true resurrection also takes place in the lives of people who are living, not just of the dead. Through moral change death is defeated and people are resurrected in a heavenly life. Saying 51 also reflects the view in Saying 1: "Whoever finds the meaning of these words will not taste death". This declares that resurrection is not a future event. It has already come when Jesus and the disciples are still alive and it is therefore not dependent on the sacrifice and death of Jesus on the Cross.*

*Belief in the resurrection is a core Jewish tradition. It is not dependent on the crucifixion itself. Nevertheless the total conviction that the resurrection is a reality infuses the Gospels of Thomas and Mark. This is even though the nature of Christ's death is never even mentioned in the Gospel of Thomas, and it is sufficient for Mark in his Gospel simply to declare that Christ's resurrection has taken place.*

*These are challenging views. Saying 51 also picks up on one of the earliest explanations for how resurrection and atonement operates. That is through moral influence. In this view the core of Christianity is positive moral change, and the purpose of everything Jesus did was to lead humans toward that moral change. Jesus is understood to have accomplished this variously through his teachings, example, founding of the Church, and the inspiring power of his martyrdom and resurrection.*

*A second explanation is the "ransom theory" which was first clearly enunciated by Irenaeus (AD 130 to 202). In the ransom theory Jesus liberates humanity from slavery to sin and Satan and death by giving his own life as a ransom sacrifice on the Cross (Matthew 20:28). This differs from the view that salvation is only made possible because of the resurrection itself. However these doctrines of ransom and atonement by death on the Cross were largely developed in the second century Church.*

*See also sayings 3-6 and 113*

(52)

- (a) His disciples said to him: "Twenty-four prophets have spoken in Israel, and all (of them) have spoken through you."
- (b) He said to them: "You have pushed away the living (one) from yourselves, and you have begun to speak of those who are dead."

*Commentary: Saying 52 reinforces Saying 51. It implies the disciples confine the idea of resurrection to those who are already dead, in accordance with the Jewish tradition. Also that Jesus is a messenger of the prophets alone. Saying 51b additionally says “That (resurrection) which you are awaiting has (already) come, but you do not recognize it.” The word “saved” is never used in the Gospel of Thomas. Today in place of the resurrection of the living in Saying 51, people might use the word “saved” instead.*

(53)

- (a) His disciples said to him: “Is circumcision beneficial, or not?”
- (b) He said to them: “If it were beneficial, their father would beget them circumcised from their mother.
- (c) But the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything.”

*Commentary: The Council of Jerusalem (or Apostolic Conference) held in Jerusalem around the year 50 AD decided that Gentile converts to Christianity were not required to keep most of the Law of Moses. (Acts: Chapter 15). The main purpose of the decree is considered to deal with the arguments as to whether Gentile converts had to be circumcised. In this decree Peter states: “Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood”. Paul deals extensively with the issues of circumcision in Philippians Chapter 3: 2-12, but there are indications that he may also be considering a wider range of physical acts.<sup>189</sup> The scientific part of this study identifies the medical consensus which regards both gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as naturally expected variations of the human condition, which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life. It also confirms that these conditions are driven by the search for identity and not reward. It additionally shows that as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must be encountered within the gender and sexually variant communities, as in the population at large. Circumcision is therefore the mark of admission to a tribe; while gender reassignment is the mark of admission to a gender, and both of these are concerned with identity alone.*

*In Matthew 19:12, Jesus declared that those people who have voluntarily made themselves eunuchs for the “Kingdom of heaven’s sake” can also be accepted into the same fold<sup>190</sup>. The passage reads: “For there are eunuchs, which were so born*

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<sup>189</sup> Judaism demanded circumcision as the badge of membership, and some of the conflicts related to the role which circumcision should play within the Church are addressed by Paul in Philippians Chapter 3: 2-12. Here Paul uses the words “We are the circumcision” to describe the Christian Community but he then goes on to identify this “circumcision” as the members of the Church itself and he rejects the need for individuals to submit to any physical act. This passage is usually taken to refer to circumcision on its own but the text of verse 2 which states: “Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh” suggests that a much broader scope was envisaged. The reference to the dogs may refer to the qedeshim mentioned in the Old Testament who may have had roles that were similar to the Gallae priests and Reumann (Reumann, John. (2008). “Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary”, Yale University Press. ISBN 0300157703, 9780300157703) considers that this passage can be taken to refer to a large number of equivalent groups. The usually accepted date for the writing of Philippians was around 62 AD, this was about 12 years after the accepted date of the pronouncement of the Apostolic Decree by the early Christian Church. The decree dealt with the arguments as to whether Gentile converts had to be circumcised. In this Peter states: “Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19–20). Although the decree deals only with circumcision the same arguments can be applied to all forms of physical transformation, and that would apply to the self-castrated Priests of the Greco-Roman Goddess cults

<sup>190</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): “Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf>

*from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it". Eunuchs who kept the Law were given a high place in Jewish society (see Isaiah 56:4-5)<sup>191</sup>. In this New Testament passage Jesus was expanding on the Old Testament texts to include those who had undergone voluntary castration, as well as those for whom it was an enforced act<sup>192</sup>. That also applies to the self-castrated priests of the Goddess Cults<sup>193</sup>. In the Gospel of Thomas the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything. Statement 53 in the Gospel of Thomas is at least as strong, if not stronger than that issued in the Apostolic Decree, and the statement in Matthew also means that such physical changes and gender non-conformities are of no consequence in lives which are lived in the love of Christ.*

*When these considerations are taken together with Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas, it confirms that the same criteria of use and abuse should be applied to all aspects of gender and sex. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, this demands that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. The Gospel of Thomas refers to the Solitary Ones. It never calls it celibacy. Under the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant all behaviour is judged by the purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any heterosexual or same-sex act of sex, and there is no toleration of abusive sex<sup>194</sup>.*

(54) Jesus says:

"Blessed are the poor. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to you."

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 6.20: And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Matthew 5.3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

(55) Jesus says:

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<sup>191</sup> See section 4:3 of: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>. For more details see also section 3 of Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf> and Section 3:2 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>192</sup> These issues caused very real difficulties for the early church. The most relevant passage in the Bible which describes the attitude of Jesus to celibacy and ritual castration is that in Matthew 19:12 which states "For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it". The third phrase in this statement implies that this is an active act and for the social culture of the time that statement was very direct. Those who opposed ritual castration had an uphill battle against them for there was little doubt about the authenticity of the text. Throughout Christian and European history there have been many who took and taught these statements literally. They include Valentinus (whose sect was declared heretical in the mid-second century), Julius Cassianus (declared heretical in the mid-second century), Basilides (also declared heretical in the early-second century), Leontios of Antiochia, (Bishop of Jerusalem, late-fourth century), Melito "the Eunuch" (ca. late-second century), Hilarion (mid-fourth century), Marcarius "the Egyptian" (late 4th century) and Origen (also declared heretical in the early-third century). These people are among the most famous of thousands that chose ritual castration. This perception was not confined to the Gnostic or fringe movements, it became a major issue in the early church. The earliest report of the desire for castration among Christians comes from the second century writings of Justin. Self-castration was a widely practiced and it was an ancient expression of religious devotion throughout the Middle East. Several early Christian encratite and ascetic movements (centred mainly in Egypt) are known to have members who were eunuchs. The cloisters of Egypt and Syria were centres of self-castration, and Coptic monasteries continued to perform castration well into the Islamic period. Indeed, the criminalization of eunuchs in the church at the Council of Nicaea is testimony to the degree to which self-castration was practiced. For the full account see Gilchrist, S. (2012). "Sexuality, Gender and the Christian Church". <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

<sup>193</sup> Gilchrist, S. 2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>194</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

- (a) "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot become a disciple of mine.  
(b) And whoever does not hate his brothers and his sisters (and) will not take up his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me."

*See Thomas, Saying 112 <Jesus said,> "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does [not] love his father and his mother as I do cannot become a [disciple] to me*

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 10.37: He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 10.38 and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Luke 14.26: "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 14.27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112.*

(56) Jesus says:

"Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse.  
And whoever has found (this) corpse, of him the world is not worthy."

*Commentary: The analogy of becoming a corpse and being eaten is discussed in Sayings 7 and 42. See saying 112 for further discussion.*

(57) Jesus says:

- (a) "The kingdom of the Father is like a person who had (good) seed.  
(b) His enemy came by night. He sowed darnel among the good seed.  
(c) The person did not allow (the servants) to pull up the darnel.  
He said to them: 'Lest you go to pull up the darnel (and then) pull up the wheat along with it.'  
(d) For on the day of the harvest the darnel will be apparent and it will be pulled up (and) burned."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13.24: "Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; 13.25 but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 13.26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 13.27 And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?' 13.28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 13.29 But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 13.30 Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*

(58) Jesus says:

"Blessed is the person who has struggled. He has found life."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 11.28: Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 11.29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I*



*am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 11.30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

(59) Jesus says:

"Look for the Living One while you are alive, so that you will not die (and) then seek to see him. And you will not be able to see (him)."

*Corresponding Texts: John 13.33: Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' John 7.34 you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come."*

*For a general discussion on seeking, see saying 95*

(60)

- (a) <He saw> a Samaritan who was trying to steal a lamb while he was on his way to Judea.
- (b) He said to his disciples: "That (person) is stalking the lamb."
- (c) They said to him: "So that he may kill it (and) eat it."
- (d) He said to them: "As long as it is alive he will not eat it, but (only) when he has killed it (and) it has become a corpse."
- (e) They said to him: "Otherwise he cannot do it."
- (f) He said to them: "You, too, look for a place for your repose so that you may not become a corpse (and) get eaten."

*Commentary: This parable does not appear in the Canonical texts. There can be no doubt that Jewish disciples of Jesus were full of prejudices regarding the Samaritans. Jews were forbidden to eat in a Samaritan home, to intermarry with them, or to worship with them. James and John seem to have believed that Jesus thought in the same way, but Jesus instead rebuked them (Luke 9:52-54). John 4 describes Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman. Jesus was tired and rested while his disciples went into the city to buy food. He started a conversation with the woman, who had come to draw water from the well of Jacob. She is surprised by Jesus' request to, "Give me a drink." She reacts immediately: "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan, so how can you ask me for a drink? Jews will have nothing to do with Samaritans." (John 4:7-9) In other words, "How is it that a Jew is ready to put his lips on the same cup Samaritans have drunk out of?" The concept of Jesus as the Lamb of God was well understood, and this parable appears to be about how well the Samaritans could receive the Gospel Message. The disciples said the Samaritans would steal it and destroy it (60c), but Jesus believed that the Gospel message could survive in Samaria (60d). Nevertheless the disciples still presumed it would be killed (60e). In (60f) the response of Jesus was to chastise the disciples. The analogy of becoming a corpse and being eaten is referred to in Sayings 7 and 42.*

*The reason why this parable does not appear in any of the canonical texts may be because it refers specifically to relationships between Judea and Samaria before the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.*

*The following sayings from 61 onwards are exhortations not to rely on the World. To follow that is the way of darkness and death. Instead of this, take up the invitation to follow the way of light and life: (The "Two Ways" teaching). Do not delay, you do not know what will happen tomorrow and do not let family and other commitments get in the way!*

(61)

- (a) Jesus said: "Two will rest on a bed. The one will die, the other will live."
- (b) Salome said: "(So) who are you, man? You have got a place on my couch as a <stranger> and you have eaten from my table."
- (c) Jesus said to her: "I am he who comes from the one who is (always) the same. I was given some of that which is my Father's."
- (d) "I am your disciple!"
- (e) Therefore I say: If someone becomes < like > (God), he will become full of light. But if he becomes one, separated (from God), he will become full of darkness.

*Commentary: Salome was a follower of Jesus who appears briefly in the canonical gospels and in more detail in apocryphal writings. She is named by Mark as present at the crucifixion and as one of the women who found Jesus's tomb empty. Tradition has further identified her with other women who are mentioned but not named in the canonical gospels: "There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome" (Mark 15:40). "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." (Mark 16:1). She is not to be confused with the dancer who demanded the head of John the Baptist: In the gospels that person is only referred to as "the daughter of Herodias".*

*Corresponding Text: Luke 17.34: I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 17.35 There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left." 17.36 17.37: And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."*

*See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment.*

(62) Jesus says:

- (a) "I tell my mysteries to those who [are worthy] of [my] mysteries."
- (b) "Whatever your right hand does, your left hand should not know what it is doing."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13.10: Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 13.11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. Mark 4.11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; 4.12 so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven." Luke 8.10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.*

*There may be a reference here to the tradition where the right hand was used for eating and the left hand for ablutions.*

*See also saying 38*

(63) Jesus says:

- (a) "There was a rich person who had many possessions.
- (b) He said: 'I will use my possessions so that I might sow, reap, plant, (and) fill my storehouses with fruit so that I will not lack anything.'
- (c) This was what he was thinking in his heart. And in that night he died.
- (d) Whoever has ears should hear."

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 12.16: And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; 12.17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' 12.18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 12.19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.' 12.20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 12.21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

(64) Jesus says:

- (a) "A person had guests. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant, so that he might invite the guests.
- (b) He came to the first (and) said to him: 'My master invites you.'
- (c) He said: 'I have bills for some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I will go (and) give instructions to them. Excuse me from the dinner.'
- (d) He came to another (and) said to him: 'My master has invited you.'
- (e) He said to him: 'I have bought a house, and I have been called (away) for a day. I will not have time.'
- (f) He went to another (and) said to him: 'My master invites you.'
- (g) He said to him: 'My friend is going to marry, and I am the one who is going to prepare the meal. I will not be able to come. Excuse me from the dinner.'
- (h) He came up to another (and) said to him: 'My master invites you.'
- (i) He said to him: 'I have bought a village. Since I am going to collect the rent, I will not be able to come. Excuse me.'
- (j) The servant went away. He said to his master: 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.'
- (k) The master said to his servant: 'Go out on the roads. Bring (back) whomever you find, so that they might have dinner.'
- (l) Dealers and merchants (will) not enter the places of my Father."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 22.3: And sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. 22.4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' 22.5 But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 22.6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 22.7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 22.8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. 22.9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' 22.10 And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. 22.11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; 22.12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 22.13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and*

cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' 22.14 For many are called, but few are chosen." Luke 14.16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; 14.17 and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' 14.18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' 14.19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' 14.20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 14.21 So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' 14.22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 14.23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 14.24: For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

(65) He said:

- (a) "A [usurer] owned a vineyard. He gave it to some farmers so that they would work it (and) he might receive its fruit from them.
- (b) He sent his servant so that the farmers might give him the fruit of the vineyard.
- (c) They seized his servant, beat him, (and) almost killed him. The servant went (back and) told his master.
- (d) His master said: 'Perhaps <they> did not recognize <him>.'
- (e) He sent another servant, (and) the farmers beat that other one as well.
- (f) Then the master sent his son (and) said: 'Perhaps they will show respect for my son.'
- (g) (But) those farmers, since they knew that he was the heir of the vineyard, seized him (and) killed him.
- (h) Whoever has ears should hear."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 21.33. "Hear another parable. There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country 21.34 When the season of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit; 21.35 and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 21.36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them. 21.37 Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 21.38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' 21.39 And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 21.40 When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 21.41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Mark 12.1 And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country. 12.2 When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 12.3 And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. 12.4 Again he sent to them another servant, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. 12.5 And he sent another, and him they killed; and so with many others, some they beat and some they killed. 12.6 He had still one other, a beloved son; finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 12.7 But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 12.8 And they took*

him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 12.9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants, and give the vineyard to others. Luke 20.9. And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. 20.10 When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. 20.11 And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 20.12 And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. 20.13 Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him.' 20.14 But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' 20.15 And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 20.16 He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "God forbid!"

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Jesus when he went to the synagogue in Nazareth on a Sabbath day. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. When he began to speak he said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus also identified himself with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:7-8.

Sayings 63 to 65 describe the actions expected of those in authority. However it is in the triumph of the suffering servant the true message of the Gospel is found. As a sexual outcast, who was silenced by society, the role of the eunuch was also close to that of the suffering servant. When Philip explained the transformation of the Gospel message to him, it is hardly surprising that the eunuch asked to be baptised and went away content<sup>195</sup>. To the man who asked Jesus: "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus said: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me". There was no safety net for any generous giver, and in the story of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan put himself in grave danger by stopping to give help to the Jew who was attacked.

(66) Jesus says:

"Show me the stone that the builders have rejected. It is the cornerstone."

Corresponding Texts: Matthew 21.42: Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'? Mark 12.10 Have you not read this scripture: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; 12.11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?" Luke 20.17: But he looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'?"

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<sup>195</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

(67) Jesus says:

“Whoever knows all, if he is lacking one thing, he is (already) lacking everything.”

(68) Jesus says:

(a) “Blessed are you when(ever) they hate you (and) persecute you.

(b) But they (themselves) will find no place there where they have persecuted you.”

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 5.11: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 5.12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you. Luke 6.22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man!*

(69) Jesus says:

(a) “Blessed are those who have been persecuted in their heart.

They are the ones who have truly come to know the Father.”

(b) “Blessed are those who suffer from hunger so that the belly of the one who wishes (it) will be satisfied.”

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Luke 6:21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled".*

(70) Jesus says:

(a) “If you bring it into being within you, (then) that which you have will save you.

(b) If you do not have it within you, (then) that which you do not have within you [will] kill you.”

*Commentary: See saying 97 for a general discussion on the need to maintain commitment.*

(71) Jesus says:

“I will [destroy this] house, and no one will be able to build it [again].”

*Corresponding Text: Mark 14:58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'"*

(72)

(a) A [person said] to him: “Tell my brothers that they have to divide my father’s possessions with me.”

(b) He said to him: “Man, who has made me a divider?”

(c) He turned to his disciples (and) said to them: “I am not a divider, am I?”

*Corresponding Text: Luke 12:13: Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."*

*For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

*Sayings 66 to 72 describe the challenges that the followers of Jesus must face. Sayings 73 to 76 describe lack of followers and the rewards that will come*

(73) Jesus says:

- (a) "The harvest is plentiful, but there are few workers.
- (b) But beg the Lord that he may send workers into the harvest."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; 9:38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*

(74) He said:

"Lord, there are many around the well, but there is nothing in the <well>."

*Commentary: Is this a comment about the despair of Jesus' because he was not being understood? See also Sayings 13, 21, and 28.*

(75) Jesus says:

"Many are standing before the door, but it is the solitary ones who will enter the wedding hall."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen."*

*Commentary: See Saying 112 for further discussion*

(76) Jesus says:

- (a) "The kingdom of the Father is like a merchant who had merchandise and found a pearl.
- (b) That merchant is prudent. He sold the goods (and) bought for himself the pearl alone.
- (c) You too look for his treasure, which does not perish, (and) which stays where no moth can reach it to eat it, and no worm destroys it."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it". Matthew 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 6:20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.*

*Sayings 77 to 79 describe who Jesus is and the promises that Jesus makes*

(77) Jesus says:

- (a) "I am the light that is over all. I am the All. The All came forth out of me. And to me the All has come."
- (b) "Split a piece of wood — I am there.
- (c) Lift the stone, and you will find me there."

*Corresponding Texts: John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 1:3: All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.*

(78) Jesus says:

- (a) "Why did you go out to the countryside? To see a reed shaken by the wind,
- (b) and to see a person dressed in soft clothing [like your] kings and your great persons?
- (c) They are dressed in soft clothing and will not be able to recognize the truth."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 11:7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 11:8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. 11:9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. Luke 7:24-26 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.*

(79)

- (a) A woman in the crowd said to him: "Hail to the womb that carried you and to the breasts that fed you."
- (b) He said to [her]: "Hail to those who have heard the word of the Father (and) have truly kept it.
- (c) For there will be days when you will say: 'Hail to the womb that has not conceived and to the breasts that have not given milk.'"

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 11:27 While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" 28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!" Luke 23:29 For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'*

*Sayings 80 to 87 describe the rejection of the dead body of worldly power and the trials that must be faced. This is the Messiah who claims that 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour', who condemns the dead body of worldly power and who stands totally alive and worthy alongside the poor and oppressed.*

(80) Jesus says:

- (a) "Whoever has come to know the world has found the (dead) body.
- (b) But whoever has found the (dead) body, of him the world is not worthy."

*Commentary: The analogy of becoming a corpse and being eaten is discussed in Sayings 7 and 42.*

(81) Jesus says:



- (a) "Whoever has become rich should be king.
- (b) And the one who has power should renounce (it)."

*Commentary: For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(82) Jesus says:

- (a) "The person who is near me is near the fire.
- (b) And the person who is far from me is far from the kingdom."

*Commentary: For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112. Sayings 83 to 85 appear to suggest the potential that is available to people when they live in the Light and Love of Christ*

(83) Jesus says:

- (a) "The images are visible to humanity, but the light within them is hidden in the image.
- (b) { The light of the Father will reveal itself, but his image is hidden by his light."

(84) Jesus says:

- (a) "When you see your likeness you are full of joy.
- (b) But when you see your likenesses that came into existence before you - they neither die nor become manifest - how much will you bear?"

*Commentary: This may be a comparison between earthly and heavenly likenesses. Saying 84b only makes sense if it is presumed that heaven exists outside time*

(85) Jesus says:

- (a) "Adam came from a great power and a great wealth. But he did not become worthy of you.
- (b) For if he had been worthy, (then) [he would] not [have tasted] death."

(86) Jesus says:

- (a) "[Foxes have] their holes and birds have their nest.
- (b) But the son of man has no place to lay his head down (and) to rest."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 8:20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Luke 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

(87) Jesus says:

- (a) "Wretched is the body that depends on a body.
- (b) And wretched is the soul that depends on these two."

*Commentary: This might be a summary of sayings 80 to 86 where the body that is wretched may be the body of the individual that depends on the dead body of worldly power. Thus the soul is wretched too. See Saying 112 for further discussion*

*Sayings 88 to 95 demand a fully committed approach.*

(88) Jesus says:

- (a) "The messengers and the prophets are coming to you, and they will give you what belongs to you.
- (b) And you, in turn, give to them what you have in your hands (and) say to yourselves: 'When will they come (and) take what belongs to them?'"

