

A Different Journey

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1:0: Introduction

For almost two thousand years the years attitudes to homosexuality, and by implication all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour have been governed by theology of the Christian Church. The belief that lies behind this doctrine presumes that their activities are invariably reward driven and that they always pursue the goals of illicit and inappropriate sex. Early Church teaching focussed on a duality between the way of darkness and the way of light. This analysis does not diminish in any form the rightful condemnation of the way of darkness. Instead it exposes the way of light for gender and sexually variant people which has been repressed and denied from the first century by the Christian Church³.

Since the beginning of the 20th Century psychodynamic and social learning theories developed by Freud, Piaget and others have supplemented the traditional theology of the Church. One feature that these need in common is the existence of a cognitive continuum to work. This requires sufficient neural co-ordination to have developed, so that the capacities of perception, intuition, rewarding and reasoning can be used to link cause to effect. A major transformation in neural processing capabilities takes place at around the age of two years. Before this period development takes place in a fragmented way and a cognitive continuum cannot exist without the degree of overall neural co-ordination that it needs. This led the proponents of the psychodynamic and social learning theories to presume that mental development at this time is limited, involving a largely passive response⁴.

That perception is totally contradicted by the neurophysiological work of Gallese, Girard, Dawkins and others⁵ which show that during this first period innate physiologically driven forces impel development by an aggressive and contagious process. In standard psychiatry and psychology the influence of these physiological driving forces is ignored, and a great deal of research and literature is still being produced in which it is assumed that no learning and development can take place without the action of a cognitive continuum at all times of life.

That exclusion is addressed in this analysis. Gender dysphoria is used as a case study to link the two elements. It is shown that the processes which lead up to the creation of the core elements of identity and personality are primarily controlled by the physiologically driven forces acting alone. This means that the social learning and psychodynamic theories can only be used as overlays on

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

² Available online at: Gilchrist, S. (2015): "A Different Journey": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/212P-DifferentJourney.pdf>

³ For a full account see Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why we should Re-Think the Process*. Also Gilchrist, S. (2013c): *A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach*.

⁴ For relationships to the Freudian and Piagetian development stages see: Gilchrist, S. (2013d): "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*".

⁵ See for example: Gallese (2003; 2009; 2013); Gallese and Sinigaglia (2011), Girard (1965/1961; 1977/1972); Girard et al. (1987), Dawkins (1989/1978); Decety and Meyer (2008); Dennett (1987); Diamond (2002); Garrels (2006); Heylighen and Chielens (2009).

what has already been formed. By using this analysis it is demonstrated that a pattern of continuous development can be traced from infancy to adult life.

Conflicts which arise from sources before any cognitive continuum becomes active are identity driven. This means that as wide a range on moral attitudes, beliefs, inclinations and responsibilities are found in gender and sexually variant groups as those which occur in the population at large. As a consequence a duality is encountered which demands the welcome of same-sex and gender variant relationships that are given in love and faithfulness while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex. That contrasts with the traditional teaching of the Church, which presumes that all such conflicts must be reward driven and are always in pursuit of immoral and inappropriate sex.

The denial of the existence of identity driven conflicts, and the physiological driving forces that empower them, means that from a social and scientific point of view, the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality and on gender and sexual variation cannot be correct. These doctrines come instead from the need to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself. Why and how this has happened is examined in this account.

An extended theological analysis has been conducted. New insights are gained by using the results of the neurophysiological and psychological study to remove the armour of the theological presumptions on gender and sexuality, which have dominated both Church and society for the last two thousand years. From the teaching of Jesus it is demonstrated that, all transgendered, 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 alike. There is also no toleration of abuse. All gender and sexually variant behaviour is governed by the purity of intention and there is no automatic condemnation of any cross-gender or same-sex act.

2:0: Sources

Section updated April 2017. For more extended discussions see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*"; Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice*"; Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church*"; Gilchrist, S. (2015): "*Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-Think the Process*"

This paper is extracted from: Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Living with Difference". For further analyses see the papers: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?*", Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life*"; 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", and Gilchrist, S. (2014) "Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church". These papers are available on the website: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm> Notes for this paper are posted on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/notes212P>

A shorter version of this analysis has been published in: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *Taking a Different Path*: Chapter 10 in "This in My Body", Ed: Beardsley, T. and O'Brien, M: Darton Longman and Todd. Publication date: May 2016

3:0: Neurophysiology and Psychology

3:1: Overview

This investigation combines the neurophysiological and psychological research work on early development carried out by Gallese, Dawkins, Girard and others⁶ with the more cognitively based approaches which are employed by the traditional psychodynamic and social learning theories. Gender dysphoria is used as a case study, and its value comes from its ability to link these two processes⁷. A major change in neural capability takes place around the age of two years. Different forms of processes are active before and after this transformation. By using this analysis it is shown that a pattern of continuous development can be traced from infancy to adult life.