(89) Jesus says:

- (a) "Why do you wash the outside of the cup?"
- (b) Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one who created the outside?"

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 11:39 Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?"*

(90) Jesus says:

- (a) "Come to me, for my yoke is gentle and my lordship is mild.
- (b) And you will find repose for yourselves."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

*Commentary: See Saying 112 for further discussion*

(91)

- (a) They said to him: "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you."
- (b) He said to them: "You examine the face of sky and earth, but the one who is before you, you have not recognized, and you do not know how to test this opportunity."

*Corresponding Texts: John 9:36 He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Luke 12:54 He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. 55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"*

(92) Jesus says:

- (a) "Seek and you will find.
- (b) But the things you asked me about in past times, and what I did not tell you in that day, now I am willing to tell you, but you do not seek them."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. Luke 11:9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

*For a general discussion on seeking, see saying 95*

(93)

- (a) "Do not give what is holy to the dogs, lest they throw it upon the dunghill.
- (b) Do not throw pearls to swine, lest they turn <them> into [mud]."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.*

(94) Jesus [says]:

- (a) "The one who seeks will find.
- (b) [The one who knocks], to that one will it be opened."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 7:8: For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:10: For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*See the next Saying. For a general discussion on other challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(95) [Jesus says:]

- (a) "If you have money, do not lend (it) out at interest.
- (b) Rather, give [it] to the one from whom you will not get it (back)."

*Commentary: In Saying 2 Jesus says: "The one who seeks should not cease seeking until he finds. And when he finds, he will be dismayed. And when he is dismayed, he will be astonished. And he will be king over the All." Saying 3 states the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you and it is outside time. Sayings 3 to 6 also imply that the Kingdom of Heaven is beyond all physical representation. In Saying 24 the disciples asked: "Show us the place where you are, because it is necessary for us to seek it. Instead of giving a direct answer, Jesus said: "Light exists inside a person of light, and he shines on the whole world. If he does not shine, there is darkness." In saying 38 he says: "Many times have you desired to hear these words, these that I am speaking to you, and you have no one else from whom to hear them. There will be days when you will seek me (and) you will not find me." In saying 59 Jesus says: "Look for the Living One while you are alive, so that you will not die (and) then seek to see him. And you will not be able to see (him)." Those comments are expanded on in Saying 92: "Seek and you will find. But the things you asked me about in past times, and what I did not tell you in that day, now I am willing to tell you, but you do not seek them." Then in Saying 94 he says "The one who seeks will find. [The one who knocks], to that one will it be opened." These sayings are challenging but it is possible that they describe a journey of discovery, which may reflect a gradual realisation by the disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be defined as a physical space. That viewpoint is reflected in Saying 2. Dismay and astonishment may come because the Kingdom of God is revealed despite your efforts, not because of them. It is through the Grace of God you are forgiven. Saying 95 suggests that this is not a search for reward. You do not find the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God finds you.*

*In saying 21 Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?" He said: "They are like servants who are entrusted with a field that is not theirs. When the owners of the field arrive, they will say: 'Let us have our field.' (But) they are naked in their presence so as to let them have it, (and thus) to give them their field." Like most people one suspects that before the Resurrection the disciples would have listened*

*to the claims of Jesus without really hearing them. The transformation was their absolute belief in the Resurrection after they had met the resurrected Jesus and after Thomas was invited to put his hand in his side. It is this which revelation transformed the followers of Jesus into people of light*

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 6:34 If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Luke 14:12-14 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

(96) Jesus [says]:

- (a) "The kingdom of the Father is like [a] woman.
- (b) She took a little bit of yeast. [She] hid it in dough (and) made it into huge loaves of bread.
- (c) Whoever has ears should hear."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 13:33: He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Luke 13:20-21 Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

*See the next saying for a discussion on the need to maintain commitment*

(97) Jesus says:

- (a) "The kingdom of the [Father] is like a woman who is carrying a [jar] filled with flour.
- (b) While she was walking on [the] way, very distant (from home), the handle of the jar broke (and) the flour leaked out [on] the path.
- (c) (But) she did not know (it); she had not noticed a problem.
- (d) When she reached her house, she put the jar down on the floor (and) found it empty."

*Commentary: Although the parable in Saying 96 appears in the Gospel texts the parable in Saying 97 does not. This parable demonstrates that the Kingdom of Heaven will be lost if care is not taken to fulfil its demands. The same theme is present in sayings 11, 24, 40, 41, 50, 61, and 70*

*In saying 7 Jesus says: "Blessed is the lion that a person will eat and the lion will become human. And anathema is the person whom a lion will eat and the lion will become human. "This is a saying which people have used to discredit the Gospel because of its seemingly preposterous nature. However it should be read in conjunction with the earlier sayings, and also in the way in which the allegory of the Lion and the Lamb is used in Isaiah 65:19-25. A full examination is given with the saying itself, where its association with eating and drinking a communion meal are examined. However it is not enough to partake of this communion in pureness of spirit, what comes afterwards is equally important. This means that continued commitment is crucial, for its absence brings the destruction created by becoming the lion instead. The challenge is made in Saying 11. In Saying 40 Jesus says: "A*

grapevine was planted outside (the vineyard) of the Father. And since it is not supported, it will be pulled up by its roots (and) will perish." The need for constant commitment is further emphasised in sayings 96 and 97: Jesus [says]: "The kingdom of the Father is like [a] woman. She took a little bit of yeast. [She] hid it in dough (and) made it into huge loaves of bread and Jesus says: "The kingdom of the [Father] is like a woman who is carrying a [jar] filled with flour. While she was walking on [the] way, very distant (from home), the handle of the jar broke (and) the flour leaked out [on] the path, (But) she did not know (it); she had not noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down on the floor (and) found it empty." And in Saying 41 he says "Whoever has (something) in his hand, (something more) will be given to him. Saying 70 similarly states "If you bring it into being within you, (then) that which you have will save you. If you do not have it within you, (then) that which you do not have within you [will] kill you." Sayings 41, 42 and 108 make it clear that what you have will be taken away from you if it is not supported. The issues of sincerity and purpose are also addressed in Sayings 56, 60 and 80 where the corpse that is created is one arising from misdirected religious belief.

(98) Jesus says:

- (a) "The kingdom of the Father is like a person who wanted to kill a powerful person.
- (b) He drew the sword in his house (and) stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough).
- (c) Then he killed the powerful one."

*Commentary: See Saying 100 for further discussion*

(99)

- (a) The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside."
- (b) He said to them: "Those here, who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother.
- (c) They are the ones who will enter the kingdom of my Father."

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 12:46: While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:31-35 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33" Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

*Commentary: This should be read in conjunction with Sayings 98 and 100. It is also qualified by Saying 101. See Saying 112 for a general discussion*

(100)

- (a) They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him: "Caesar's people demand taxes from us."
- (b) He said to them: "Give Caesar (the things) that are Caesar's.

- (c) Give God (the things) that are God's.  
(d) And what is mine give me."

*Commentary: Versions of this appear in Mark and Luke's Gospel: Mark 12:14-17 Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." 16 And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." 12:17 Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him. Luke 20:22-25: Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" 25 "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

*First Century Judean society was a hotbed of revolt against the Roman Empire. Many were looking for a Messiah to come, who would lead a violent revolt. The revolt that Jesus sought did not come from the destruction of violence for the sake of power, it came through the fulfilment of God's Love, yet even that was to create the discord and fire promised by Jesus in Sayings 98 and 100 are related although only saying 100 appears in the Gospel texts. Saying 99, which appears between them, describes the level of commitment that Jesus demanded. These sayings describe a practical and pragmatic approach to any act of revolution, violent or not. They describe the strength and the revolutionary nature of Jesus's message, while at the same time indicating that the revolution which Jesus seeks does not come through violence, it comes through the implementation of God's Love.*

*In saying 16 Jesus says: "Perhaps people think that I have come to cast peace upon the earth. But they do not know that I have come to cast dissension upon the earth: fire, sword, war. For there will be five in one house: there will be three against two and two against three, father against son and son against father. And they will stand as solitary ones." This viewpoint is further supported in saying 10 where Jesus says: "I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes." And saying 82, where Jesus says "The person who is near me is near the fire. And the person who is far from me is far from the kingdom." In Saying 55 Jesus says: "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot become a disciple of mine. And whoever does not hate his brothers and his sisters (and) will not take up his cross as I do, will not be worthy of me." That the relationship between family and the call of Jesus is complex is indicated in Saying 101 where Jesus says "a) "Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother as I do will not be able to be a [disciple] of mine. And whoever does [not] love his [father and] his mother as I do will not be able to be a [disciple] of mine. For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life." Furthermore in Saying 25 "Jesus says "Love your brother like your life! Protect him like the apple of your eye!" In Saying 99 It is written "The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside. He said to them: "Those here, who do the will of my Father, they are my brothers and my mother"<sup>196</sup>. They are the ones who will enter the kingdom of my Father." This statement is also made in Mark 31-35, Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21. In Saying 49 Jesus says "Jesus says: "Blessed are*

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<sup>196</sup> John 3: 1-5: "After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him".

*the solitary ones, the elect. For you will find the kingdom. For you come from it (and) will return to it.” In saying 75 Jesus says: “Many are standing before the door, but it is the solitary ones who will enter the wedding hall.” The emphasis on the solitary ones appears in sayings 16, 47 and 75 and there is no reference to celibacy or sex. Jesus did not marry. For Jesus the freedom from family concerns was important in fulfilling the Gospel he preached.*

(101)

- (a) “Whoever does not hate his [father] and his mother as I do will not be able to be a [disciple] of mine.
- (b) And whoever does [not] love his [father and] his mother as I do will not be able to be a [disciple] of mine.
- (c) For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life.”

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 10:37: Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple.*

*See also Saying 98, for a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(102) Jesus says:

“Woe to them, the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in a cattle trough, for it neither eats nor [lets] the cattle eat.”

*Corresponding Texts: Luke 11:39-52: Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. 42 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. 43 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces”. 44 “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.”*

*Commentary: The Pharisees are also condemned in sayings 39 and 89:  
39:“The Pharisees and the scribes have received the keys of knowledge, (but) they have hidden them.*

*(b) Neither have they entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to.*

*(c) You, however, be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves!”*

*89 (a) “Why do you wash the outside of the cup?*

*(b) Do you not understand that the one who created the inside is also the one who created the outside?”*

*These statements describe a lukewarm and hypocritical approach which should be contrasted with the revolution Jesus demands in sayings 98 to 101.*

(103) Jesus says:

“Blessed is the person who knows at which point (of the house) the robbers are going to enter, so that [he] may arise to gather together his [domain] and gird his loins before they enter.”

*Corresponding Texts: Matthew 24:43: But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Luke 12:39. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.*

See also Saying 19 and 21

(104)

- (a) They said to [Jesus]: “Come, let us pray and fast today!”
- (b) Jesus said: “What sin is it that I have committed, or wherein have I been overcome?”
- (c) But when the bridegroom comes out of the wedding chamber, then let (us) fast and pray.”

See also Sayings 6 and 14

(105) Jesus says:

“Whoever will come to know father and mother, he will be called son of a whore.”

(106) Jesus says:

- (a) “When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man.
- (b) And when you say ‘Mountain, move away,’ it will move away.”

*Corresponding Texts: Mark 11:23: Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. Matthew 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

(107) Jesus says:

- (a) “The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep.
- (b) One of them went astray, the largest. He left the ninety-nine, (and) he sought the one until he found it.
- (c) After he had toiled, he said to the sheep: ‘I love you more than the ninety-nine.’”

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 18:12: What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. Luke 15:3-7: Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*

(108) Jesus says:



- (a) "Whoever will drink from my mouth will become like me.
- (b) I myself will become he,
- (c) and what is hidden will be revealed to him."

(109) Jesus says:

- (a) "The kingdom is like a person who has a hidden treasure in his field, (of which) he knows nothing.
- (b) And [after] he had died, he left it to his [son]. (But) the son did not know (about it either). He took over that field (and) sold [it].
- (c) And the one who had bought it came, and while he was ploughing [he found] the treasure.  
He began to lend money at interest to whom he wished."

*Corresponding Text: Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

(110) Jesus says:

"The one who has found the world (and) has become wealthy should renounce the world."

*Commentary: See also Saying 81. For a general discussion on the challenges in this saying that Jesus makes, see Saying 112*

(111) Jesus says:

- (a) "The heavens will roll up before you, and the earth.
- (b) And whoever is living from the living one will not see death."
- (c) Does not Jesus say: "Whoever has found himself, of him the world is not worthy"?

*Commentary: See Saying 112 for further discussion*

(112) Jesus says:

- (a) "Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul.
- (b) Woe to the soul that depends on the flesh."

*Commentary: Sayings 56, 111, 27, 16, 49 and 23 promote a negative attitude to the world. Sayings 87, 90 and 112 moderate that demand*

*In John 18:36, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." In saying 39 Jesus says: "The Pharisees and the scribes have received the keys of knowledge, (but) they have hidden them. Neither have they entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to.) You, however, be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves!" In Saying 49 Jesus says: "Blessed are the solitary ones, the elect. For you will find the kingdom. For you come from it (and) will return to it." In saying 110 Jesus says: "The one who has found the world (and) has become wealthy should renounce the world." And in saying 56 he says "Whoever has come to know the world has found a corpse. And whoever has found (this) corpse, of him the world is not worthy." The theme is continued in Saying 111 where Jesus says: "The heavens will roll up before you, and the earth. And whoever is living from the living one will not see death." Does not Jesus say: "Whoever has found himself, of him the world is not worthy"? That rejection of the secular world is also found in Saying 27: "If you do not abstain from the world, you will not find the*

*kingdom. If you do not make the Sabbath into a Sabbath, you will not see the Father.” And in Saying 87: “Wretched is the body that depends on a body. And wretched is the soul that depends on these two.” Saying 87 is difficult to interpret: however one possible interpretation could be “Wretched is the body that depends on the (secular) world”*

*A withdrawal from worldly matters is a very strong theme in these sayings, however saying 112 which states: “Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul. And woe to the soul that depends on the flesh” warns against the extremes that might be pursued. The attitude that Jesus took to fasting is also a warning against these extremes. In Saying 14 Jesus says: “If you fast, you will bring forth sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. In Saying 104 the disciples said to [Jesus]: “Come, let us pray and fast today!” Jesus said: “What sin is it that I have committed, or wherein have I been overcome? But when the bridegroom comes out of the wedding chamber, then let (us) fast and pray. The subject of fasting was not a central issue in the teachings of Jesus. He never commanded fasting or propounded any detailed regulations concerning the practice. Matthew 9:15 also reports Jesus as saying: “The friends of the bridegroom have no reason to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, do they? But days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.” However in Matthew 28:20 Jesus says “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”. In Matthew 9:15 Jesus associates the act of fasting with mourning and separation from the Love of God. There is a parallel here with Saying 2 in the Gospel of Thomas, where it is through the Grace of God you are forgiven.*

*In Saying 94 Jesus [says]: “The one who seeks will find. [The one who knocks], to that one will it be opened.” In Saying 90: Jesus also says: (a) “Come to me, for my yoke is gentle and my lordship is mild. And you will find repose for yourselves.” The corresponding bible texts are: Matthew 7:8: “For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened”. Luke 11:10: “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened”. The emphasis in the teaching of Jesus is upon abstinence. Fasting and deprivation may be important as a means of developing the resolution needed for any task, but you are not forgiven because of the magnitude of these works and you are not forgiven just because of the severity of any act of deprivation or any fast.*

(113)

- (a) His disciples said to him: “The kingdom - on what day will it come?”
- (b) “It will not come by watching (and waiting for) it.
- (c) They will not say: ‘Look, here!’ or ‘Look, there!’
- (d) Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it.”

*Corresponding Text: Luke 17:20 Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; 17:21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”*

*Commentary: This is a reprise of sayings 3 to 6 and 51. For a full discussion, see saying 51.*

(114)

- (a) Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life."  
 (b) Jesus said: "Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male spirit, similar to you."  
 (c) (But I say to you): "Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

*Commentary: An alternative translation of this passage states:" (114) Simon Peter said to him, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>197</sup>*

*Saying 13 in the Gospel of Thomas has parallels in Matthew 16:13-20 where Jesus asks the disciples to describe who they think he is. In the bible passage it is Peter who declares that Jesus is the Messiah. In the equivalent saying in the Gospel of Thomas, Peter is dismissed as a "Wise Messenger" and Thomas instead is given that perceptive role. The saying most often quoted is Saying 114: Simon Peter said to them: "Let Mary [Magdalene] go away from us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said: "Look, I will draw her in so as to make her male, so that she too may become a living male spirit, similar to you."(But I say to you): "Every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven." This saying is often rejected because of the seeming biological impossibility. However in first century society gender was largely determined by the capacity to act. Gender transformations and their threats, metaphorical or not were used as political and social weapons to manipulate people in society. To "Make Mary Male" was to give her full equality with all of the apostles, in social roles, in public and private ministry, and in every other act.*

*This seems to be a difficult passage to modern eyes. Many people reject it as a later addition. However that presumption fails to take account, not only of how gender was at that time defined but also how the concept of gender transformation was an accepted understanding in the first century societies of the Middle East<sup>198</sup>, and how this saying relates to the other Sayings in the Gospel itself. A further difficulty with this saying is that it could be assumed to demand either the rejection of all sex, or complete gender equality, depending on whether the Gospel of Thomas is assigned to a very early or to a much later date. What it does not support is the type of gender complementarity that is enshrined in the traditional teaching of many present day Churches.*

*Saying 114a reflects a first century understanding that women did not have souls and the idea that women had an instant sex change at the moment of death in order to enter heaven as men was so prevalent in the fourth century Church that St Augustine devoted a complete chapter to this in his works.<sup>199</sup> However that is not the understanding in this passage. Saying 114b clearly says that Mary will be a "living spirit similar to the disciples". Saying 22 demands that men and women are indivisible in the Love of God. Here Peter is restricting the role that Mary should play*

<sup>197</sup> Peter seems to have been particularly averse to the presence of women.

<sup>198</sup> Gilchrist, S: (2013): "Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>,  
 Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>199</sup> St. Augustine (354-430): *City of God, Chapter 17 of book XXII* - Whether the Bodies of Women Shall Retain Their Own Sex in the Resurrection. [Accessed 19/12/2012]. <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers2/NPNF1-02/npnf1-02-28.htm>

on earth. Jesus is not talking about what would happen to Mary after her death. He is talking about her ministry in life.

A further notable feature of the Gospel of Thomas is that there is no consideration either of celibacy or of sexual acts. Instead reference is made to “The Solitary Ones” who are the elect, who are charged with bringing the Gospel message to the world with a single-minded devotion that avoids the distraction of other commitments and family life. The arguments presented in this commentary assign an early date to the Gospel of Thomas and these points of view are subjected to a more detailed analysis, which follows in this account.

In the parts of this investigation which examine the developments in the Roman Church it is demonstrated that the present obsession of the Christian Churches with sexual behaviour arises from a later paradigm shift in Christian teaching: In this, the type of condemnation of same-sex intercourse which were based on its intention and purpose, which Jesus and the disciples would have known, was changed from condemning all abuses into the condemnation of the actual act. This study of the Gospel of Thomas forms one part of an investigation which aims to establish the original teaching of Jesus by examining the current understandings from two independent perspectives. The first perspective assesses how this teaching has been developed and changed through the customs and practices of the Roman Church<sup>200</sup>. The second does the same, except through the Syriac, Indian and Coptic traditions. Each of these traditions has developed independently of each other. Therefore the aim has been to conduct a redaction of both sets of accounts in an attempt to find common ground. It is found that full agreement is reached. When Saying 114 of the Gospel of Thomas is taken together with sayings 22 (on the unity of male and female) and saying 53 (on circumcision), they all lead to the same conclusion which is already summarised in the commentary on Saying 53.

It is confirmed that the same criteria of use and abuse should be applied to all aspects of gender and sex. As with Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:28, this demands that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. Under the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant all behaviour is judged by the purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any heterosexual or same-sex act of sex, and there is no toleration of abusive sex<sup>201</sup>.

## 7:0: Evidence and Origins

## 8:0: Cultural Clashes, Gender and Sex

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<sup>200</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>  
Gilchrist, S. (2013a): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>  
<sup>201</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): “Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

A previous theological understanding of saying 22<sup>202</sup> takes the view that both this saying and saying 114 are not concerned about the transcendence of gender and sex but they demand instead the suppression of all gender and sex. This is evident in the commentary by Bruce<sup>203</sup> and by Grant and Freedman<sup>204</sup>. That can be a perfectly well argued position to adopt when it assumed that Thomas is a product of the Gnostic literature, and the Gospel was written at a later date<sup>205</sup>. In such cases the paradigm shift that took place early in Christianity is not recognised or it is ignored. There is also no internal evidence in the Gospel itself which suggests that it enforces suppression instead of transcendence. In place of the late dating advocated by Bruce, Grant and others, it is demonstrated in this investigation, and in other recent studies that the gospel of Thomas has existed from an early date. That demands the freedom to transcend gender, not the suppression of sex. The statement by Paul in Galatians 3:28: *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* encapsulates the ethos of the Gospel message. This unrestrained inclusion is further affirmed in the Gospel of Thomas. Instead of suppression it is shown to mean that all people, transgender, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people, who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express

<sup>202</sup>As previously noted in section 5:1:4: Grant Robert M. and Freedman, David Noel. (1993) *“The Secret Sayings of Jesus”*, pp. 143-144, : Barnes & Noble Books; First Edition (January 1, 1993). ISBN-10:1566192749 ISBN-13: 978-1566192743 write: "Infants (as in Sayings 3, 21, and 38) may be compared with those who enter into the kingdom (cf., John 3, 3.5). But entering the kingdom means more than becoming childlike. The two must become one; all earthly differences must be obliterated, including - especially - those of sex. Sayings very much like this one are preserved in the Gospel of the Egyptians, in 2 Clement 12:2, and in the Martyrdom of Peter (see pages 78-79). The unity of Christian believers in the body of Christ is, of course, based on the New Testament. Doresse (pages 155-56) cites John 17:11, 20-23; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:14-18; and he points out that in Ephesians 5:32 the unity of Adam and Eve (i.e., of human marriage) is referred to 'Christ and the Church.' In Galatians 3:28 Paul says that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free men, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' This kind of unity looks back to the first creation story in Genesis, where 'man' is male and female; it is the second creation story that sharply differentiates Eve from Adam. The original state of creation is to be reached through spiritual union. According to this analysis, man is not to be man; woman is not to be woman (though according to Saying 112 she is to become man - i.e., fully human in a spiritual sense)."

<sup>203</sup>As previously noted in section 5:1:4: Bruce, F. F. (1974): *“Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament”*, pp. 153-154. Eerdmans Pub. Co. (Jun 1974): ISBN-10: 0802815758 ISBN-13: 978-0802815750. Bruce writes: "This is not the only place in Gnostic literature where Peter expresses impatience at the presence of Mary Magdalene in their entourage. [In Pistis Sophia, when Mary has expounded the 'mystery of repentance' in a Gnostic sense and been congratulated by Jesus for her insight, Peter protests: 'My Lord, we are not able to bear with this woman, speaking instead of us; she has not let any of us speak but often speaks herself' (54b). In the John Rylands University Library of Manchester there is an early third-century Greek papyrus fragment (P. Ryl. 463) of a Gospel according to Mary (Magdalene), in which the disciples discuss revelations which the Saviour is said to have given exclusively to Mary. Peter is unwilling to believe that the Saviour would have committed privately to a woman, truths which he did not impart to his male disciples, but Levi rebukes him and defends Mary. (Part of the same work survives in a Coptic version in the Berlin papyrus 8502.) For Mary cf. Saying 21 (p.122).] The general rabbinic idea that women were incapable of appreciating religious doctrine - compare the disciples' astonishment at Jacob's well when they found Jesus 'talking with a woman' (John 4.27) - was reinforced in Gnostic anthropology, where woman was a secondary and defective being. Yet none could deny Mary's fidelity: to an objective observer, it surpassed that of the male disciples. Jesus's promise that she will become a man, so as to gain admittance to the kingdom of heaven, envisages the reintegration of the original order, when Adam was created male and female (Genesis 1.27). Adam was 'the man' as much before the removal of Eve from his side as after (Genesis 2.18-25). Therefore, when the primal unity is restored and death is abolished, man will still be man (albeit more perfectly so), but woman will no longer be woman; she will be reabsorbed into man. [According to Bruce, this is the point of the mystery of the bridal chamber (cf. Saying 75, p. 141); it was a form of initiation calculated to reverse the process by which death entered. 'When Eve was in Adam, there was no death; but when she was separated from him, death came into being' (Gospel of Philip 71)."

<sup>204</sup>As previously noted in section 5:1:4: Grant Robert M. and Freedman, David Noel. (1993) *“The Secret Sayings of Jesus”*, pp. 143-144, : Barnes & Noble Books; First Edition (January 1, 1993). ISBN-10:1566192749 ISBN-13: 978-1566192743. Grant and Freedman write: "As in the Gospel of Mary (pages 17-18 of the papyrus) and in Pistis Sophia (chapter 146), Simon Peter is not enthusiastic about the presence of Mariham (Mary) (mentioned in Saying 21), just as in John 4:27 the disciples of Jesus are amazed because he is speaking with a woman. Male and female must become one (Saying 23 and Commentary). Jesus will 'draw' her (John 12:32) so that she will become 'one spirit' with him (1 Corinthians 6:17). She will become a man; just so, Ignatius of Antioch says that when he receives the pure light he will 'become a man' (Romans, 6, 2; for another parallel to Ignatius see Commentary on Saying 82). In order to enter into the kingdom of heaven, women must become men. Grant and Freedman write, we might be tempted to take this notion symbolically were it not for the existence of Gnostic parallels, for example in the Gospel of Mary (page 9), in Clement of Alexandria (Excerpta ex Theodoto 21, 3), and among the Naassenes. The 'house of God' is reserved 'for the spiritual ones alone; when they come there they cast off their garments [see Saying 38] and all become bridegrooms [Saying 75], having been made male by the virginal Spirit' (Hippolytus, Ref., 5, 8, 44). The high point of Thomas's eschatology is thus reached, at the end of his gospel, with the obliteration of sex." (The Secret Sayings of Jesus, p. 198) Robert M. Grant and David Noel Freedman write: "Indeed, Jesus says of Mary (presumably Mary Magdalene, as in most Gnostic revelations) that he will make her a male so that she may become a 'living spirit' like the male apostles: 'for every woman who makes herself a man will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (114/112). According to the Naassenes, spiritual beings will come to 'the house of God'; there they will cast off their garments and all of them will become bridegrooms, having been made male by the virginal Spirit. [Hippolytus Ref. V. 8. 44.] Grant and Freedman argue that this teaching is close to that of Thomas." (Gnosticism & Early Christianity: p.188). This analysis assumes a late date for the Gospel of Thomas which would presume the obliteration of all sex.

<sup>205</sup> See also section 4:0 Of this document.

their own identities in roles that are true to their own selves, must be accepted in their own right. All such activities must be guided by love and purity of intention. There is no toleration whatever of abuse of any kind.

The interaction between the Jesus movement and the Goddess cults was taken much further than this when, in Matthew 19:12, Jesus declared that those people who have voluntarily made themselves eunuchs for the “Kingdom of heaven’s sake” can also be accepted into the same fold. The passage reads: “For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake<sup>206</sup>. He that is able to receive it let him receive it”<sup>207 208 209</sup>. The commanding form of expression which Jesus used in this statement implies that this is an active act<sup>210</sup>. For the social culture of the time that statement was very direct. Those who opposed ritual castration had an uphill battle against them for there was little doubt about the authenticity of the text. This caused great difficulties for the early Church. It was not just Origen who took this statement of Jesus literally; there were thousands of others who did so too<sup>211</sup>. Eunuchs who kept the Law were given a high place in Jewish society (see Isaiah 56:4-5). Others were condemned for their disreputable sexual behaviour, and in this New Testament passage Jesus was expanding on Old Testament texts. It was considered that Deuteronomy 22:5 only prohibited acts of cross dressing for unapproved purposes or for deceit and no exclusively literal interpretation was ever applied<sup>212</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> Some populist translations of the bible interpret this as “Choose to be eunuchs”. In this investigation and in analyses of the text that is shown to be misleading and incorrect.

<sup>207</sup> The close conjunction of the statements on marriage and eunuchs in Matthew 19: 3-12 further suggests that these two statements should be considered together. Both of them are included in the same sentence; the directly equivalent form of words is also used, and the Jewish Midrashim tradition of interpretation imposes a very careful structuring that demands a close reading of any biblical text. In regard to marriage, the usual interpretation which is given to this passage states that Jesus considered that marriage should be treated as a “Second best” option, and therefore the same close textural relationships between these two statements additionally implies that the people “Who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven”, should be treated in the same way. Therefore this extreme action of self-castration too should be regarded as another “Second best” approach. However, that is only when behaviour conforms to the highest ideals of society. That must also be interpreted in accordance with the moralities of first century societies, and not those of the present day.

<sup>208</sup> It is important to note that it is not suggested that Jesus was here advocating self-castration, although a literal interpretation was sometimes taken. However the welcome that it offers to the already self-castrated male priests of the Goddess Cults should also be noted: For a full account see Section 3:2 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: “*An Unfinished Reformation*”. Access at: [www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm](http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm)

<sup>209</sup> The part of the passage which says “He that is able to receive it let him receive it” is the second passage in the New Testament where Jesus allows compromises to his teaching. (The first is the passage on “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, as described above). The statement in Matthew was a radical statement. Its impact on the behaviour on the early Church means that there is little doubt about the authenticity of the text. Christianity had to adapt if it was going to be able to survive in Roman society and to continue to take the Gospel message to the world. That meant a re-interpretation of the radical teaching which Jesus presented on gender and sex. It is shown later in this account that this passage in Matthew gave an early authorisation for the compromises that were necessary for the survival of the Church. The context also demands that Christianity restores the radical teaching on gender and sex once it had gained a position of sufficient strength. That has had a profound effect on the development of the Church. See section 3:5:3 in this document and section 4:5:3 onwards in Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> for an examination of the impact of this passage.

<sup>210</sup> The serious with which the Christian Church took this issue can also be seen by the prominence it is given through its listing as the first of the Canons (decrees) of the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

<sup>211</sup> Throughout Christian and European history there have been many who took and taught these statements literally. They include Valentinus (whose sect was declared heretical in the mid-second century), Julius Cassianus (declared heretical in the mid-second century), Basilides (also declared heretical in the early-second century), Leontios of Antiochia, (Bishop of Jerusalem, late-fourth century), Melito “the Eunuch” (ca. late-second century), Hilarion (mid-fourth century), Marcarius “the Egyptian (late 4th century) and Origen (also declared heretical in the early-third century). These people are among the most famous of thousands that chose ritual castration. This perception was not confined to the Gnostic or fringe movements, it became a major issue in the early church. The earliest report of the desire for castration among Christians comes from the second century writings of Justin. Self-castration was a widely practiced and it was an ancient expression of religious devotion throughout the Middle East. Several early Christian encratite and ascetic movements (centred mainly in Egypt) are known to have members who were eunuchs. The cloisters of Egypt and Syria were centres of self-castration, and Coptic monasteries continued to perform castration well into the Islamic period. Indeed, the criminalization of eunuchs in the church at the Council of Nicaea is testimony to the degree to which self-castration was practiced. For the full account see Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”. Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> The Jewish concerns in Deuteronomy 22:5 are not about creating or reinforcing gender differences but in preventing the gender associations of clothing, or possibly body hair from being used to deceive others for purposes leading to sexual immorality, or to dishonest behaviour. Every interpretation condemns cross dressing for dishonest or destructive action or to condemn the practice in other

In all of these activities distinction is made between good and bad on the basis of intention; rather than direct condemnation of the acts. As well as in Judaism, equivalent diversities existed in Greek and Roman society and the same dualities were also encountered. In Roman culture those people who castrated themselves for religious devotion often did so for the highest ideals and for the avoidance of the temptation of sex. Others were accused of sexual abuse. Many eunuchs who were castrated by others were given notoriously deserved and severe defamatory reputations because of their licentiousness and misuse of sex<sup>213</sup>. Due to their incapability some eunuchs could reach to positions of high power, but their existence outside the normal boundaries of society could never exempt them from these scurrilous reputations, and praise was almost never given for what they did. Their metamorphoses did not encourage their loyalty to the social and gender frameworks of the dominant society, and this also made them a threat.

Early Christianity exposed itself to the same condemnations by choosing a eunuch to spread the Gospel message. In the New Testament account of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40, the gender transgressive body of a eunuch has become the symbol of the Kingdom of God who has been charged with bringing its mission to the world<sup>214</sup>. However the actions of the self-castrated male priests of the Goddess cults, who dressed as women, provided even greater threats to the gender-based foundations and institutions upon which the male dominated society was built<sup>215</sup>. These itinerant priests travelled widely through the Roman Empire. They would have been known in to Jesus and Eusebius reports that they had a shrine in Bethlehem itself<sup>216</sup>. The statement on eunuchs in Matthew 19:3-12 is therefore a very direct statement which connected the teaching of Jesus<sup>217</sup> with those among the self-castrated priests who transcended the gender divisions of society; and who embraced a code of morality which sought to be true to the Gospel that Jesus taught. However the worship of the Christian gender transcendent God meant that their acts of physical transformation were no longer required, although these were not prohibited by Jesus in any text.

In Matthew 19:12 it is of note that Jesus was expanding on Isaiah 56:4-5 which says: *“For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off”*. This Old Testament passage refers to those who were made eunuchs by the force of others. The teaching of Jesus in the New Testament extends the same welcome to people who have voluntarily castrated themselves. In these societies the moral duality demonstrated in the scientific research existed. In many religions a compulsory physical transformation was a mark of religious allegiance, either

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cults. None of them prohibit it for just purpose. In the ancient world no literal interpretation has ever been applied to this passage and it is rightly put in the section of the Holiness Code in Leviticus which deals with deceit. For a full discussion and an account of the various interpretations see Gilchrist, S. (2015): *“Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”*: Also Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“An Unfinished Reformation”*. Access at: [www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm](http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm).

<sup>213</sup> Hester, J. David, (2005) *“Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus: Matthew 19:12 and Transgressive Sexualities”* Journal for the Study of the New Testament September (2005) 28: 13-40, Interfakultäres Zentrum für Ethik in den Wissenschaften, Tübingen Centre for Hermeneutics and Rhetorics, California. Accessed at: [www.spirituality.org.za/files/Eunuch.pdf](http://www.spirituality.org.za/files/Eunuch.pdf) 23 July 2012. For a full account see also section 8 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church”*: Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

<sup>214</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): *“Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

<sup>215</sup> Self-castration by itself does not indicate any transgender desires, for the purpose may be the avoidance of the temptations of sex in religious devotion. However when self-castration is combined with the fact that the Goddess priests dressed as women, the opportunity for the expression of transgender feelings becomes available. For extended descriptions see: Gilchrist, S. (2015): *“Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”*: and Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church”*: Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

<sup>216</sup> Kuefler, Mathew. (2001): *“Eusebius, in his Life of Constantine. See in “The Manly Eunuch Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity”* University of Chicago Press ISBN: 9780226457390

<sup>217</sup> See Gilchrist, S. 2012. *“Sexuality, Gender and the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

circumcision in Judaism, or self-castration in the case of the Goddess Cults. However this statement in Matthew also means that such physical changes and gender non-conformities are of no consequence in lives which are lived in the love of Christ, and that viewpoint is reflected in the Apostolic Decree issued by the early Church.

The Council of Jerusalem (or Apostolic Conference) held in Jerusalem around the year 50 AD decided that Gentile converts to Christianity were not required to keep most of the Law of Moses. (Acts: Chapter 15). The main purpose of the decree which was issued by the Council is considered to deal with the arguments as to whether Gentile converts had to be circumcised. In this decree Peter states: *"Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood"*. This is expanded on in Saying 53 of the Gospel of Thomas: *"His disciples said to him: "Is circumcision beneficial, or not? He said to them: "If it were beneficial, their father would beget them circumcised from their mother. But the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything.""* Paul deals extensively with the issues of circumcision in Philippians Chapter 3: 2-12, but there are indications that he may also be considering a wider range of physical acts.<sup>218</sup> The present day idea that this passage simply refers to modes of behaviour was totally foreign to the first century world<sup>219</sup>.

The scientific part of this study identifies the medical consensus which regards both gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as naturally expected variations of the human condition, which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life. It also confirms that these conditions are driven by the search for identity and not reward. It additionally shows that as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must be encountered within the gender and sexually variant communities, as in the population at large. Circumcision is therefore the mark of admission to a tribe; while gender reassignment is the mark of admission to a gender, and both of these are concerned with identity alone. In the Gospel of Thomas the true circumcision in the spirit has prevailed over everything. Statement 53 in the Gospel of Thomas is at least as strong, if not stronger than that issued in the Apostolic Decree, and the statement in Matthew also means that such physical changes and gender non-conformities are of no consequence in lives which are lived in the love of Christ.

The close conjunction of the statements on marriage and eunuchs in Matthew 19: 3-12 strongly suggests that these two statements should be considered together. Both of them are included in the same sentence; the directly equivalent form of words is also used, and the Jewish Midrashim tradition of interpretation imposes a very careful structuring and analysis of any biblical text. In

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<sup>218</sup> Judaism demanded circumcision as the badge of membership, and some of the conflicts related to the role which circumcision should play within the Church are addressed by Paul in Philippians Chapter 3: 2-12. Here Paul uses the words "We are the circumcision" to describe the Christian Community but he then goes on to identify this "circumcision" as the members of the Church itself and he rejects the need for individuals to submit to any physical act. This passage is usually taken to refer to circumcision on its own but the text of verse 2 which states: "Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh" suggests that a much broader scope was envisaged. The reference to the dogs may refer back to the qedeshim mentioned in the Old Testament who may have had roles that were similar to the Gallae priests. Reumann considers (Reumann, John. (2008). "Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary", Yale University Press. ISBN 0300157703, 9780300157703): that this passage can be taken to refer to a large number of equivalent groups. The usually accepted date for the writing of Philippians was around 62 AD, this was about 12 years after the accepted date of the pronouncement of the Apostolic Decree by the early Christian Church. The decree dealt with the arguments as to whether Gentile converts had to be circumcised. In this Peter states: "Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:19–20). Although the decree deals only with circumcision the same arguments can be applied to all forms of physical transformation, and that would apply to the self-castrated Priests of the Greco-Roman Goddess cults

<sup>219</sup> Some bible translations are expressed in the form which misinterprets this passage. For example in the New International Version of the bible, this is translated as: *"For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others--and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."* There are also others



regard to marriage, the usual interpretation<sup>220</sup> that is given to this passage declares that Jesus considered that marriage should be treated as a “Second best” option, and the same close relationship between these two statements further implies that those *people* “Who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” and the coupling with: “He that is able to receive it let him receive it”, should be treated in the same way<sup>221</sup>. Therefore this action too should likewise be regarded as another “Second best” approach. It is of note that in the *Gospel of Thomas* the equivalent conclusions are reached.

Modern interpretations attempt to construe that this reference to eunuchs is limited to an exhortation by Jesus for people not to marry, to abstain from sexual intercourse, or just to embrace a celibate life. However this interpretation ignores the widespread endorsement in the surrounding first century cultures of the act of self-castration as an expression of supreme religious devotion, together with the major problems which its continued practice would cause throughout the early church<sup>222 223</sup>. The eunuchs who kept the Law were given a high place in Jewish society (see Isaiah 56:4-5) and it was considered that Deuteronomy 22:5 only prohibited acts of cross dressing for unapproved purposes or for deceit<sup>224</sup>. Thus just as it is with the transgressive body of the eunuch in the New Testament which symbolizes the Kingdom of God, and who is charged with bringing its mission to the world, then like the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts (Acts 8:26-40), those transgender people<sup>225 226</sup> who use the

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<sup>220</sup> This term is the author's own but it is implicit in almost all scholarship and in the bible texts. See for example: Deming, Will (2004) “Paul on Marriage & Celibacy” Publisher: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN 13: 9780802839893 ISBN 10: 0802839894

<sup>221</sup> These issues caused very real difficulties for the early church. The most relevant passage in the Bible which describes the attitude of Jesus to celibacy and ritual castration is that in Matthew 19:12 which states “For there are eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, which were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, which made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it”. The third phrase in this statement implies that this is an active act and for the social culture of the time that statement was very direct. Those who opposed ritual castration had an uphill battle against them for there was little doubt about the authenticity of the text. Throughout Christian and European history there have been many who took and taught these statements literally. They include Valentinus (whose sect was declared heretical in the mid-second century), Julius Cassianus (declared heretical in the mid-second century), Basilides (also declared heretical in the early-second century), Leontios of Antiochia, (Bishop of Jerusalem, late-fourth century), Melito “the Eunuch” (ca. late-second century), Hilarion (mid-fourth century), Marcarius “the Egyptian (late 4th century) and Origen (also declared heretical in the early-third century). These people are among the most famous of thousands that chose ritual castration. This perception was not confined to the Gnostic or fringe movements, it became a major issue in the early church. The earliest report of the desire for castration among Christians comes from the second century writings of Justin. Self-castration was a widely practiced and it was an ancient expression of religious devotion throughout the Middle East. Several early Christian encratite and ascetic movements (centred mainly in Egypt) are known to have members who were eunuchs. The cloisters of Egypt and Syria were centres of self castration, and Coptic monasteries continued to perform castration well into the Islamic period. Indeed, the criminalization of eunuchs in the church at the Council of Nicaea is testimony to the degree to which self castration was practiced. For the full account see Gilchrist, S .2012. “Sexuality, Gender and the Christian Church”.

<sup>222</sup> Hester, J. David, (2005) “Eunuchs and the Postgender Jesus: Matthew 19:12 and Transgressive Sexualities” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* September 2005 28: 13-40, Interfakultäres Zentrum für Ethik in den Wissenschaften, Tübingen Centre for Hermeneutics and Rhetorics, California. Accessed at [www.spirituality.org.za/files/Eunuch.pdf](http://www.spirituality.org.za/files/Eunuch.pdf) 23 July 2012

<sup>223</sup> This was the subject of the first Canon in the Canons of the Council of Nicaea: Canon 1: Castration among the clergy: “If anyone due to sickness has undergone a surgical operation, or if he has been castrated by barbarians, he is allowed to remain among the clergy. But if anyone enrolled among the clergy has castrated himself when in perfect health, it is good for him to leave the ministry. From now on, no such person should be promoted to the clergy. But since this applies only to those who wilfully castrate themselves, if anyone has been made a eunuch by barbarians, or by his master, and is otherwise fit for office, church law admits him to the clergy”.

<sup>224</sup> The Jewish concerns in Deuteronomy 22:5 are not about creating or reinforcing gender differences but in preventing the gender associations of clothing, or possibly body hair from being used to deceive others for purposes leading to sexual immorality, or to dishonest behaviour. Every interpretation condemns cross dressing for dishonest or destructive action or to condemn the practice in other cults. None of them prohibit it for just purpose. In the ancient world no literal interpretation has ever been applied to this passage and it is rightly put in the section of the Holiness Code in Leviticus which deals with deceit. For a full discussion and an account of the various interpretations see Gilchrist, S .2012. “Sexuality, Gender and the Christian Church”.

<sup>225</sup> In the Apostolic Church gender was contested as a “natural” category because of the transcendent power of God's Spirit at work in the community and the world. Therefore early Christianity challenged gender in every way. Unlike the requirements for physical castration that was demanded by the Goddess religions this action was no longer required, but many Christian men still continued to self castrate as an act of extreme devotion. Origen was the most notable of these, but there were also many others. In early Christianity a woman's identity and spirituality could also be developed separately from her roles as wife and mother (or slave), whether she actually withdrew from those roles or not. This meant that women and men could equally exercise leadership in the Church on the basis of spiritual achievement alone. That was apart from their gender status. However this attitude also contravened what were regarded as the “respectable” division of gender roles in a male dominated patriarchal society. (See for example King, Karen (1998) “Women In Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries”. Accessed 27 March 2013 at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html>.)

<sup>226</sup> Christian examples of male to female transgendered people are hard to come by because gender reassignment in that direction would become so suppressed by the later Church. However there is much more evidence of transgender behaviour in the female to male

breadth and range of their experiences to embrace and enrich the ideals of both lives may participate in that priestly act.

The story of the Centurion and the slave in Matthew 8:5-13 and in Luke 7:1-10, is discussed in section 5:1:5 of this document. In this situation the normal pattern would be that of a powerful master dominating a powerless slave. An accepted role for a slave of a Centurion stationed in a foreign country was to satisfy his master's sexual needs. In this story of the Centurion and the slave, the story of power is replaced by a story of love<sup>227</sup>. Jesus did not query the relationship between the Centurion and slave, despite the sexual expectations that would have been present. In this case Jesus may be interpreting Jewish Law, particularly Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, in accord with his teaching in the New Covenant, where the Law is to be fulfilled in line with its purpose and intention, not the prohibition of the act. Alternatively he may have been applying the first century Jewish understanding of this passage; (which he also expressed in his own condemnations of Sodom and Gomorrah), where the focus was on the abuses of power, decadence and depravity which led to the abuses of sex. On its own, one might not read too much into the story of the Centurion and the slave, but when all of these considerations are taken together they support the conclusion that when the abuses of power are absent, there should be no condemnation of any loving and committed heterosexual or same-sex act of sex. Just as Jesus, Paul and Thomas affirm the transcendence of gender and the inclusion of male and female in the Gospel message, so all people, transgender, transsexual, lesbian, gay and heterosexual who seek to live their lives in ways that are true to themselves and to their identities are as one in the Love of Christ.

### **8:1: He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.**

In Mark 12:14-17 Jesus responded to the trap the Pharisees set for him by asking: *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"* In Matthew 19:12 Jesus was discussing issues of marriage, self-castration, celibacy and love<sup>228</sup>. These are the only two places in the Gospels where the teaching of Jesus is qualified. The Gospel writers had two principal aims. The first was to affirm and preserve the Gospel message. The second was to do this in a manner which people they were writing for

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direction. The early Church sought to transcend all divisions of gender and the nature of this type of transgender influence may be due more to the growth of gender discrimination within the Church because of the ways it sought to gain respectability by conforming to the polarised gender role expectations of a male dominated Greco/Roman society. Thus, for example saying 114 in the Gospel of Thomas reads: "Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven." Most scholars now tend to attribute an early date to the Gospel of Thomas. (See: <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html>). One of the most famous woman leaders was Thecla, a virgin-martyr who was converted by Paul. She cut her hair, donned men's clothing, and took up the duties of a missionary traveller. Threatened with rape, prostitution, and twice put in the ring as a martyr, she persevered in her faith and her chastity. Her lively and somewhat fabulous story is recorded in the second century Acts of Paul and Thecla, The importance of such stories lies in their acceptance and not necessarily their absolute truth. (As at the 25 February 2013 the text of the acts can be accessed at: (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html>). During the second and third centuries gender discrimination continued to increase and it was considered that fourth century female mystics could only achieve salvation and redemption if they rejected every aspect of their femininity. Even then redemption could only be gained in heaven and not on earth. Therefore even if male to female transgender behaviour was considered abhorrent by the second third and fourth centuries it was positively encouraged in the female to male direction. The idea that women had to have an instant sex change when they die in order to enter heaven as men was commonly held in the Church. Had the surgical possibilities present day female to male gender reassignment been available to the second third and fourth Century Church one wonders what might have happened! Thus for women gender reassignment for entry to heaven was an ideal to be achieved but it could only come after death, in order to protect the authority of a male church hierarchy in a male dominated society. That attitude towards reassignment for entry to heaven was not held by all, and others concluded that because lust and sexuality was absent gender differentiation failed to matter at all after death. In the meantime on earth women could only redeem their lives through childbirth, obedience or by renouncing all aspects of their femininity. On earth they could only wait in penance for the sins of Eve until heaven, when the day of gender reassignment, or freedom from gender comes.

<sup>227</sup> For a full account see: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

<sup>228</sup> Celibacy was advocated by Jesus on the grounds of a single minded devotion to the gospel message, but the discipline of celibacy can be applied equally to heterosexual and same-sex relationships. Jesus did not condemn either of these relationships outright but considered them to be second best choices. That includes same sex-relationships, where all acts inside them are the products of the outpouring of love. It is notable that what is being described here is a form of relationship which was acceptable, and was expected, inside first century Jewish Rabbinic partnerships. These relationships were recognised in the services of Adelpoiesis, which were carried over into the Christian Church.

could accept. In Mark 12:14-17 the Pharisees say: *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?”* But knowing their hypocrisy, Jesus said to them, *“Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.”* And they brought one. Then he said to them, *“Whose head is this, and whose title?”* They answered, *“The emperor’s.”* Jesus said to them, *“Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* A version of this story also appears in Luke, and it again appears as saying 100 in the Gospel of Thomas. However in Thomas it is accompanied by sayings 98 and 99 which expand on this theme. Saying 98 states *“The kingdom of the Father is like a person who wanted to kill a powerful person. He drew the sword in his house (and) stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough). Then he killed the powerful one.”*

Without compromise Jesus had usurped the social and power structures upon which Jewish society was built. The condemnations which Jesus applied to the Scribes and Pharisees of his own day for their imposition of religious doctrine were complete and extreme<sup>229</sup>. By stepping outside the boundaries of a gender unequal and dictatorial Roman society, the disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults attacked the power structures which were essential to maintain it. The Goddess cults were so popular with the underclasses that the Roman elite could only try to tame them<sup>230</sup>. However Christianity, like any minority group which made the same attacks, could be destroyed. This analysis makes use of the work of René Girard who shows how a scapegoat can exert enormous power in religious belief. The differences and commonalities in the behaviour of the two traditions and the similarity in their application of the scapegoat mechanism, as described by Girard, are considered in detail elsewhere<sup>231</sup>. Clearly there were very important differences: but from all of these considerations the commonalities of purpose of the Gospel of Jesus and those of the positive elements of the Goddess cults can hardly be missed<sup>232</sup>. For Jesus, the true bearers of the Gospel message are to be found in the poor, the outcast, the Samaritan, the captive and the oppressed<sup>233</sup>. The welcome which Jesus gave to those who had physically made themselves eunuchs, the story of the Centurion and the slave, and the choice of the eunuch by the early Church to take the gospel message to the world, shows that gender and sexually variant people are included. These gender based challenges to the power structures of Greco/Roman society came both from Christianity and from the Goddess cults. Genuine sexual abuse of all kinds was rightly condemned. However as is shown in sections 2:0 and 3:0 of this document a major Jewish concern was over sexual abuse when it was used to enforce subjection and domination between people and societies in a grossly gender and socially unequal first century world.

<sup>229</sup> See for example Mark 7:1-9. Matthew 23:33 *“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”*: Matthew 3:7 *“But when John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his place of baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”*: Matthew 12:34 *“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks”*: Luke 3:7 *“Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”*

<sup>230</sup> The major Goddess cult in Rome was that of Cybele. Rome ensured that the chief priest of the cult was a (non-castrated) Roman citizen of high standing (Archgallus) who was appointed by the authorities. Two groups of “cult supporters” were created whose lavish banquets for the elite and whose sexual behaviours within these groups were notorious. No ordinary priest or follower was admitted. The arts were also emphasised. For all classes the blessings of fertility, and the sexual performance that was needed for it, were sought. All of these were a far cry from the everyday activities of the cults and their self-castrated Gallae priests, to which not just women, but slaves, non-citizens and the underclasses looked for support. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“An Unfinished Reformation”*. Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>231</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf>

<sup>232</sup> See Section 13 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf> . See also section 3:1:7: *“Power and its Usurpation”* of Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“An Unfinished Reformation”*. Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>233</sup> The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Jesus when he went to the synagogue in Nazareth on a Sabbath day. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: *‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’*. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. When he began to speak he said, *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”*. (Luke 4:16-21).

In the discussion by Jesus in Matthew 19:12, on marriage and eunuchs an equivalent qualification is made. However this time, it is applied to transgender and gender and sexually variant conditions. In order to become accepted Christianity had to conform to the social divisions of a gender unequal and male dominated Roman society. This search for conformity meant urging respect for the Roman authorities and transferring the gender divisions which were already present in first century Jewish culture, into the Roman state<sup>234</sup>. As a consequence men and women were required to exalt and fulfil the male and female gender stereotypes which such a divided society requires. However that did not stop it setting an example of good practice and attacking the moral abuses which occurred. These demands compromised the radical teaching and example of Jesus on gender and sex, and this has had major consequences for the Church. In Matthew 19:12. The statement: *“He who is able to receive this, let him receive it”* could have been a direct comment on the abhorrence of self-castration in Jewish society, or it could have meant that Jesus was aware of the difficulties that would later be likely to occur, or it could have been added later to deal with the changes that were required. Whatever way it is taken, it allowed the Church to move forward and gain acceptance in the Roman world.

The story in Mark 12:14-17 about *“Rendering unto Caesar”*, the statement in Matthew 19:12: *“He who is able to receive this, let him receive it”* and Saying 98 in the Gospel of Thomas: *“The kingdom of the Father is like a person who wanted to kill a powerful person. He drew the sword in his house (and) stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough). Then he killed the powerful one”* all indicate the types of compromise that could occur. Instead of the lack of compromise in the teaching of Jesus, the compromise that Peter, Paul and the early Church made was to avoid direct attacks on the Roman authorities. Paul’s statement in Romans 13:1-5 could hardly be more different from the condemnations Jesus imposed<sup>235</sup>. In place of an early Church which was unequivocal about standing foursquare with the poor and oppressed, and which was free to condemn the abuses of the Jewish and Roman authorities, it now canvassed for respectability in society. In what should have been a staged adjustment, it looked for the support of the authorities in bringing its Gospel message to the world.

This meant that in order to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, Christianity had to quickly separate itself from the still continuing social and gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. Sexual abuse was rife in Roman society and the abuses of power gave permission for the abuses of sex. Attitudes to transgender issues were similarly dominated by the need to maintain the power structures in a male dominated society<sup>236 237 238</sup>. In this process of rejection the social roles of the

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<sup>234</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): *“Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church”* Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>235</sup> Romans 13:1-5 *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience”*.

<sup>236</sup> Christian examples of male to female transgender people are hard to come by because any movement in that direction would become suppressed by the doctrines of male supremacy and the gender discrimination which was practiced by the later Church. However there is much more evidence of transgender behaviour in the female to male direction. One of the most famous woman leaders was expressed in the popular story of Thecla, a virgin-martyr who was converted by Paul. She cut her hair, donned men’s clothing, and took up the duties of a missionary traveller. Threatened with rape, prostitution, and twice put in the ring as a martyr, she persevered in her faith and her chastity. Her lively and somewhat fabulous story is recorded in the second century Acts of Paul and Thecla, The importance of such stories lies in their high degree of acceptance and popularity, and not necessarily in their absolute truth. The text of the acts can be accessed at: <http://www.pbs.org/wqbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html> See also Section 3:2:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): *“An Unfinished Reformation”*. Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>237</sup> In the second and third centuries, gender discrimination continued to increase. In the fourth century it was considered that female mystics could only achieve salvation and redemption if they rejected every aspect of their femininity. Even if they did, redemption could only be gained in heaven and not on earth. Although male to female transgender behaviour would be considered abhorrent at this time, it was positively encouraged in the female to male direction. Thus for women gender reassignment for entry to heaven was an ideal, and also a requirement that had to be achieved. However in order to protect the authority of a male church hierarchy in a male dominated

Goddess cults were forgotten, and they were presumed to be purveyors of depraved and dissolute sex. There were many other moral, cultural and theological differences between the two religious groups, and these equally required an absolute and an immediate elimination of any possible links with the Goddess cults<sup>239</sup>.

The consequence of this was a reversal in outlook. Instead of continuing with the challenges and social disruption of maintaining the doctrine of true gender transcendence contained in the Gospel message which is taught by Jesus, and also by Paul in Galatians 3:28, Christianity came to adopt the form of gender complementarity which demanded the submission of women as is described by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 14:34, and 1 Timothy 2:1-7<sup>240</sup>, and additionally by Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-6. The criticism of "Soft Men" by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9 should also be noted<sup>241</sup>. However, instead of simply embracing the social divisions and the gender complementarity of these gender unequal societies Christianity also had to be seen to take a pro-active role in their enforcement and this pursuit of respectability has led to the enforcement of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and exclusive orthodoxy in Christianity, where every expression of gender or of sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be an immoral act. It has also led to the great severity of the Christian condemnations of all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of their acts.

These issues are discussed in section 5:1:3 of this document. As with the attitude which Paul took to slavery in the Letter to Philemon, it would seem that the Gospel message should be expressed in full within the Christian Community while conforming to social expectations outside it<sup>242</sup>. Once it had gained sufficient influence it could then transform the world. By this means the radical teaching of equality and oneness in the gospel message could be kept alive, while accommodating the pressures of society around it. Reasons for adopting of this approach are discussed in other parts of this investigation, and they are found in the Gospel of Thomas and in the Canonical Gospel texts<sup>243</sup>. That could only happen if the Christian Community itself could remain true to the Gospel message. It did not occur. By the time that the Church, had obtained secular power in theory to make this transformation, the acceptance of the compromises that were needed to survive in this first century society had been transformed into permanent doctrines of the Church. The paradigm shift in Christian teaching had long since taken place: thus the first century condemnations of same-sex

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society, it could only come after death. For a full account see Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>.

<sup>238</sup> This idea that women had to have an instant sex change when they die in order to enter heaven as men was commonly held in the Church. In the meantime on earth women could only redeem their lives through childbirth, obedience or by renouncing all aspects of their femininity. On earth they were told by the Church that they could only wait in penance for the sins of Eve until they entered heaven, when the day of gender reassignment or freedom from gender comes. For a full account see section 2:3:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>.

<sup>239</sup> It should be noted that sexual morality in these dominant societies was determined by authority. Responsibility in all activities was demanded, but provided the recipient was of a lesser status than the perpetrator, these societies endorsed what in the present day would be considered to be same-sex or heterosexual rape. That was horrendous to subject societies, whose members could be the victims of such actions. However this difference arises due to cultural clashes between subject and dominant societies more than the theologies of the cults

<sup>240</sup> "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all --this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth".

<sup>241</sup> The relevant word in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is "Malakoi" which could mean effeminacy, love of luxury and other non-sexually related things. Many popularising translations of the bible mistranslate this word as "homosexuality"

<sup>242</sup> From the prior research work described in sections 2 and 3 of this document. As with Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, this demands that all transgender people, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted in their own right. Under the teaching of the New Covenant all sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act, and there is no toleration of abusive sex.

<sup>243</sup> See section 4:3 Christian Interactions in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

intercourse which were based on the abuses of power, purpose and hospitality.... and would have been known to Jesus, had been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act<sup>244</sup>.

The searching for respectability is apparent through all of the Pauline epistles, as is the departure from proclaiming a doctrine of gender transcendence within a gender unequal society. From the second century a strong and an exclusively heterosexual orthodoxy had come to be adopted. By the time of Augustine and the fourth century Church a total transformation had occurred. All expressions of gender and sexually variant behaviour were labelled as being in pursuit of promiscuity, prostitution and lust, and all, except for procreation, very strongly condemned. Severe gender discrimination was also exercised although the equality of men and women in heaven was preserved<sup>245</sup>. Christian redemption for women on earth could only be obtained by then through motherhood and childbirth or by the denial of all femininity<sup>246</sup>. A male priesthood was assumed and in place of the prominent role which had been the prerogative of women within the early Church they were only offered a secondary and a subservient role<sup>247</sup>. Although the cult of Mariology put women on a pedestal, and the Virgin Mary was given a very exalted status as an intercessor and mediator<sup>248</sup>, this also confined them to these roles<sup>249</sup>. Gender equality was at the discretion of the male and on the terms which the male decides. However women had played a major and powerful role in the early Church, the behaviour of the Desert Mothers showed how this continued to be expressed<sup>250</sup>. Instead of a call to celibacy which was the call for devotion to duty, that Jesus had offered, a different and Neo-Platonic form of celibacy was adopted, which required not just the denial of every sexual act, but also all thoughts of sex<sup>251</sup>.

This analysis has shown that the driving forces of power, subjection and domination between the different societies were responsible for much of what happened. However little of that appears in the New Testament itself, and references to potentially challenging teachings are described in actions rather than words. Even Paul's condemnations are based on sexual propriety and his comments on the struggles for power are encoded in the need to seek respectability for the Church<sup>252</sup>. One of the strengths of Christianity is that it has always sought to adapt to its surroundings. This passage: "*He who is able to receive this, let him receive it*", brings out that point. Had Christianity continued to act in full on the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sex it might have been unlikely to survive the

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<sup>244</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

<sup>245</sup> Kidd, Erin (2007). "The Virgin Desert: Gender Transformation in Fourth-Century Christian Asceticism" Lyceum, Volume VIII, Number 2. Spring 2007 ISSN number 1934-2438. The Lyceum is a publication of the Philosophy Department of Saint Anselm College. Accessed 12 December 2012 at: <http://lyceumphilosophy.com/8-2/Lyceum-8-2-Kidd.pdf>

<sup>246</sup> See sections 2:1:5, 2:2:4 and 3:3:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>247</sup> See section 3:3:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>248</sup> For a contemporary Roman Catholic View on the Virgin Mary, see: Redemptoris Mater: On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church. Pope John Paul II (1987) [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031987\\_redemptoris-mater\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html)

<sup>249</sup> Paradoxically the situation may become worse for women in a monotheistic religion where there is a gender transcendent God. In a polytheistic culture two parallel structures are set up, with a god and goddess at the head of each group. Women can rely on a separate goddess to protect their interests, and that is seen in the aggressive elements in the cult of Cybele which disrupted the social order and tested the male domination of society. However this polytheism leads to a divided and theologically sanctified structure where men engage in the social roles of power and politics while the women's domain is that of the hearth and home. Therefore the allegiance to an independent goddess in a polytheistic religion gave a woman considerable power within her domain. However that protection is lost in a monotheistic religion in circumstances where the single god who, although transcending gender, is assumed to have male characteristics. In theory full gender equality should be achieved but in practice the situation may become worse, since there is now no goddess who could protect female interests. See: Frymer-Kensky, Tivka. (1993) "In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth" Ballantine Books; (First Edition February 10, 1993) ISBN-10: 0449907465 ISBN-13: 978-0449907467

<sup>250</sup> See section 8:4 of this document

<sup>251</sup> See Section 3:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>252</sup> For a detailed consideration of these power struggles it is necessary to look outside the bible and the early history of the Church. That is done in the fourth paper in this series Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church" Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

confrontations it created. By taking the pragmatic approach described by Jeremiah<sup>253</sup> and in section 5:1:3 of this paper, Christianity has been able to bring the Gospel message to the world. That endorsement of conformity and its compromise could be why Christianity still exists in the present day. However the flaws in this argument arise from the compromises that were made.

## 8:2: Diversity in the Early Church

This is also discussed in section 5:1 of this document. Both Peter and Paul had met early in Paul's ministry, presumably to agree mutual support, but each had different expectations for the Church<sup>254</sup>. Although Paul in this analysis saw the need to conform to the gender roles expected in the gender unequal societies as a stepping stone towards the full realisation of the gender transcendence and gender equality of the Gospel message (and is still pilloried for it), Peter, with his reference to the submission of the Holy Women of the past, and his definition of women as the weaker partners, considered the adoption of this gender complementarity to be an end in itself. Matters came to a head around AD50 when the Council of Jerusalem was called to discuss how the fledgling Christian religion should be presented to the Gentile world. Paul describes this meeting as being called to discuss whether Gentiles should be required to be circumcised or not, but clearly other issues were at stake. There were differences of opinion between those Jewish members who were regarded as "Pillars of the Church" and those who were not. Comparing Paul's ideal in Galatians 3:28 that full gender transcendence could be maintained in the Christian Community, with Peter's idea that gender complementarity was an end in itself, was a measure of the lack of unity that existed.

What is not discussed in Western and Roman Christianity is the disagreement between Peter and Thomas, which the gospel of Thomas presents. The Gospel of Thomas is examined in section 7:0 of this document where it is shown to have a unity of structure. Thomas took Christianity to India in AD53, and the version of the Gospel that exists at present may well have originated around or

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<sup>253</sup> See section of

<sup>254</sup> Paul says that his initial interaction with Peter came upon his own initiative. He "went up to Jerusalem to inquire of Cephas (Peter)" (Galatians 1:17) to visit him for fourteen days. What happened during the meeting is unclear: On the one hand, Paul could be saying that he visited Peter with the intent of becoming acquainted with him and his experience in the Gospel. On the other hand, Paul may be saying that he went to give an account to Peter of what his own experience in the Gospel had been. Since this was their first meeting, a bit of both may have occurred. Based on the information Paul shares in Galatians 1-2 this initial meeting appears to have taken place around 37-38 AD. Their pathways into faith and leadership in the church were very different: Peter, the Galilean fisherman and Paul, the rising Jewish scholar and leader. In Acts 9-15, Luke complements what Paul says. In his second letter Peter mentions Paul and commends his writings, even though they contain things he considers "hard to grasp" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Some have considered Peter to be the person who acted as a bridge between James the Just, who was strongly supportive of maintaining the Jewish traditions in the Torah, and Paul who was not. Galatians 2 indicates the nature of the conflicts that existed. The next episode in Paul's account in 2 Galatians presents a painful contrast to the expression of fellowship in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Having just heard about the "right hand of fellowship" extended to the circumcised and uncircumcised in Galatians 2:2:9, in verse 11 Paul publically opposed Peter to his face. (Galatians 2:9-14: "and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'). The question therefore has to be asked: Was the conflict between the two groups really resolved, and how could this conflict between Paul and Peter occur so soon after they had reached an agreement to support one another? Apparently that is exactly what certain men with connections to James did when they arrived in Antioch. Who were these men? Were they actually sent from James? Or were they members of James's circle in the church but without a direct commission from James? Paul cloaks them with anonymity but he seems to lay on James the responsibility for their disturbance in the church in Antioch. The clue is in Paul's explanation in verse 12 that Peter separated himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. This account exposes the simmering tension in the early Church between those who were determined to maintain the Laws of the Torah and those who supported the transcendence of gender in the teaching of Jesus. Because of its derogation of Peter and the strong emphasis of the transcendence of gender, the Gospel of Thomas fits the character of a riposte to those who sought to maintain the Jewish traditions of the Torah in the Christian Church. Although Peter and Paul agreed to support each other, there appears to be different endpoints in their strategies. It is argued that the conservatism of Peter and his difficulty in accepting women as full equals in the Church has led to the continuation of the doctrines of gender complementarity derived from the Jewish tradition. However Paul, who did not consider himself bound by this Jewish tradition, advocated the full transcendence of gender and the equality of men and women in the Christian Church.

before this date. If Peter and Paul were to make compromises which demanded the submission of women, Thomas clearly did not. Sayings 21 and 61 in the Gospel of Thomas present Mary Magdalene and Salome as wise confidants of Jesus, while the disciples are presented as those stumbling to understand. Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas makes it clear that there should be no difference in treatment between men and women. As discussed in section 8:0, this saying can only be interpreted as the fulfilling transcendence of gender; not the suppression of all sex<sup>255</sup>. Gender transformations and their threats, metaphorical or not were used as political and social weapons to manipulate people in society. To “Make Mary Male” in saying 114 was to give her full equality with all of the male apostles, in social roles, in public and private ministry, and in every other act. In saying 98 Thomas, like Paul, understood that Christianity could not transform the world until the time was right. However for Thomas there was no place at any time in the Gospel message where the submission of women and the enforcement of a doctrine of gender complementarity could be accepted acts.

Nor did Thomas compromise on his challenges to the ruling authorities. An early legend reports that instead of building a temple in India using the money and resources that King Gundaphar had given him for this purpose, Thomas distributes it to the poor instead. He faces death as a consequence of his act. This and other stories suggest that no compromises were made.<sup>256</sup> That dissent within the Church was present is evident in the public confrontation between Peter and Paul at Antioch (see section 5:1:4). It is also evident in the disagreements over the roles of Peter and Thomas. The contrast between the elevation of Peter and as the perceptive one and the derogation of Thomas as “*the doubter*” in the Canonical Gospels, when it is compared with the elevation of Thomas as the perceptive person and the derogation of Peter as “*the wise messenger*” in the Gospel of Thomas, suggests that these issues caused significant disagreements in the early Church. Tradition, which is reported in the “Acts of Thomas”, states that Thomas did not go voluntarily to India, it was forced upon him.

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<sup>255</sup> From early in the Second century, encratic teaching had become a major influence in the Syrian Church. This teaching declares that salvation can only be gained through complete abstinence from sex. The name is identified with an ascetic Christian sect led by Tatian, a 2nd-century Syrian rhetorician. It represents the group’s doctrine of continence. In the Gospel of Thomas the “Solitary Ones” are called the elect; however it is clear that this form of asceticism is to ensure total commitment to the Gospel message by avoiding the distractions of blood relationships and family life: it was not the condemnation of sex. First century concerns over same-sex intercourse related to its use to enforce power and domination over people in socially unequal societies, again it was the abuses of power that gave rise to sexual abuse rather than the horror of sex. Nevertheless sexual abuse was also rife in these first century societies. In all cases that was totally and vociferously condemned. Encratic and Christian teaching combines all of these together and regardless of purpose, condemns them as the evils of sex.

<sup>256</sup> The “Acts of Thomas” (<http://gnosis.org/library/actthom.htm>) is a purported account of the activities of Thomas in India. One thing deserves note is the emphasis the Thomas gives on charity to the poor and needy. It was written around the first half of the third century. It is in the form of a pseudepigraphic text which relates the adventures of the apostle Judas Thomas. It identifies Thomas with an ascetical or encratite form of Christianity on his way to and from India. It should not be confused with the earlier *Gospel of Thomas* in which, as is shown in this analysis, the encratite element is absent. Literal interpretations are also not appropriate since in this type of document facts, and imagined accounts are combined. However independent research may be used to identify the factual elements that are present (see McGrath, James F. (2008): “History and Fiction in the Acts of Thomas: The State of the Question” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* (2008): 297-311. Available at: [http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch\\_papers/6](http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch_papers/6)). In this case the existence of King Gundaphar is independently confirmed through coins and inscriptions. With a single exception, scholarship on Indian and Parthian history seems to unanimously date his reign to the period from 21 C.E. until at least 46 C.E: that is contemporary with the journey of Thomas to India. The Western or Northwest Indian tradition holds that Thomas arrived by sea with an Indian trader to King Gundaphar, whose reign allegedly extended parts of India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Punjab. As the story in the “Acts of Thomas” goes, the king hires Thomas to build him a palace and the apostle gives all the funds for the project to the poor, building the king a palace that Gundaphar may see “*when thou dost depart this life*” (Acts 21). Instead of being killed for his disobedience, as Gundaphar had intended, Thomas was saved by a miraculous act. When Thomas redistributes the king’s money to the poor, people report to the king that: Neither has he built a palace or done anything else of what he has promised to do, but he goes about the towns and villages, and if he has anything he gives it all to the poor, and he teaches a new God . . . his works of compassion, and the healings which are wrought by him without reward . . . and the quality of his faith, show that he is righteous or an apostle of the new God whom he preaches. On a later occasion the king, Misdeus (or Mizdeos), was infuriated when Thomas converted the queen Tertia, the king’s son Juzanes, sister-in-law princess Mygdonia and her friend Markia to Christianity. Misdeus led Saint Thomas outside the city and ordered four soldiers to take him to the nearby hill, where the soldiers speared to death. This is generally assumed to have happened in AD 72. What is important in these accounts is not the accuracy or factuality of these stories. It is in the nature of the ministry of Thomas that no compromises were made with those in authority, and no compromises with the teaching of Jesus were made.



Up to about the beginning of the fourth Century Christianity was extremely diverse: Attridge<sup>257</sup> states that it probably ought to be thought of in terms of regional diversity, with different brands of Christianity often living side by side, even in the same city. This investigation has identified three different approaches to gender and sex inside the Apostolic Community itself. Each of these has tried to interpret the teaching of Jesus within what their culture expects. For Peter that interpretation was framed by the Jewish tradition, where his communication of the teaching of Jesus within the framework of gender complementarity was an end in itself. Both Thomas and Paul appear to have recognised the full impact of the gender transcendence and the equal treatment of men and women that is present in the teaching of Jesus. However Paul, a Roman Citizen, sought to find a way of expressing this within the social and philosophical constraints which were demanded by this Roman society to ensure the reception of the Gospel message and the survival of the Church. Thomas, who took the Gospel message to the East, had different constraints to deal with. The lack of any evidence of compromise on the issues of gender transcendence and equality is evident in the Gospel of Thomas. However no such compromise was needed, since under the Parthians (247BC-224AD) in the Persian Empire, and because of the codes of the Zoroastrian religion, the principles of gender equality were already applied<sup>258</sup>.

When it was subject to Parthian rule, the Persian Empire had been a refuge for Christians who were fleeing the persecution of the Roman authorities<sup>259</sup> and a place where Christianity could develop in a relatively unimpeded way<sup>260</sup>. It is also of interest to note that Babylonia became the major seat of Jewish learning after the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in AD 70.

### 8:3: The Church of the East

According to the best known and most widely disseminated early tradition, the Church of the East was evangelised by Thomas from the circle of the twelve Apostles and also by Addai, Mari and Assai from the seventy<sup>261</sup>. The evangelisation of Edessa, Nisbis, Mosul, Arbela, Beth, Garmai and Babylonia are credited to Addai and his disciples<sup>262</sup>. The Church of the East had its centre in Antioch and later Edessa in Turkey<sup>263</sup> <sup>264</sup>. It officially declared itself separate from the state church of the Roman Empire in 424–427. Between the 9th and 14th centuries the Church of the East represented the world's largest Christian church in terms of geographical extent, with dioceses stretching from its heartland in Upper Mesopotamia, from the Mediterranean Sea to as far afield as

<sup>257</sup> Attridge, Harold W. (1998); Summary of various contributors views: "The Diversity of Early Christianity From the beginning, early Christians struggled to define for themselves the identity of Jesus and the meaning of his message": The Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament Yale Divinity School <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/diversity.html>

<sup>258</sup> Zoroastrian religion does not discriminate between men and women. Leaving aside the differences with regard to religious observances and role responsibilities, both the sexes are treated equally in the religious texts. There is no preferential treatment for male children. There is no such argument that male children are necessary for the deliverance of parents into the ancestral world. The same initiation ceremony is performed for both male and female children. Of the six Immortal Beings created by God, three are feminine and three are masculine. Both men and women have equal importance in protecting the sanctity and divinity of the world. Children are advised to honour both mother and father equally. A useful summary is given in: Ebrahimpour, Tamara: (2008): "Women's Rights in Ancient Persia": *Iran Review*: Sunday May 18, 2008: [http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Women\\_s\\_Rights\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Persia.htm](http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Women_s_Rights_in_Ancient_Persia.htm)

<sup>259</sup> The Parthian (Arsacid) Empire flourished from 247 BC to 224 AD. It was then supplanted by the Sassanids, who prevailed from 224 to 651, when they were in turn conquered by the new force of Islam.

<sup>260</sup> Venetis, Evangelos, Mozdoor M. Alinia: (2003): "The Establishment and Development of Christianity in the Parthian Empire" *Transoxiana: Journal de Estudios Orientales*: Transoxiana 6 Julio 2003: ISSN 1660-7050; English translation available at: [http://www.transoxiana.org/0106/venetis-mozdoor\\_christianity\\_parthian\\_empire.html](http://www.transoxiana.org/0106/venetis-mozdoor_christianity_parthian_empire.html)

<sup>261</sup> The seventy disciples or seventy-two disciples (known in the Eastern Christian traditions as the Seventy [or seventy two] Apostles) were early emissaries of Jesus mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 10:1–24). According to Luke, the only gospel in which they appear, Jesus appointed them and sent them out in pairs to preach the gospel on a specific mission which is detailed in the text. In Western Christianity, they are usually referred to as disciples, whereas in Eastern Christianity they are usually referred to as Apostles.

<sup>262</sup> It is understood that Thomas travelled to India in AD 52-3.

<sup>263</sup> Winkler, Dietmar, Baum, Wilhelm: (2003): "The Church of the East: A Concise" History": *Volume 1 of Central Asian Studies*: Routledge, 2003 ISBN 1134430191, 9781134430192

<http://www.learnassyrian.com/assyrianlibrary/assyrianbooks/Religion/The%20Church%20of%20the%20East%20-%20A%20concise%20history%20-%20Wilhelm%20Baum%20and%20Dietmar%20W.%20Winkler.pdf>

<sup>264</sup> [http://www.oxuscom.com/Church\\_of\\_the\\_East.pdf](http://www.oxuscom.com/Church_of_the_East.pdf)

China, Mongolia, Central Asia, Anatolia, the Arabian Peninsula and India<sup>265</sup>. Unlike the monolithic Roman Empire, the Church of the East involved very diverse nations and cultures<sup>266</sup>. As a consequence the decisions and arguments made during and leading up to the council of Nicaea had little impact on this Eastern Church. The friction and wars between the Roman and Parthian (Persian) empires led to isolation from each other, and the different traditions and different environments led to differences in theology<sup>267</sup>. The Theology of the Church of the East has been stated briefly and clearly in the following “Hymn of Praise” Composed by Mar Babai the Great in the sixth century A.D.<sup>268</sup>

One is Christ the Son of God,  
Worshiped by all in two natures;  
In His Godhead begotten of the Father,  
Without beginning before all time;  
In His humanity born of Mary,  
In the fullness of time, in a body united;  
Neither His Godhead is of the nature of the mother,  
Nor His humanity of the nature of the Father;  
The natures are preserved in their Qnumas<sup>269</sup>,  
In one person of one Sonship.  
And as the Godhead is three substances in one nature,  
Likewise the Sonship of the Son is in two natures, one person.  
So the Holy Church has taught.

This is an alternative doctrine of the Trinity which avoids the difficulties encountered in the Roman Church over the Arian controversy and the Nicene Creed since it argues from the start that the key elements of the Trinity are formed outside time<sup>270</sup>. The Creed issued by the First Council of Nicaea in 325 had the addendum: *“But those who say: ‘There was a time when he was not,’ and ‘He was not before he was made,’ and ‘He was made out of nothing,’ or ‘He is of another substance’ or ‘essence,’ or ‘The Son of God is created,’ or ‘changeable,’ or ‘alterable’ - they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church”*. In the later version of the creed issued by the Council of Constantinople in AD 381, this passage is removed and the following is inserted: *“And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son*

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<sup>265</sup> Some other sources: Moffett, Samuel Hugh: (1998): “A History of Christianity in Asia: Beginnings to 1500” History Of Christianity In Asia (Book 1): Orbis Books; 2 Sub edition (April 1, 1998) ISBN-10: 1570751625 ISBN-13: 978-1570751622: Jenkins, Philip: (2009): “The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia-and How It Died” HarperOne; Reprint edition (November 3, 2009) ISBN-10: 0061472816 ISBN-13: 978-0061472817: Baumer, Christoph: (2016) “Church of the East: An Illustrated History of Assyrian Christianity” I.B.Tauris; New edition (November 5, 2016) ISBN-10: 1784536830 ISBN-13: 978-1784536831 ISBN:9781784536831: Wigram, William Ainger (2015) “An Introduction To The History Of The Assyrian Church Or The Church Of The Sassanid Persian Empire, 100-640 A.D.” Andesite Press ISBN: 9781298635891: Soro, Mar Bawai. (2014): “The Church of the East: Apostolic & Orthodox” Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (June 5, 2014) ISBN-10: 1500104531 ISBN-13: 978-1500104535

<sup>266</sup> The modern day descendants encompass: the “Nestorian Church”, also known as the “Church of the East”, the “Persian Church”, the “East Syrian Church”, the “Chaldean Syrian Church” in India only, the “Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East”, and the “Assyrian Church of the East”. See: <http://www.nestorian.org/index.html>

<sup>267</sup> In the first two centuries of the Christian era, Thomas was seen as an authority for doctrine. This belief is documented in Gnostic groups as early as the Pistis Sophia. In this work, Mary Magdalene (one of the disciples) says: *Now at this time, my Lord, hear, so that I speak openly, for thou hast said to us “He who has ears to hear, let him hear:” Concerning the word which thou didst say to Philip: “Thou and Thomas and Matthew are the three to whom it has been given... to write every word of the Kingdom of the Light, and to bear witness to them”; hear now that I give the interpretation of these words. It is this which thy light-power once prophesied through Moses: “Through two and three witnesses everything will be established. The three witnesses are Philip and Thomas and Matthew”* Pistis Sophia 1:43 <http://gnosis.org/library/pistis-sophia/index.htm>). About half of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas have been incorporated into the Gospels of Matthew and the gospel of Luke. The reason for referring to Philip is not known.

<sup>268</sup> Babai the Great (551- 628) was an early church father of the Church of the East. He set several of the foundational pillars of the Church, revived the monastic movement, and formulated its Christology in a systematic way

<sup>269</sup> Qnuma, is an Aramaic word. The nearest equivalent is the Greek “hypostasis”, in Latin “substantia” and in English “substance

<sup>270</sup> It should nevertheless be noted that the Nicene Creed is today used by those churches who trace their history back to the Church of the East.

together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets". Even though unity is presented, an order of precedence is introduced in the Nicene Creed which would seem to oppose that in saying 44 of the gospel of Thomas and in Matthew 12.31: Mark 3.28 and Luke 12.10: "And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven". These different patterns of development were touchstones for the divisions and disagreements that were created<sup>271</sup>. This was a time when the Roman Church was reaching the point of becoming the official state religion of the Roman Empire where, in support of the Emperor, "God the Father" needed to play an important role.

Around the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, the Church of the East became accused of "Nestorian"<sup>272</sup> heresy. However this accusation by the Roman and Byzantine church was vociferously denied in the Church of the East from at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>273</sup>. In 1298 the distinguished East Syriac scholar Abdisho bar Brika<sup>274</sup> wrote in his "Book of the Pearl" (Margarita)<sup>275</sup> that East Syriac Christians had "never changed their faith and preserved it as they had received it from the apostles, and are called Nestorians unjustly, especially since Nestorius was not their patriarch and did not understand their language"<sup>276</sup>. Despite this rejection, in some circles the use of what was intended as a condemnation in the fifth century has become a descriptive name for the Church of the East, and its use has persisted down to the present day<sup>277</sup>.

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<sup>271</sup> "Filioque" is the Latin term for the expression "and the Son" which is added to the original Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. It has been the subject of great controversy between Orthodox and Western Christianity. The Latin term Filioque describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from both the Father and the Son, and not from the Father only. "The section is: I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son). Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified". Whether that term Filioque (an the Son) is included, as well as how it is translated and understood, can have important implications for how one understands the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is central to the majority of Christian churches. The term has been an ongoing source of conflict between Orthodox Christianity and Western Christianity, contributing, in major part, to the Schism of 1054. For some, the term implies a serious underestimation of the Father's role in the Trinity; for others, denial of what it expresses implies a serious underestimation of the role of the Son in the Trinity. Saying 44 in the Gospel of Thomas (see the commentary in section 6:0 for details) and the equivalent texts in Matthew 12.31, Mark 3.28 and Luke 12.10 suggest that neither concern is correct. However the existence of any order of precedence is denied in the "Hymn of Praise" composed by Mar Babai for the Church of the East, and that adds a further level of dissent to the discussion. Notably the statement about blaspheming against the father, which is present in the Gospel of Thomas, is absent in the bible texts. It is however of note that the present day churches which trace their lineage to the Church of the East now use versions of the Nicene Creed"

<sup>272</sup> Nestorianism is attributed to Nestorius (386–450) who was the Patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431. Nestorius's teachings brought him into conflict with other prominent church leaders, most notably Cyril of Alexandria, who criticized especially his rejection of the title Theotokos ("Mother of God") for Mary the mother of Jesus. The concerns of Nestorius were principally about the growth of doctrines of Mariology of the Church. His teachings were eventually condemned as heretical at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. According to traditional church theology Nestorianism is a Christological doctrine that emphasizes a distinction between the human and divine natures of Jesus. However Nestorius himself denied this charge which is attributed to him by arguing that God and Man are completely one in Christ. It was this misrepresentation that enabled Nestorianism to be declared a heresy. The position taken by Cyril of Alexandria was also rejected. The reasons for the separation seem to be as much political as theological, arising from a conflict between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria and over which patriarchate should have highest authority in the church. The Council attempted to find a compromise between the two positions. After the Council of Chalcedon, the Churches who supported Nestorius on the one hand and the Coptic Orthodox churches representing Cyril of Alexandria on the other, broke with the rest of the Christian Church. However the Church of the East was not represented at the Council of Chalcedon, since it was beyond the jurisdiction of the Roman Emperor. The wars and dissension between the Roman and Persian empires had isolated these two groups from each other. Following that schism many of Nestorius's supporters relocated to the Persian Sasanian Empire, where they found a welcome in the already existing Thomasine Church. This has led to the Church of the East being called "The Nestorian Church". However the process of one was assimilation of the Nestorians into the existing Thomasine Church. The name "Nestorian" has stuck, although it is technically incorrect. The allegation that the Church of the East had adopted Nestorian theology, at least in the form that the Roman church had then defined it is also incorrect, and this allegation was vigorously denied by the Church of the East from an early date. Modern attitudes tend to regard none of these positions as being inherently heretical and that the dissension was created for power and political advantage by using arguments over the meaning of words. See the following footnotes for more information.

<sup>273</sup> Winkler, Dietmar, Baum, Wilhelm: (2003): "The Church of the East: A Concise" History": *Volume 1 of Central Asian Studies*: Routledge, 2003 ISBN 1134430191, 9781134430192

<sup>274</sup> Died 1318

<sup>275</sup> Full text of "The Book of the Pearl": [https://archive.org/stream/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz_djvu.txt)

<sup>276</sup> For an overview of Nestorian Theology see: Dickens, Mark: (1999): "Nestorian Theology" at <http://www.oxuscom.com/theology.htm>

<sup>277</sup> Nestorius spoke of Christ as one person (prosopon) in two natures (physis), human and divine. The Monophysites spoke of him as one person (hypostasis) and one nature (physis), both God and man. The council of Chalcedon referred to Christ as one person (hypostasis) in two natures (physis). In essence this is a compromise between the Nestorian and Monophysite positions. The Monophysite position was and is still largely followed by the Coptic and the Oriental Orthodox churches. The Nestorian bishops, in a statement drawn up in 612, stated: "There is a wonderful connection and indissoluble union between [Christ's] human nature, which was assumed, and God the Word who assumed it, a union existing from the first moment of conception. This teaches us to recognize only one Person (parsopa),

Other surviving early condemnations of the *Gospel of Thomas* are found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome (c. 222–235). Hippolytus wrote in his *Refutation of All Heresies*<sup>278</sup>. He said: “[The Naassenes]<sup>279</sup> speak...of a nature which is both hidden and revealed at the same time and which they call the thought-for kingdom of heaven which is in a human being. They transmit a tradition concerning this in the Gospel entitled "According to Thomas," which states expressly, "The one who seeks me will find me in children of seven years and older, for there, hidden in the fourteenth aeon, I am revealed””. This appears to be a reference to saying 4 of the Gospel of Thomas, although the wording differs significantly from the Gospel itself. Origen of Alexandria (c. 233) listed the "Gospel according to Thomas" as being among the heterodox apocryphal gospels known to him (*Hom. in Luc.* 1). In the 4th and 5th centuries, various Church Fathers wrote that the Gospel of Thomas was highly valued by Mani<sup>280</sup>. In the 4th century, Cyril of Jerusalem mentioned a "Gospel of Thomas" twice in his *Catechesis*<sup>281</sup>. He says: "The Manicheans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tintured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort." and "Let none read the Gospel according to Thomas: for it is the work not of one of the twelve Apostles, but of one of the three wicked disciples of Manes." The 5th century *Decretum Gelasianum*<sup>282</sup> includes "A Gospel attributed to Thomas which the Manichaeans use" in its list of heretical books. By the time of the Emperor Constantine's conversion, when Christianity became an officially approved religion in the fourth century, Christian bishops, who had been previously victimized by the police, now commanded them. Possession of books denounced as heretical was made a criminal offence<sup>283</sup>. Copies of such books were burned and destroyed. In 367 AD, Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, issued a decree known as the Festal Letter, banning the use of alternative Christian writings. He also outlined an accepted canon of orthodox scripture. In reacting to this censorship, some monks, (probably from the St Pachomius Monastery in Upper Egypt), smuggled out the codices and buried them in the nearby sands. These 52 texts were discovered in 1945 close to the town of Nag Hammadi, were hidden in the jar where they remained buried for almost 1,600 years. Among them was the Gospel of Thomas. However in this pursuit of orthodoxy many other texts were lost. When the Portuguese took over Goa in India they destroyed

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our Saviour Jesus Christ, Son of God, begotten in the nature of his Godhead by the Father before all ages, without beginning, and born finally in the nature of his Manhood of the holy Virgin, the daughter of David". This Nestorian teaching has equivalence to the attitudes to Mariology in the Protestant churches of the present day. These differences in detail may lie in the theology, but all too often it is the politics that get in the way. An interesting perspective on these developments is given in the paper by Mar Aprem: Aprem, Mar: (2017): "Is the Theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian?" Pro Oriente Foundation. (His Beatitude Mar Aprem is the Metropolitan of Malabar and India); available at: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/is-the-theology-of-the-assyrian-church-nestorian/>

<sup>278</sup> Hippolytus of Rome, "Philosophumena:" vol.1. Ed. W.J. Sparrow Simpson, W.K. Lowther Clarke, trans. F. Legge. (New York: MacMillan, 1921), p. 65.

<sup>279</sup> The Naassenes were a Christian Gnostic sect known only through the writings of Hippolytus of Rome. The Naassenes claimed to have been taught their doctrines by Mariamne, a disciple of James the Just. The retention of the Hebrew form shows that their beliefs may represent the earliest stages of Gnosticism. Hippolytus regards them as among the first to be called simply "Gnostics", alleging that they alone have sounded the depths of knowledge

<sup>280</sup> Mani (216-274): Mani's teaching was intended to succeed and surpass the teachings of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. It is based on a rigid dualism of good and evil, locked in eternal struggle. In his mid-twenties, Mani decided that salvation was possible through education, self-denial, fasting and chastity. Mani claimed to be the Paraclete promised in the New Testament, and the Last Prophet. While his religion was not strictly a movement of Christian Gnosticism in the earlier mode, Mani did declare himself to be an "apostle of Jesus Christ", and extant Manichaeans frequently extol Jesus and his mother, Mary, with the highest reverence. Manichaeans also noted to have claimed that Mani was the reincarnation of different religious figures including Zoroaster, the historical Buddha, as well as Jesus. Mani's followers were organized in a church structure, divided into a class of "elects" (electi) and "auditors" (auditores). Only the electi are required to follow the laws strictly, while the auditores care for them, hoping to become electi in their turn after reincarnation.

<sup>281</sup> Cyril (c313-c386): Catechesis 4.36: Cyril is noted for twenty-three lectures given to catechumens in Jerusalem being prepared for, and after, baptism are best considered in two parts: the first eighteen lectures are common known as the Catechetical Lectures, Catechetical Orations or Catechetical Homilies, while the final five are often called the Mystagogic Catecheses, because they deal with the mysteries i.e. Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

<sup>282</sup> Decretum Gelasianum: The Decretum Gelasianum or the Gelasian Decree is so named because it was traditionally thought to be a Decree of the prolific Pope Gelasius I, bishop of Rome 492–496. It is said that the work was derived from a five-chapter text written by an anonymous scholar between 519 and 553, the second chapter of which is a list of books of Scripture presented as having been made Canonical by a Council of Rome under Pope Damasus I, bishop of Rome 366-383

<sup>283</sup> Excerpt from: Pagels, Elaine. (1979): "The Gnostic Gospels" Vintage Books, New York: 1979  
pp. xiii-xxiii: <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/Pagels-Gnostic-Gospels.html>

much of the documentation held by the Indian Christian Church. As a consequence much of the information that would enlighten the early development of Christianity in the Roman and Byzantine Church, and the Church of the East, were lost.

#### 8:4 Asceticism and Monasticism

Prior to the emergence of monasticism in the fourth century, the practice of asceticism was widespread. Conrad writes.<sup>284 285</sup> Indeed, asceticism goes back to the New Testament, and less dramatically to the Old Testament. A number of church fathers, East and West, had already developed an ascetical theology. Christians in the East were persecuted at various times, most notably and most violently between 339 and 370 under the reign of Shapur II. The headquarters of the Church was moved from Antioch to Edessa because of the severity of this persecution. In such situations the structural framework needed by monasteries may have been difficult to create. A likely pattern for the development of asceticism is the creation of cells for the “Solitary ones” centred round a centre of worship which served as the equivalent of a parish church for the whole community. Withdrawal from the world was not an absolute requirement. On the level of practice, many celibates or consecrated virgins could be found. These “Solitary Ones” may be widows choosing to remain in their bereaved state, young virgins choosing to consecrate their lives to God, priests being required to pursue their ministry in a state of celibacy (or, if already married, living with their wives in continence)<sup>286</sup>, married couples among the laity choosing to live together in continence, or even in some cases unmarried men and women choosing to live together as brother and sister (although this particular practice would quickly fall into disfavour). Without the stability and acceptance needed to maintain it, the emergence of monasticism as a distinct ascetic movement, separated from the larger Christian community, does not appear straightaway. Rather, it emerges, in diverse forms and various regions, but only around the fourth century AD.

Before this occurred, asceticism and withdrawal from the world took place in many different ways. First, there is the unmitigated life of withdrawal and seclusion: the life of the hermit. This is found in particular in Lower Egypt, as well Syria, but there only after the fifth century. One such alternative form of monasticism is the communal life. Here a group of monks live together, under a common rule and in a common monastery, mutually supporting and encouraging one another. There are two fathers of this form of monasticism: St. Pachomius of Egypt (286-346) and St. Basil the Great (c. 330-379) in Asia Minor. However it is unlikely that Basil's inspiration came from Pachomius; it seems to have come instead from Syria. Third, there is the semi-hermetic form of monasticism, which is intermediate between the two that are already mentioned. In this situation, the monks did not live in complete separation, like the hermits; nor did they live in complete community, like the communal monks. Rather, they existed as a number of independent groups of monks, each of which varied greatly in size, but which would all come together for a common liturgy or meal, especially on Sunday.

In order to understand the history of monasticism in Syria, it is necessary to note that there were two phases in its development. The first phase may be called “proto-monasticism,” and it is the phase dominant prior to the fifth century. This differed considerably from the monastic traditions of the Egyptian Desert Fathers. The second phase is the one that receives the most attention among historians, no doubt in part because it is also the one in which all the remarkable accounts of

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<sup>284</sup> Nahas, Newman: “The origins and motivations of monasticism” <http://www.monachos.net/library/index.php/monasticism/studies/92-the-origins-and-motivations-of-monasticism>

<sup>285</sup> Conrad, Jeffrey. (2015): “Egyptian and Syrian Asceticism in Late Antiquity” *Syriac Studies*: <http://www.syriacstudies.com/2015/09/16/egyptian-and-syrian-asceticism-in-late-antiquity-jeffrey-conrad-2/>

<sup>286</sup> For attitudes to celibacy in the Roman Church: see; Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2011): “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

stunning acts of self-mortification are found. This second phase reflects a fundamental shift toward the later Egyptian model of the Desert Fathers, which had gained an irresistible prestige and momentum throughout Christendom. The first evidence of this earlier version of Syrian monasticism was the B'nai Q'yama and the B'nat Q'yama (the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant), an ascetic group which began in the third century and gained ascendancy in the Church during the fourth century. In some places, baptism came to be reserved only for those who had renounced the world and made a vow of celibacy. The first actual monasteries were built around 330-340<sup>287</sup>. By the following century, the strict regulations of the B'nai Q'yama and the B'nat Q'yama had been largely laid aside, but monastic communities still continued to spread throughout Persia, bound together by an adherence to celibacy, poverty, manual labour, prayer, fasting, study of the scriptures and silence<sup>288</sup>.

There is very little direct information concerning the first phase of Syrian monasticism. The primary sources for this period are Aphrahat and Ephrem. To understand the distinctive characteristics of Syrian "proto-monasticism," two phrases need to be understood: "*ihidaya*" (literally: solitary, monk)<sup>289</sup> and "*Bnay Q'yama*" (literally: sons of the covenant). These phrases are used almost interchangeably, especially by Aphrahat; but they do seem to convey different nuances. The ways in which they are used, primarily by Aphrahat, give us a glimpse of the character of Syrian "proto-monasticism." The term "*ihidaya*" (plural, "*Ihidaye*") term refers to single persons who were committed to serving God. Griffith associates them with the biblical widows and virgins<sup>290</sup>. The *ihidaye* occupied a special status in the church, but while they could occasionally be found among the clerical orders (particularly the lower ones), this was rare. They were primarily lay persons, whether male or female. The term *ihidaye*, more specifically, seems to have been used with three major features in mind, and accordingly tells three main things about the monastic movement: The first sense is that of "monochos", conveying the sense of unmarried or continent; second, "*monozonos*" or "*monotropos*", conveying the sense of single-mindedness; third, "monogenes", conveying the sense of union with *the "Monogenes"* (the Ihidaya, Only-begotten Son). Griffith<sup>291</sup> thinks that this last sense, with its connection between the individual *ihidaya* and *the Ihidaya* (the Only-begotten), was the most prominent in the minds of the Syrians.

As Aphrahat explains: "*For those who do not take wives will be served by the Watchers of heaven: the observers of consecrated holiness will come to rest at the sanctuary of the Exalted One. The Ihidaya who is from the bosom of the Father will gladden the ihidaye. There will be neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, but all are sons of the Most High. These things are befitting the ihidaye, those who take on the heavenly yoke, to become disciples to Christ. For so it is fitting for Christ's disciples to emulate Christ their Lord*"

Another important group in the understanding the native Syrian monasticism is *Bnay Q'yama*. The term "*Qyama*" refers primarily to the sense of covenant, though it also connotes "*station*" and possibly "*resurrection*". Accordingly, the Bnay Q'yama and B'nat Q'yama (the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant) refers to a group of celibates who took upon themselves a special "station" in the life of the community. At this time, the sons and daughters of the Covenant, did not strictly live in

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<sup>287</sup> Jullien, Florence:(2015): "East Syrian Monasteries in Sasanian Iran," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/east-syrian-monasteries> (accessed on 7 June 2018).

<sup>288</sup> For more on Syrian and Nestorian monasticism, see: Atiya, Aziz S.(1968): "*History of Eastern Christianity*" (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) 291-294; Moffett, Nicholas. (1961): "*Eastern Christendom*" (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), 96-100 and Stewart, John: (1928): *Nestorian Missionary Enterprise* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928) 36-49

<sup>289</sup> Note the lower case at the start of the word. When the upper case is used the term refers to Jesus as the "only begotten Son"

<sup>290</sup> Griffiths, Fiona J. (2018): "*Nuns' Priests' Tales: Men and Salvation in Medieval Women's Monastic Life*"

The Middle Ages Series University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018 ISBN 0812294629, 9780812294620

<sup>291</sup> Griffiths, Fiona J. (2018): "*Nuns' Priests' Tales: Men and Salvation in Medieval Women's Monastic Life*"

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monastic structures but near parish churches<sup>292 293</sup>. They assumed this station by covenant, or solemn pledge, at baptism, at which time they “put on the *ihidaya* and became *ihidaye*”. They also covenanted to follow Christ's lifestyle in a uniquely uncompromising way, and in so doing they were revealing the life that would be lived in the age to come - the life to which all the baptized are called. Through their celibacy and uncompromising pursuit of holiness, they stood among their community as anticipatory images of the promised Resurrection where “*Their status in the community served as a type for the expectations of all the baptized.*” Thus, they represented for the Church, what the Church was called to be. In the case of the *ihidaye* and the *Bnay Q'yama*, some might have pursued withdrawal from the community, most did not). From the time of Baršauma, bishop of Nisibis in the 5th century, who obliged priests to marry, monastic life was less considered.

The asceticism of the Desert Fathers was not the first type of Christian Monasticism to be found in Egypt<sup>294</sup>. St. Pachomius's (286-346) foundations were governed by an elaborate rule. The members lived in dormitories instead of separately in caves and huts and had their meals and prayers in common. The abbot of the motherhouse was the superior of all the other convents whether of men or women, appointed their superiors, visited them periodically, and presided at a general chapter held annually at the motherhouse. As a tightly organized a system as this would not appear again until the Benedictine reforms in the early middle ages. Time not spent in prayer was spent in work. Each monastery had its own farmlands and craft workshops and was largely self-sufficient. However by the fifth century, this ascetic tradition quickly becomes displaced by the Egyptian variety associated with the Desert Fathers, with its gymnastics of asceticism, and its focus on withdrawal from the world. There is a greater emphasis now placed on many of the monastic themes, such as martyrdom, that were prevalent in this tradition; and withdrawal is certainly more emphatically pursued. That marked the supplanting of the earlier traditions and after the fifth century the traditions of the Desert Fathers took the prominent place. For the Desert Mothers it was also a reaction against the gender discrimination which was being practiced by the mainstream Roman Church.

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<sup>292</sup>Jullien, Florence:(2015): “East Syrian Monasteries in Sasanian Iran,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/east-syrian-monasteries> (accessed on 7 June 2018).

<sup>293</sup> Something of the type of lifestyle may be described by Mc Clintock and Strong in their *Biblical Cyclopaedia*, published in 1880. They attributed their description to the Nestorian Church, however that association was vehemently denied by the Church of the East from a very early date. They state that: “*there are a class of devotees among the Nestorians (q.v.), claiming to be of the Order of St. Anthony, though they do not strictly adhere to the rules of that or any other order, and are but insignificant in number. They probably were quite powerful as a monastic body at one time, for there are a large number of monasteries now extant in the Nestorian country which these devotees named and supported. Most of these monasteries are now deserted, especially those upon the River Tigris; the rest have but few inmates except that of Ormuz, which is the most considerable, and in that there are only about fifty monks. This monastery is the residence of the patriarchs, and takes its name from Hormisdas, one of the Nestorian saints. There are some other monasteries in Persia, the most considerable of which is that near Tauris. They have about twenty double convents, that is, both for monks and nuns, who have separate habitations, though but one common church. While the monks are employed in bodily labour the nuns prepare their victuals. The religious Nestorians eat no fish, drink no wine. Their Lents are six in number; viz., the grand Lent of the universal Church; that of the Apostles, which begins fifteen days before the festival of St. Peter; that of the Assumption of Our Lady; that of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, each of fifteen days; that of Elias, or the Ninevites, which lasts eight days; and that of Christ's Nativity, which continues twenty-five days. The Nestorian monks are habited in a black gown tied with a leathern girdle. They wear, instead of a capuche, a blue turban. The nuns are habited after the same manner, excepting that they tie a kind of black veil about their heads and under their chins. They must be forty years old before they take the monastic habit. If a monk desires to quit his convent to marry, he asks leave of the pasha, and the bishop is obliged to consent to it for fear the monk might turn Mohammedan.... See Brunel, Histoire des Clerges Seculier et Regulier, 2:44-47*”. As cited the McClintock and Strong *Biblical Cyclopaedia*: <http://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/N/nestorian-monastics.htm>  
Reference: Strong, James, McClintock, John (1880): “*The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*.” Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880.

<sup>294</sup> According to the Life of St Antony: At about twenty years of age (c. 269) Antony responded to Christ's words, “Go, sell all you have and give to the poor and come and follow me” read aloud in Church. He thus freed himself of the confines of his possessions -- although not without first securing a stable existence for his sister, for whose care he was responsible at the time (he entrusted her to a Parthenon, showing that community life for women already existed) -- and followed Christ into the Desert. His withdrawal was a gradual one: he moved further and further away from human society until, c. 285, he reached the deep desert, the outer mountain at Pispir, where he struggled day and night to liberate his true self from the ‘zombiefying’ delusions of the passions and the demons. Around 305, having attracted a number of followers who were inspired by his discipline and holiness, he came out of his seclusion to advise others in their own struggles.

David Reis writes<sup>295</sup>: “As the early Christian church began to flourish under Constantine’s rule in the fourth century Greco-Roman world, so too did the ascetic movement. This shift from the mainstream life to a simple life of solitude was catalysed by the physical, geographical movement of Saint Antony. Revered as the father and founder of desert asceticism, the movement grew as an alternative form of martyrdom creating a community of renunciation in the desert. By moving into the desert, men and women ascetics replaced the voice of the martyr’s blood and became the voices of the desert<sup>296</sup>. Women who moved from the home-centred subordinate lifestyle of mainstream society transitioned into a new arena of freedom found in the ascetic lifestyle. This autonomy is seen in the lesser known writings of the Desert Mothers who “did not allow cultural norms and expectations for women to thwart their call nor limit their pursuit of God”<sup>297</sup>. As such, the Desert Mothers tended towards adopting more masculine-gendered traits to achieve acceptance into desert monasteries and cultivating authority within the ascetic movement. This gendering is seen primarily through three different categories of women: widows, battling with fornication, and androgyny. By critically examining gender theory its application to other female ascetics in antiquity, the abatement of the Desert Mothers sexuality takes on a greater meaning in how these women are portrayed through their sayings and the stories of their lives...

By playing a significant role in the ministry and leadership of ascetic Christianity, the Desert Mothers proved to make male leaders uncomfortable with their public roles. As a result, these women sought out the solitude of the desert which in turn offered these women a greater sense of physical and spiritual autonomy<sup>298</sup>. When the Church Fathers encountered virtuous women such as the Desert Mothers, it challenged the notion that women were miserable, abject creatures that fell from Eve<sup>299</sup>. Their quest for ascetic perfection was not bound to villages allowing them to venture into the desert where their female characteristics disappeared and they became men<sup>300</sup>. These women of deep Christian character and action broke the prescribed female nature and strove to exemplify the masculine qualities found in Christ. This is seen in the three categories of gendering that occurred – widowhood, androgyny, and the temptation of sexual desires...

The extreme renunciation found in desert asceticism is shown clearly through the gender transformation that the Desert Mothers undergo. Within these stories of the Desert Mothers, the liberation found in the desert is seen through these women gaining control over their bodies and sexuality<sup>301</sup>. Melania the Elder challenges the authority of non-Christian men and ministers to exiled male bishops showing the liberation from masculine social domination. New expressions of sexuality are seen in Amma Syncletica’s androgyny and Amma Sarah’s masculine transformation. These women of the desert create and defend new communal boundaries, rewriting and redefining women’s bodies in asceticism. For these Desert Mothers, “sexual asceticism represents liberation from precisely such male attempts to control women’s sexuality, social relationships, and intellectual strivings; and their articulation of their own sexuality remains attentive to the knowledge and experience of their own bodies”<sup>302</sup>. Contemporaries to these ancient mothers include, Tamav Irene, who emulated the life of Amma Syncletica, carried on the tradition of the Desert Mothers into

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<sup>295</sup>Reis, David: (2013): “Enigmas of the Desert – Gender and Sexuality of the Desert Mothers” University of Oregon <https://citydesert.wordpress.com/2015/09/13/enigmas-of-the-desert-gender-and-sexuality-of-the-desert-mothers/> See also: <http://uo-sexgender.weebly.com/desert-mothers.html>

<sup>296</sup> Chryssavgis, John. (2009): “In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers: With a Translation of Abba Zosimas’ Reflections (Treasures of the World’s Religions)” Publisher: World Wisdom Books; Revised edition (19 Feb. 2009) ISBN-10: 193331656X ISBN-13: 978-1933316567

<sup>297</sup> Swan, Laura: (2001): “*The Forgotten Desert Mothers*” New Jersey: Paulist Press, 18

<sup>298</sup> Swan, Laura: (2001): “*The Forgotten Desert Mothers*”. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 10

<sup>299</sup> Mellinger, Laurie. (2007): “Why Can’t a Woman be More Like a Man?” Comparing the Spirituality of the Desert Mothers and a Contemporary Christian Feminist’s Spirituality.” *Evangelical Journal* 25, no. 1 (2007)

<sup>300</sup> Elm, Susan. (1996): ‘*Virgins Of God’ The Making Of Asceticism In Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. 262

<sup>301</sup> Burrus, Virginia. (1994): “Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10, no. 1 (1994): 27-51. 32

<sup>302</sup> Burrus, Virginia. (1994): “Word and Flesh: The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10, no. 1 (1994): 27-51. 51



*modernity by reforming and guiding women into ascetic life. Additionally, journalists have stepped into the world of asceticism, documenting and experiencing the ancient practice of desert asceticism.”*

From this time onwards the Syrians did not simply import Egyptian monasticism; they incorporated it into their region in a creative way that reflected their own idiosyncrasies. Conrad writes that these idiosyncrasies were expressed in a range of behaviour which might strike the modern reader as deeply disturbing, even deeply un-human. He argues that this later Syrian monasticism should therefore not be seen simply as a more extreme form of monasticism, stemming from either a greater degree of dualism or intellectual simplicity, but rather as a form of monasticism stemming from a different theological emphasis. Asceticism was certainly no revolutionary idea; but Anthony's emphasis on withdrawal was, in some sense, revolutionary. Prior to Anthony, all examples of pre-monastic asceticism were undertaken within the milieu of the larger Church community and within human society. Conrad notes that before this time, “*we do not yet hear of specific cases of formal, systematic withdrawal*”. This issue of withdrawal is precisely what Conrad thinks is the differentia of monasticism. The differences can be observed to considerable effect by comparing the communal traditions of the order created in Egypt by St Pachomius (286-346) and the asceticism of Antony and the Desert Fathers founded by St Antony around 305. In the Church of the East, the decision which was made at the *Synod of Beth Lapat* by Baršaumā, bishop of Nisibis in 484, which obliged its monks and priests to marry, was reversed in 553<sup>303</sup>. In 571 Abraham the Great of Kashkar, founded a new monastery on Mt. Izla with strict rules. The third abbot of this monastery (Babai the Great, 551-628) finally drove out the married monks from Mt. Izla, and as “*visitor of the monasteries of the north*” and ensured that the monastic ideal pioneered by Antony and the Desert Fathers was taken seriously throughout northern Mesopotamia.

## **8:5 Gender Fairness and Women’s Rights**

The principles of the theological section of this study are described in section 2:2 of this document. Five perspectives are employed. The first perspective examines the traditional Church teaching in the light of the understanding developed by this neurophysiological and psychological study. The second perspective works backwards within Church history and traditions in an attempt to determine what the earliest doctrines adopted by the Christian Church had been. The third independently examines the social and the cultural backgrounds of the Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Jewish societies in which Christianity and the early Church had first been formed. In the light of the first

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<sup>303</sup> The Synod of Beth Lapat was a council of the Church of the East, held in 484 under the leadership of Catholicos Bar Sauma in the Persian city of Gondishapur, (or in the Syriac language; Bēth Lapat). Nestorianism was condemned as heretical at the Council of Chalcedon and at the First Council of Ephesus in 431. This effectively separated the Church of the East from the Byzantine church. After this schism, Many Nestorians relocated to the Persian Sasanian Empire and, (as will be shown) found a welcome in the already existing Thomasine Church. The Persian Empire had given protection to Nestorian refugees since 462. However the process of one was assimilation into the existing Thomasine Church: Descriptions which call the Church of the East the “The Nestorian Church” have stuck, although this it is technically incorrect. Barsauma's 484 Synod of Beth Lapat and Acacius' 485 Synod of Beth Adrai defined the ongoing nature of Persian Christianity which already had the attitude to gender equality that is expressed in the Gospel of Thomas and the Persian Empire behind it. The Synod of Beth Lapat (484) is reputed to have accepted Nestorianism at the instigation of Barsauma of Nisibis, and this acceptance is further reputed to have been confirmed at the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (486). However, the sources in no way allow this conclusion; though it has been tirelessly disseminated. With canon 3 of the Synod of Aqaa (486) celibacy was abolished and consequently the influence of monasticism was curbed. Decisions made at the Synod included a disavowal of clerical celibacy. This disavowal of celibacy became the distinguishing feature of Persian Monasticism. That aroused sympathies particularly among Zoroastrian Persians, for whom marriage was imperative. It contrasts strongly with the asceticism of the Desert Fathers and the developing doctrines of withdrawal and ascetic and celibate monasticism in the Roman and Byzantine Church (Winkler, Dietmar, Baum, Wilhelm: (2003): “The Church of the East: A Concise” History”: *Volume 1 of Central Asian Studies*: Routledge, 2003 ISBN 1134430191, 9781134430192 page 28). These decisions were clearly aimed at satisfying the Zoroastrian Persian Kings, who were at constant war with the now Christian Byzantine Empire. The 544 Synod of Mar Aba I attempted to bring the Church of the East back into alignment with the Roman and Byzantine Church by ratifying the decisions at the council of Chalcedon and introducing celibacy. But these changes pleased few and led to decades of conflict. The consequence was a split in the Eastern Church after the end of the east Roman- Persian war in 591, which took place in 604. One section of the church accepted the reforms which were introduced by Babai the Great. This ultimately branched into the Chaldean Catholic Church in full communion with the Rome and Byzantium. The other section continued to exist independently as the Assyrian Church of the East, which maintained the original East Syrian doctrines and rites.

three perspectives, the fourth perspective seeks to ascertain the teaching of Jesus himself. The second and the third perspectives adopt reverse standpoints to examine the history and the theology of the Christian Church. The final perspective examines the relevance of these issues to present day life. In examining the development of Christianity in the Church of the East the same principles should be applied.

Considerable religious freedom existed under Parthian rule in the Persian Empire. The main element of their religious policy was the tolerance to all sects and the liberal acceptance of the religious customs of their citizens. However Zoroastrianism was the religious foundation which guided social attitudes in this society and the foundation on which its customs were based. Tablets and inscriptions exist which define the roles of women in this society. The evidence of these Fortification and Treasury texts provide a unique insight into the social and economic situation of Persian women, royal and non-royal, as well as female workers<sup>304</sup>. These women owned property, were involved in managing their assets. They participated in economic activities of the estate and other economic units. They had employment opportunities earned wages and as a result were able to be economically independent. Nevertheless a patriarchal system prevailed and husbands and other males had more rights and privileges than their wives or children.

That state of equality is further affirmed in the Zoroastrian codes of belief. By using the gender-neutral term God (Ahura+Mazda), a compound of a male and female name, Zoroastrianism affirmed the equality of the males and females before the Creator; and that the single deity was beyond one particular sexual designation. Zoroastrian texts such as the Avesta<sup>305</sup> clearly define the status of Persian women and reveal that at a time when many women in the world were deprived of their basic rights, Persian women enjoyed social and legal freedom and were treated with great respect. These Avestan texts mention both genders, asking them to share responsibility and make decisions together<sup>306</sup>. Men and women are equally praised for their good deeds rather than their gender, wealth or power<sup>307</sup>. Such evidence clearly indicates that women in the Parthian empire contributed fully to society. The very specific use of gender neutral pronouns and descriptions throughout the Avesta and in Zoroastrianism indicates the extent to which gender equality and fairness was pursued.

The Parthian Dynasty in the Persian Empire lasted from 247 BC to 224 AD. In the following Sassanid dynasty, which prevailed from 224 to 651 Shapur II<sup>308</sup> strongly enforced Zoroastrianism. This enforcement, together with the impact of the developments in the Roman Church amidst the wars against Rome led to severe and violent persecution of the Church of the East<sup>309</sup>. However the religious tenets of Zoroastrianism were maintained and the doctrines of gender equality still applied.

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<sup>304</sup> Price, Massoume: (2000): "Women's Lives In Ancient Persia": *Parstimes*: November 2000:  
[http://www.parstimes.com/women/women\\_ancient\\_persia.html](http://www.parstimes.com/women/women_ancient_persia.html)

<sup>305</sup> The Avesta is the primary collection of religious texts of Zoroastrianism, composed in the otherwise unrecorded Avestan language. The Avesta texts fall into several different categories, arranged either by dialect, or by usage. The principal text in the liturgical group is the Yasna, which takes its name from the Yasna ceremony, Zoroastrianism's primary act of worship, and at which the Yasna text is recited. The most important portion of the Yasna texts are the five Gathas, consisting of seventeen hymns attributed to Zoroaster himself. These hymns, together with five other short Old Avestan texts that are also part of the Yasna, are in the Old Avestan language. The remainder of the Yasna's texts are in Younger Avestan, which is not only from a later stage of the language, but also from a different geographic region.

<sup>306</sup> Goldman, Leon. (2012): "Women ii. In the Avesta" : *Encyclopaedia Iranica*: Last Updated: December 14, 2012:  
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/women-ii-avesta>

<sup>307</sup> Ebrahimipour, Tamara: (2008): " Women's Rights in Ancient Persia": *Iran Review*: Sunday May 18, 2008:  
[http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Women\\_s\\_Rights\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Persia.htm](http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Women_s_Rights_in_Ancient_Persia.htm)

<sup>308</sup> Shapur II pursued a harsh religious policy. Under his reign, the collection of the Avesta, the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, was completed, heresy and apostasy were punished, and Christians were persecuted. The latter was a reaction against the Christianization of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great. Shapur II, like Shapur I, was amicable towards Jews, who lived in relative freedom and gained many advantages in his period. At the time of Shapur's death, the Persian Empire was stronger than ever, with its enemies to the east pacified and Armenia under Persian control.

<sup>309</sup> Stewart, John.(1928) "*Persecution Of The Persian Church Under The Sassanids*": Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928, 17-35:  
<http://www.oxuscom.com/persecution.htm>

The use of the term to “Make Mary Male” in saying 114 in the Gospel of Thomas was to give her full equality with all of the apostles, in social roles, in public and private ministry, and in every other act. Saying 22 in the Gospel of Thomas, which it attributes to the teaching of Jesus, very strongly endorses the transcendence of gender, and the full equality of men and women in God's love, and that applies in all matters of behaviour and gender and sex.

## 8:6 Ireland

In areas remote from the control of Roman Church and Empire, like Ireland and to a lesser degree, Britain, and also in the Persian Empire, asceticism was both more reclusive and more socially effective both on the Church and on the surrounding secular society. Brehon Law governed society before Christianity came to Ireland. The Brehon Law was a system well ahead of its time. It emphasised gender and social equality and democracy, and was based on a complex system of fines instead of corporal punishment. It covered everything from matters of commerce, crime, healthcare, the ownership of property to marital and family law, and equal rights. Women were entitled to enter all the same professions as men; they could be Druids, poets, physicians, lawgivers, teachers, warriors, leaders, even Queens. In the fifth century, St Patrick distilled these laws down to five volumes, removing and discarding those which did not fit with Christian doctrine. These tomes were known collectively as the *Senchas Mór*. Thus Christianity in Ireland developed on the basis of equality of the sexes in broadly the same way as that which the Gospel of Thomas describes. The hermit life has often been seen in the Eastern tradition, as a goal of the monastic life, but like the “Solitary Ones” in the Gospel of Thomas” the aim of this was to gird themselves and/or others for engagement with the world. The other side of the coin was the vast missionary work that the monks engaged in. Missionaries from Ireland went to Europe and voyaged for America. The Church of the East evangelised much of Asia. While the Solitary life of a hermit was greatly valued it was not accompanied with the asceticism and withdrawal that one might expect<sup>310</sup>. In both male and female lives of the period, the normal course of events remained as it was in the earlier ones. Monks, clerics, and nuns interacted in close proximity on account of friendship, collaboration, and mutual support and such arrangements neither scandalised nor puzzled the redactors<sup>311</sup>. The theme is continuity from the earlier traditions and a further tradition that was handed down was that of the “*Anam Cara*”. This is a Gaelic phrase which is often loosely translated as 'Soulmate'. 'Anam' is the Gaelic word for 'soul', while 'Cara' translates from Gaelic to friend. Thus its literal meaning is 'Soul Friend'. Descriptions vary. Generally it is a term sometimes used to designate someone with whom one has a feeling of deep and natural affinity, friendship, love, intimacy, sexuality, and/or compatibility. By connecting with someone and being completely open with them, both souls begin to flow together. Once this deep bond was formed; that person becomes your “*Anam Cara*”. This individual would always accept the ‘real’ you and could see your inner beauty and light. However, you wouldn’t receive the true benefits of this friendship until you could see this beauty and light within yourself. According to the Celts, finding an “*Anam Cara*” enabled you to discover your own true nature and also experience other peoples’ joy. The “*Martyrology of Óengus*” recounts an

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<sup>310</sup> Women like Brigid, Aebbe and Hilda were leaders of mixed monasteries, where men and women lived and worked in co-operation; their counsel was welcomed and expected at the court of kings. They also exercised authority over ordained clergy who worked alongside them. Brigid founded a double monastery at Kildare in Ireland, and may have been consecrated as a bishop. She died of old age in the early sixth century and was interred at first in the church of her own monastic community, then eventually together with St Patrick and St Columcille in Downpatrick. (<http://www.kildaremonastery.com/about-the-monastery.html>). The foundation Aebbe established in Northumberland was a “double monastery” which provided for separate communities of monks and nuns governed by an abbess, who in this case was Aebbe. (<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usbiography/a/aebbe.html>). Hilda of Whitby also founded a double monastery. At the Synod of Whitby in 664, the rivalry between the two strands of Christianity in England, the Celtic and the Roman, came to a head. Christianity had been brought to Northumbria not only by missionaries from Rome but by Celtic missionaries from Iona in Scotland. The two traditions differed over such issues as how priests and monks should dress and wear their hair, and, most notably, how the date of Easter should be calculated. Eventually King Oswiu decided that the Roman side should prevail, and the Pope's authority was gradually established over the Church in the British Isles.

<sup>311</sup> Harrington, Christina: (2002): “Proximities and Boundaries: Sexual Anxiety and the Monastery:” in “*Women in a Celtic Church: Ireland 450-1150*” Oxford University Press ISBN: 9780198208235 eISBN: 9780191716683 DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198208235.003.0009

incident where Brigid of Kildare counselled a young cleric that "...*anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head.*"<sup>312</sup> A similar concept is found in the Welsh periglour<sup>313</sup> and as a practice handed down by tradition it would have been widely understood<sup>314</sup>. In a society where equality in gender roles is practiced, these could be relationships between members of either sex or both sexes. One such relationship appears to be that between Bernard of Clairvaux and Malachy of Armagh<sup>315</sup>. Comparison should therefore be made the close relationships encountered in the Rabbinic and Chavruta partnerships of first century Judaism and the services of Brother Making or Adelphopoiesis which sanctify close partnerships between two men which existed from an early date in the Christian Church. It was much more than what a "*Spiritual Director*" would be in the present day world. Michael Mitton Writes<sup>316</sup>: "*We find, then, in the Celtic church an impressive acceptance of the feminine. It is desperately sad to recognise how this was lost after the Synod of Whitby*" *Had we been allowed to pursue the natural faith that the Spirit of God first breathed upon this land, which contained a far more just attitude to women than was experienced elsewhere, then our shameful history of repression of women may not have developed...we would also have had a far healthier attitude to sexuality generally, affirming the masculine and feminine within ourselves and within our communities.*"

## 8:6: Continuity

One of the most intriguing and in the end most tragic stories in all of Church history is that of the Church of the East. This church, with its roots in those churches existing outside the Roman Empire once had millions of followers stretching from what is now Iraq to China and possibly Japan. Yet by the twentieth century all that was left of this once vast communion were scattered communities of ethnic Assyrians and Indians with the distinct possibility of complete disintegration of what remains though the actions of present day Islamic fundamentalist groups.

However it was just one of a number of Churches which spread Christianity outside the Roman Empire. Today the Oriental Orthodox group is the fourth largest communion of Christian churches, with about 76 million members worldwide. As one of the oldest religious institutions in the world, it has played a prominent role in the history and culture of Armenia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and parts of the Middle East, and in India. An Eastern Christian communion of autonomous churches, its bishops are equal by virtue of episcopal ordination. However its doctrines only recognize the validity of the first three Christian ecumenical councils, which took place before the split at the Council of

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<sup>312</sup> Stokes, Whitley, (1905): "*The Martyrology of Oengus*", London, Harrison and Sons, 1905, p. 65:

<https://archive.org/stream/martyrologyofoen29oenguoft#page/64/mode/2up>

<sup>313</sup>Sellner, Edward C., "*Soul Friendship in Early Celtic Monasticism*", Aisling Magazine, Issue 17, Samhain, 1995:

<http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM17/Friendship.html>

<sup>314</sup> According to O'Donohue, the Irish term anam cara originates in Irish monasticism, where it was applied to a monk's teacher, companion, or spiritual guide. (John O'Donoghue, John: (1988): "*Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*": Harper Paperbacks; First Paperback Edition edition (31 Dec. 1998) ISBN-10: 006092943X

ISBN-13: 978-0060929435). For O'Donohue an Anam Cara is someone who deeply impacts who we are as a person. It's more than finding someone to marry or even someone to spend your life with. It's more than a best friend. It's someone who becomes a part of you.

([https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/6224.John\\_O\\_Donohue](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/6224.John_O_Donohue)) However, Edward C. Sellner traces its origin to the early Desert Fathers and Desert Mothers: "This capacity for friendship and ability to read other people's hearts became the basis of the desert elders' effectiveness as spiritual guides." [3] Their teachings were preserved and passed on by the Christian monk John Cassian, who explained that the soul friend could be clerical or lay, male or female.(Sellner, Edward C.(1995): "*Soul Friendship in Early Celtic Monasticism*", Aisling Magazine, Issue 17, Samhain, 1995): <http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM17/Friendship.html>

<sup>315</sup> Kitteredge, Cherry. (2017): "*Malachy of Armagh: Same-sex soulmate to Bernard of Clairvaux*": Nov 3, 2017: <http://qspirit.net/saint-malachy-same-sex-soulmate/>; Roberts, Christopher. (2008): "*Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage*". Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2008 ISBN 0567269671, 9780567269676

<sup>316</sup> Mitton, Michael, (1996): "*The Soul of Celtic Spirituality: In the Lives of Its Saints*": Twenty-Third Publications, 1996 ISBN089622662X, 9780896226623

Chalcedon in 451<sup>317</sup>. Prior to the Council of Chalcedon, the Church of the East and the Oriental Orthodox churches shared communion with the contemporary Roman Church

The Oriental Orthodox communion is composed of six autonomous churches: the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Collectively, they consider themselves to be the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic church founded by Jesus Christ in his Great Commission, and that its bishops are the successors of Christ's apostles. Most member churches are part of the World Council of Churches. Three very different rites are practiced in the communion: the western-influenced Armenian Rite, the West Syrian Rite of the two Syriac churches, and the Alexandrian Rite of the Copts, Ethiopians and Eritreans. Although each of the churches has different traditions in relation to their foundations, St Mark is traditionally regarded as the founder of the Egyptian Coptic Church of Alexandria<sup>318</sup>. Traditionally the Eunuch mentioned in the book of Acts has been regarded as the founder of the Ethiopian Church: St Matthew is also said to have evangelised the Ethiopians however there is little historical evidence for this<sup>319</sup>. The establishment of the Church is more reliably attributed to St Frumentius around 330 AD<sup>320</sup>. All of the member churches have shared a virtually identical theology, with the distinguishing feature being Miaphysitism<sup>321</sup>. Historically the Church has followed the teaching of Cyril of Jerusalem. Dyophysim, Monophysitism and Nestoriansim are all rejected<sup>322</sup>. Today the majority of Oriental Orthodox Christians live in Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, India and Armenia, with smaller Syriac communities living in the Middle East. These are decreasing due to persecution. There are also many communities in other parts of the world, formed through diaspora, conversions, and missionary activity. The Oriental Orthodox churches use the Nicene Creed although expansions are also used<sup>323</sup>. Today in the Ethiopian church, the attitude to homosexuality shares much with that of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>324</sup>

In section 8:3 of this document it has been noted that the distinguished East Syriac scholar Abdisho bar Brika<sup>325</sup> 1298 wrote in his *"Book of the Pearl"* (Margarita)<sup>326</sup> that East Syriac Christians *had "never changed their faith and preserved it as they had received it from the apostles, and are called Nestorians unjustly, especially since Nestorius was not their patriarch and did not understand their language"*. The modern day descendants of the "Church of the East" encompass: the "Nestorian Church", also known as the "Church of the East", the, "Persian Church", the "East Syrian Church",

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<sup>317</sup> These councils are the First Council of Nicaea in 325, the First Council of Constantinople in 381 and the Council of Ephesus in 431. Because of the differences in the way in which theology had developed, the decisions made in these councils had little impact on the Church of the East.

<sup>318</sup> See: <http://www.copticchurch.net/>

<sup>319</sup> Voragine, Jacobus (1275), Chapter 140 of the Golden Legend by Jacobus Voragine (1275), translated by William Caxton, 1483: <http://www.christianiconography.info/goldenLegend/matthew.htm>

<sup>320</sup> See: <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/indexenglish.html>

<sup>321</sup> Miaphysitism holds that in the one person of Jesus, Divinity and Humanity are united in one "nature", the two being united without separation, without confusion, and without alteration. Where Dyophysim holds that Christ had two loosely united natures, divine and human, Monophysitism argues that he had a single nature, his human nature being absorbed into his divinity. Dyophysim would appear to be the heresy that Nestorius was charged with at the Council of Chalcedon, but that allegation was strongly denied by Nestorius himself. Both Nestorianism and monophysitism were condemned as heretical at the Council of Chalcedon. After this, Many Nestorians migrated and, (as will be shown) found a welcome in the already existing Thomasine Church of the East. The Roman Church condemned the Church of the East as a Nestorian heresy and, despite the then contemporary and the continuing protests of the Church of the East about this misidentification, that label has stuck. The theology of the Church of the East has been stated briefly and clearly in the "Hymn of Praise", composed by Mar Babai the Great in the sixth century A.D (cited in section 8:3 of this document) which identifies it more closely as a monophysitic church. Monophysitism survived and has since developed into the Miaphysitism of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

<sup>322</sup> Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. *"The Issue Between Monophysitism And Dyophysitism"*:

<http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/dogma/monodyo.html>

<sup>323</sup> Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. *"Fundamental Dogmas In The Nicæan Creed"*

<http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/dogma/niceancreed.html>

<sup>324</sup> Coptic Orthodox Church Formally Condemns Homosexuality, Ordination of Homosexuals and Same-Sex Marriage August 26, 2003 [http://copticchurch.net/news/press\\_release\\_homosexuality.html](http://copticchurch.net/news/press_release_homosexuality.html)

<sup>325</sup> Died 1318

<sup>326</sup> Full text of *"The Book of the Pearl"*: [https://archive.org/stream/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz\\_divu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz/bookofpearlhisto00kunuz_divu.txt)

the “Chaldean Syrian Church” in India only, the “Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East”, and the “Assyrian Church of the East”. The same belief in the continuity of tradition continues in the Oriental Orthodox Churches. As with Ireland the greatest evidence of that continuity is most likely to be seen in churches which are on the periphery. Many customs and practices associated with early Judaism have a strong presence in the Ethiopian church<sup>327</sup>, the Rules of St Pachomius (286-346) continue to today regulate the monastic life of Ethiopia, despite having disappeared from Egypt and other areas centuries ago<sup>328</sup> and the continued use of a gender transcendent image of the risen Jesus in the iconography of the Church in the Stations of the Cross<sup>329</sup>.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (AD 306–337), Christianity began to transition from a minority persecuted sect to the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine's decision to cease the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire was a turning point for early Christianity. In 313, Constantine and Licinius<sup>330</sup> issued the Edict of Milan decriminalizing Christian worship and the Emperor became a patron of the Church. Christianity was declared the state church of the Roman Empire by edict in 380. This set a requirement to define the position of the Christian emperor within the Church, and to establish the notion of Christian orthodoxy that the new status of the Church required. Christian synods or councils, including the councils of Ancyra (314), Arles (314) and Elvira (ca 303-306) were held<sup>331</sup>. The First Council of Nicaea took place in AD 325. The Nicene Creed which was used throughout the Roman and the Coptic Orthodox Churches was adopted at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 and expanded at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. The Church of the East did not adopt this Nicene Creed and the decisions made at the Council of Nicaea had little impact on the Church. This might be taken to indicate that the Church of the East had already gone its separate ways. However this was also a time when the Persian Empire was at war with Rome and also a time when Christians in the East were being violently persecuted by the Sassanid emperor Shapur II. Under these circumstances it must have been impossible for the Church of the East to accept the Roman and Byzantine associations with the Nicene Creed<sup>332</sup>. Thus the disregard of decisions made by the Council of

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<sup>327</sup> The Ethiopian church places a heavier emphasis on Old Testament teachings than one might find in Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic or Protestant churches, and its followers adhere to certain practices that one finds in Orthodox or Conservative Judaism. Ethiopian Christians, like some other Eastern Christians, traditionally follow dietary rules that are similar to Jewish Kashrut, specifically with regard to how an animal is slaughtered. Similarly, pork is prohibited, though unlike Rabbinical Kashrut, Ethiopian cuisine does mix dairy products with meat. Women are prohibited from entering the church temple during menses; they are also expected to cover their hair with a large scarf while in church, as described in 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. As with Orthodox synagogues, men and women are seated separately in the Ethiopian church, with men on the left and women on the right (when facing the altar. Ethiopian Orthodox worshippers remove their shoes when entering a church temple, in accordance with Exodus 3:5 (in which Moses, while viewing the burning bush, was commanded to remove his shoes while standing on holy ground). (Hable Selassie, Sergew (1997). “*The Church of Ethiopia – A panorama of History and Spiritual Life*”. Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia: Berhanena Selam. p. 66) Furthermore, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church upholds Sabbatarianism, observing the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday), in addition to the Lord's Day (Sunday). However more emphasis, because of the Resurrection of Christ, is laid upon Sunday (See Binns, John (2016). “*The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia: A History*”. I.B.Tauris. p. 81. ISBN 9781786720375)

<sup>328</sup> Hable Selassie, Sergew: (1970) “*The Establishment Of The Ethiopian Church*”

<http://ethiopianorthodox.org/english/ethiopian/prechristian.html> Copied from.

“*The Church Of Ethiopia A Panorama Of History And Spiritual Life*” Written by Professor Sergew Hable Sellassie and Professor Tadesse Tamerat Addis Ababa –December 1970. A publication of the EOTC

<sup>329</sup> Personal Communication

<sup>330</sup> Gaius Valerius Licinianus Licinius Augustus (263 – 325) was a Roman emperor from 308 to 324. For most of his reign he was the colleague and rival of Constantine I, with whom he co-authored the Edict of Milan that granted official toleration to Christians in the Roman Empire.

<sup>331</sup> For full details and analysis of the decisions made by these Councils see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2011): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

<sup>332</sup>332332 The officially recognized synod of the Church of the East after the imperial synods of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), which was held in 486, produced the first preserved Christological creed of the Church of the East.

It stated:

*Further, let our faith in the dispensation of Christ be in the confession of the two natures, of the divinity and of the humanity, while none of us shall dare to introduce mixture, mingling or confusion into the differences of these two natures; rather, while the divinity remains preserved in*

Nicaea is most likely to be of political rather than theological concern. This was also a time when the Arian controversy was at its height and the Church of the East avoided any association with Arianism by restating the view in the Gospel of Thomas that Heaven exists outside time<sup>333</sup>.

## 8:7 Interpretations

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Jesus when he went to the synagogue in Nazareth on a Sabbath day. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. When he began to speak he said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus also identified himself with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:7-8.

For the small band of disciples of Jesus who were set on fire by their personal experiences of his resurrection, the challenge they faced was that of how to bring the Good News of Jesus to the world. The disagreements about the approaches that should be taken are evident in the New Testament. Each of the Apostles interpreted this in different ways, and in accordance with his own experiences and traditions. The conservative attitude of the Jerusalem Church is probably best described in the epistle of James. Peter sought to express the Gospel message within the framework of the gender complementarity that first century Judaism expected. With the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 the contribution of the Jerusalem Church disappeared, but the strong association between the customs of first century Judaism and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church may give some idea about how this could have developed.

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*what belongs to it, and humanity in what belongs to it, it is to a single Lordship and to a single (object of) worship that we gather together the exemplars of these two natures, because of the perfect and inseparable conjunction that has occurred for the divinity with respect to the humanity. And if someone considers, or teaches others, that suffering and change have attached to the divinity of our Lord, and (if) he does not preserve, with respect to the union of the prosopon of our Saviour, a confession of perfect God and perfect Man, let such a person be anathema.*

(Trans. S. P. Brock) (Prosopon - In the realm of iconology this is the attentiveness to the Image of God, God's "Prosopon" can therefore be used to indicate the perceivable revelation of God). Winkler, Dietmar, Baum, Wilhelm: (2003): "The Church of the East: A Concise" History": *Volume 1 of Central Asian Studies*: Routledge, 2003 ISBN 1134430191, 9781134430192

<http://www.learnassyrian.com/assyrianlibrary/assyrianbooks/Religion/The%20Church%20of%20the%20East%20-%20A%20concise%20history%20-%20Wilhelm%20Baum%20and%20Dietmar%20W.%20Winkler.pdf>

<sup>332</sup> [http://www.oxuscom.com/Church\\_of\\_the\\_East.pdf](http://www.oxuscom.com/Church_of_the_East.pdf)

<sup>333</sup> Arius formulated the following Statement: "If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing". Therefore the argument at the root of the Arian controversy was about who was created first. The Nicene Creed is the most widely accepted and used brief statements of the Christian Faith. In liturgical churches, it is said every Sunday as part of the Liturgy. It is Common Ground to East Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Calvinists, and many other Christian groups. Many groups that do not have a tradition of using it in their services nevertheless are committed to the doctrines it teaches. Traditionally, in the West, the shorter Apostles' Creed is used at Baptisms, and the Nicene Creed at the Eucharist (aka the Mass, the Liturgy, the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion). The East uses only the Nicene Creed. When the Apostles' Creed was drawn up, the chief enemy was Gnosticism, which denied that Jesus was truly Man; and the emphases of the Apostles' Creed reflect a concern with repudiating this error. When the Nicene Creed was drawn up, the chief enemy was Arianism, which denied that Jesus was fully God. Arius was a presbyter in Alexandria in Egypt, in the early 300's. He taught that the Father, in the beginning, created (or begot) the Son, and that the Son, in conjunction with the Father, then proceeded to create the world. The result of this was to make the Son a created being, and hence not God in any meaningful sense. It was also suspiciously like the theories of the Gnostics and pagans who held that God was too perfect to create something like a material world, and so introduced one or more intermediate beings between God and the world. God created A, who created B, who created C... who created Z, who created the world. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, sent for Arius and questioned him. Arius stuck to his position, and was finally excommunicated by a council of Egyptian bishops. He went to Nicomedia in Asia, where he wrote letters defending his position to various bishops. The Emperor Constantine summoned a council of Bishops in Nicaea (across the straits from modern Istanbul) and there in 325 the Bishops of the Church, by a decided majority, repudiated Arius and produced the first draft of what is now called the Nicene Creed.

Paul who was proud to be a Roman Citizen sought to express the full extent of the Gospel message as he declared in Galatians 3:28: *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”*. However for a powerless church in a powerful society moderation and adaptation was needed to ensure the survival of the Church. That meant accommodating in some way the gender inequalities and discrimination that was present in Roman Society. The need to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to give recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free is clearly evident in the Epistles and Letters of Peter and Paul. However both Peter and Paul sought to obtain respectability in Roman society in a way that in Jewish society, Jesus did not. As with the attitude which Paul took to slavery in the Letter to Philemon, it would seem that the Gospel message should be expressed in full within the Christian Community while conforming to social expectations outside it. Once Christianity had gained sufficient influence it could then transform the world. However instead of pursuing this action when it had the power to do so, Christianity has taken the adaptations which Paul permitted to gain acceptance and respectability in Roman society, and turned these into the permanent doctrines of gender complementarity which are enforced by the present day Church.

For Thomas, who is understood to have taken the Gospel message into Persia and India, no such adaptations were needed, because the cultures of gender equality were already present. Thomas did not have to deal with the same arguments from Greek and Roman philosophy which confronted Peter and Paul. The tension between Peter and Thomas which is evident in the Gospel of Thomas, the continuing history of wars between the Persian and Roman empires which meant that the Church of the East developed in relative isolation from the Roman and Byzantine church and the destruction of many documents after Roman Christianity gained the power to order their destruction together give reasons why knowledge about the development of eastern Christianity is no longer available, why it has been condemned for being heretical, and why its history has been written out of the received history of the Christian Church.

These are also strong reasons why this history: and more specifically the history, teaching and doctrines of the Church of the East should be examined. The destruction of much evidence by the Roman and Byzantine Churches means that there is a paucity of information on the subject. Celtic Christianity is also discussed, because there are similarities in its development, and more information about it is available. The provenance of the Gospel of Thomas is extensively examined in the previous sections of this document. It is confirmed that the Gospel is from an early date, and that it relates directly to the time when the Apostles were trying to agree on how to take Christianity to the world. It should therefore be a document which provides a strong foundation upon which the Church of the East, together with Indian Christianity is based. The relationships between the Gospel of Thomas and the development of Eastern Christianity are therefore key elements in this study.

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If Paul had expected that the vision of a society where: *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* would transform the world when Christianity obtained the power to do so, he would have been disappointed

Through the role of Jesus as the suffering servant, in the story of Philip and the Eunuch, the Good Samaritan, the rich follower and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Gospel is revealed. In place of the



Sayings 63 to 65 describe the actions expected of those in authority. However it is in the triumph of the suffering servant the true message of the Gospel is found. As a sexual outcast, who was silenced by society, the role of the eunuch was also close to that of the suffering servant. When Philip explained the transformation of the Gospel message to him, it is hardly surprising that the eunuch asked to be baptised and went away content<sup>334</sup>. To the man who asked Jesus: "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus said: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me". There was no safety net for any generous giver, and in the story of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan put himself in grave danger by stopping to give help to the Jew who was attacked.

The thesis presented in section 3:4 of this document is that it is not Christianity which is responsible for creating the persecution of gender and sexually variant people: instead that is driven by social divisions in society. However it is the collusion of the Church with this secular scapegoating of gender and sexually variant people which leads to the extremes of abuse. It is also demonstrated that these transformations have brought the Church to collude with the secular demands of society rather than to challenge them

## **9:0: Theology and the Present Day Church**

### **9:1 Cultural Implications**

It is essential that the gospel message is understood in the context of the time when it was delivered. Any first century reader of this account would not have understood what the current definitions of homosexuality or transsexuality meant<sup>335</sup>. At that time the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour was determined on the responsibility of each action, and by separating sexual acts which were engaged in for the noble pursuit of love from those which were pursued for the carnal abuse of sex. However it is essential to note that this freedom was restricted by the abuses of power in these grossly socially and gender unequal societies: that gave permission for the extreme abuses of sex. Instead of defining the moralities of sexual relationships through the types of act, the distinctions were made on the motives involved<sup>336</sup>. Different words were used to define the different types of love, but they were not used on a gendered basis. These cultural differences create problems of description within an account which is intended for a present day readership. Therefore the terms homosexuality and transsexuality will still continue to be used, but that is to ensure that this account can be made most relevant to the present day understanding. Thus these cultural transformations must be understood.

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<sup>334</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

<sup>335</sup> For a fuller account see Gilchrist, S. (2011). "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships". See footer for access.

<sup>336</sup> See section 3:2:3 of this document

## 9:3 Compromises

The part of the passage in Matthew 19 which says “He that is able to receive it let him receive it” is the second passage in the New Testament where Jesus allows compromises to his teaching<sup>337</sup>. The statement in Matthew was a radical statement. Its impact on the behaviour on the early Church means that there is little doubt about the authenticity of the text. Christianity had to adapt if it was going to be able to survive in Roman society and to continue to take the Gospel message to the world. That meant a re-interpretation of the radical teaching which Jesus presented on gender and sex. It is shown later in a later paper that this passage in Matthew gave an early authorisation for the compromises that were necessary for the survival of the Church. The context also demands that Christianity restores the radical teaching on gender and sex once it had gained a position of sufficient strength. That has had a profound effect on the development of the Church. See section 3:5:3 in this document and section 4:5:3 onwards in Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*” for an examination of the impact of this passage

Christianity exposed itself to the same condemnations by choosing a eunuch to spread the Gospel message. In the New Testament account of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts (Acts 8:26-40), the gender transgressive body of a eunuch has become the symbol of the Kingdom of God who has been charged with bringing its mission to the world. However the actions of the self-castrated male priests of the Goddess cults, who dressed as women, provided even greater threats to the gender-based foundations and institutions upon which the male dominated society was built<sup>338</sup>. These itinerant priests travelled widely through the Roman Empire. They would have been known in to Jesus and Eusebius reports that they had a shrine in Bethlehem itself<sup>339</sup>.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus declared that those people who have voluntarily made themselves eunuchs for the “Kingdom of heaven’s sake” can also be accepted into the same fold. By extending this welcome to all eunuchs, Jesus was doing more than just welcoming those who had castrated themselves for religious devotion. The same acceptance would also apply to the self-castrated priests of the Goddess cults who chose to follow his message. There is no suggestion that the Ethiopian eunuch was a transgender person. However, many of the Goddess priests would have been transgender people. Others may not. This passage caused great difficulty in the early Church because, in Matthew 19:12 Jesus accepted everybody alike<sup>340</sup>. This was a welcome given by Jesus to all people who seek to live their lives in the light of the teaching of Jesus the New Covenant and in the love of Christ. In the same way as the Ethiopian eunuch it follows that all transgender people who use the breadth and range of their experiences to embrace and enrich the ideals of their own lives; and the lives of others may likewise minister to the Gospel message and they may also participate in this priestly act.

Without compromise Jesus had usurped the social and power structures upon which Jewish society was built. By stepping outside the boundaries of a gender unequal and dictatorial society, the disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults attacked those power structures which were essential to maintain it. Attitudes to transgender issues were similarly dominated by the need to maintain the

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<sup>337</sup>The first is the passage on “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”.

<sup>338</sup> Self-castration by itself does not indicate any transgender desires, for the purpose may be the avoidance of the temptations of sex in religious devotion. However when self-castration is combined with the fact that the Goddess priests dressed as women, the opportunity for the expression of transgender feelings becomes available. For extended descriptions see: Gilchrist, S. (2015): “Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”:and :Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church*”: Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf>

<sup>339</sup> Kuefler, Mathew. (2001): “Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*. See in “*The Manly Eunuch Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*” University of Chicago Press ISBN: 9780226457390

<sup>340</sup> The implications of this are discussed in section 3:4:7 of this document.

power structures in a male dominated society<sup>341 342 343</sup>. These gender based challenges to the power structures of Greco/Roman society came both from Christianity and from the Goddess cults. This analysis makes use of the work of René Girard who shows how a scapegoat can exert enormous power in religious belief. The differences and commonalities in the behaviour of the two traditions and the similarity in their application of the scapegoat mechanism, as described by Girard, are considered in detail elsewhere<sup>344</sup>. There were important differences but from all of these considerations the commonalities of purpose of the Gospel of Jesus and those of the positive elements of the Goddess cults can hardly be missed<sup>345</sup>.

## 9:4 Gender Fairness

The Gospel that Jesus preached was the same for everyone. Nobody is excluded for being true to who they are and for the honesty with which they live their lives. The equality of all men and women in the sight of God, and gender fairness were also key elements in his approach<sup>346</sup>. In Galatians 3:28 Paul states that there shall be “no male and female... for all are one in Christ Jesus”. The same message is expressed in saying 22 of the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. In addition to this, saying 114 in the same Gospel reads: “Simon Peter said to them, “Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life.” Jesus said, “Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven.” This viewpoint is strange to modern eyes, but it gives an introduction to first century thinking. That adopted a one sex model for gender, whereby the male and female reproductive organs were essentially the same as each other except that one set is turned inside out<sup>347</sup>. The idea that a man can be turned into a woman by some malign act of a God or Goddess was not just an abstract thought. This viewpoint is representative of the attitudes to gender, and the one sex model, that first century people understood. Considerable care should be applied when using apocryphal texts, but there is a case for rating the integrity of this Gospel above some of the

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<sup>341</sup> Christian examples of male to female transgender people are hard to come by because any movement in that direction would become suppressed by the doctrines of male supremacy and the gender discrimination which was practiced by the later Church. However there is much more evidence of transgender behaviour in the female to male direction. One of the most famous woman leaders was expressed in the popular story of Thecla, a virgin-martyr who was converted by Paul. She cut her hair, donned men's clothing, and took up the duties of a missionary traveller. Threatened with rape, prostitution, and twice put in the ring as a martyr, she persevered in her faith and her chastity. Her lively and somewhat fabulous story is recorded in the second century Acts of Paul and Thecla, The importance of such stories lies in their high degree of acceptance and popularity, and not necessarily in their absolute truth. The text of the acts can be accessed at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/thecla.html>. See also Section 3:2:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>342</sup> In the second and third centuries, gender discrimination continued to increase. In the fourth century it was considered that female mystics could only achieve salvation and redemption if they rejected every aspect of their femininity. Even if they did, redemption could only be gained in heaven and not on earth. Although male to female transgender behaviour would be considered abhorrent at this time, it was positively encouraged in the female to male direction. Thus for women gender reassignment for entry to heaven was an ideal, and also a requirement that had to be achieved. However in order to protect the authority of a male church hierarchy in a male dominated society, it could only come after death. For a full account see Gilchrist, S. 2013: “An Unfinished Reformation”. Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> .

<sup>343</sup> This idea that women had to have an instant sex change when they die in order to enter heaven as men was commonly held in the Church. In the meantime on earth women could only redeem their lives through childbirth, obedience or by renouncing all aspects of their femininity. On earth they were told by the Church that they could only wait in penance for the sins of Eve until they entered heaven, when the day of gender reassignment or freedom from gender comes. For a full account see section 2:3:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> .

<sup>344</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf>

<sup>345</sup> See Section 13 of Gilchrist, S: (2013): “Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf> . See also section 3:1:7: “Power and its Usurpation” of Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> .

<sup>346</sup> The term gender fairness is used in instead of gender equality because of some of the 21<sup>st</sup> century presumptions that the latter term implies.

<sup>347</sup> This perception is reflected in saying 22 of the Gospel of Thomas. see section 2:3:4 of Gilchrist, S. 2013: “An Unfinished Reformation”. Access at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

other apocryphal texts. Many scholars now ascribe it to a very early date<sup>348</sup>. If these passages are correct, they provide a further association with the outlook of the Goddess cults<sup>349</sup>.

## 10:0: Conclusions and Implications

The consequences of the policies in relation to issues of history, theology, gender equality, sexual abuse, celibacy, gender complementarity and gender transcendence have all been considered in this section of the document. The Reformers made the abolition of clerical continence and priestly celibacy a vital element in their reforms. Although this was done for scriptural reasons, they also blamed the discipline of compulsory celibacy and continence for the widespread sexual misconduct that was encountered amongst the clergy. Celibacy, gender polarity, heterosexual orthodoxy and gender and sexual variance are all intertwined. To give way on any one of these elements may then challenge the whole structure and the authority of the Church because it challenges the foundations on which Church traditions are based. Change is therefore difficult, and there is major resistance to overcome. That may create particular problems for the Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>348</sup> Recent scholarship now tends to ascribe an early date to the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas and this is supported by this analysis. ( For a full account see section 2:3:4 of Gilchrist, S .2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*". Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>.) If that is the case the idea that women have to have a sex change before they can enter heaven may be ascribed to an early date. For example saying 114 in the Gospel of Thomas reads: "Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven" (For texts see: <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html>). This is not quite as strange as it seems. The perceptions of sex and gender were very different from today: a "One Sex" model, where male and female were the extremes of one range, was prevalent and the fear of a man being turned into a woman because of some offence to the Gods or Goddesses occurred..

<sup>349</sup> An extended analysis of this is given in Section 3:1:7 of Gilchrist, S .2013: "*An Unfinished Reformation*". Access at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> .