There are three principal phases involved in early development. The first, which lasts up to the age of about two years, is a period when no overall neural co-ordination is present. Development can only take place in a fragmented way. No cognitive abilities exist which allow overall concepts to be formed. Control starts to come into force during the second phase. This begins somewhere around the age of two years, when a rapid increase in neural capabilities takes place, and the brain begins to operate as a co-ordinated unit. In the third phase a constancy of personality is created. Development is characterised by often hidden struggles between fierce and contagious opposing forces. It is also shown in this analysis that the physiological, neurological and psychological aspects of brain development together 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 formed.

3:2: Development

At birth the pre-frontal cortex of the brain is still in a primitive state: this is the part of the brain which is responsible for acquiring knowledge by the use of reasoning, intuition or perception to pursue a reward. During the early first period, development is dominated by physiologically internally generated strong and contagious forces predicted by Dawkins, Gallese, Girard and others. These invoke the processes of empathy, possessive imitation and inhibition. Learning and advancement is driven with an intensity which means that the major challenge to be faced is not one of explaining how learning develops, but how it can be managed in an orderly way. The fragmented nature and the intense momentum created by these physiologically driven forces means that this early development is relatively immune from outside pressures. That includes the expectations of rearing and it is possible for pre-disposing factors present from birth to have an influence on the outcome that is found. No goals are set. Learning develops through drives of compulsive acquisition and rejecting what is found to be incompatible with the reality that is pursued.

In the second phase, from around the age of two years there is an explosion in neural capacity and cognitive ability. Distant parts of the brain become linked together and instead of the development of isolated elements, the pre-frontal cortex of the brain begins to work as a single unit. In this investigation, this period is called the neurophysiological transformation period and it can be linked to developments noted by Piaget and Freud. These physiological processes are matched by the development of cognitive abilities. Prior to the neurophysiological transformation period, elementary ideas and concepts form as individual and essentially unlinked strands of thought. Brain co-ordination rapidly develops during the neurophysiological transformation period. As this happens,

⁶ See for example: Gallese (2003; 2009; 2013); Gallese and Sinigaglia (2011), Girard (1965/1961; 1977/1972); Girard et al. (1987), Dawkins (1989/1978); Decety and Meyer (2008); Dennett (1987); Diamond (2002); Garrels (2006); Heylighen and Chielens (2009).

⁷ These studies are reported in two documents: Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why we should Re-Think the Process* and: Gilchrist, S. (2013d): *Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*.

the individual concepts become increasingly linked, and after a threshold is reached, they rush to form the more global concepts of personality and identity: just as a crowd rushes to any point of interest that is found. It is shown that this happens at or near to where the cusp of the neurophysiological transformation period occurs. From that point onwards two key things take place. As the cognitive capabilities of reasoning, perception and intuition develop, some pathways in the brain become increasingly used, but others die back. The number of brain junctions, or synapses, also decrease, rather than increase as one might expect. Brain size has also decreased in historical terms, as the level of organisation has increased. This characteristic has been described as the “Domestication of the brain”. There are certain key periods when the ability of the brain to physically re-shape itself reaches its peak and these occur in different parts of the brain at different times. Outside these periods much less change is possible. The relevant peak in this instance occurs close to the time when the neurophysiological transformation period occurs. By the age of three years it is shown that the core sense of gender identity, which can be described as the usually unconscious sense of being who one is, has become permanently locked in place. From the neurophysiological transformation period onwards the externally oriented controlling and cognitively based processes of perception, intuition, rewarding and reasoning take an increasingly active role but the internally driven and contagious physiological forces still remain. The stimuluses created by their disputations ensure that the peaks of development are maintained.

The process does not just apply to the core gender identity: it also applies to other aspects of personality and identity. This analysis therefore identifies a third phase, when a constancy of personality is created. That is taken to be between the age of two and three years. It is considered to be an outcome of the brain domestication: when the connections in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain which are more used grow stronger and those which are not die back. As a consequence the core elements of personality and identity that have been formed at around the age of two years become permanently and physically locked in place. The same person can be recognised even over gaps on many years, and this gives the constancy of personality which is needed to pursue an ordered life.

For most children the unconscious core gender identity will be in harmony with the conscious sense of gender identity that is later created. In such circumstances no evidence for the unconscious core gender identity will be found. Standard psychology and psychiatry has developed on the premise that only the later conscious and cognitively based formation processes are involved in its creation: and this is in part why the omission and the failure to consider the earlier processes occurs. However considerable trauma is found when the core gender identity conflicts with what the later cognitively based processes seek to create. In this investigation, the development of atypical gender identities is used to examine the process.

All of these developments take place before children become able to make their own judgements on what has been happening to them. That starts to come into effect around the age of four years. This is the age when many transgender people first become aware that “something is wrong” with the gender identity they are expected to possess. The lifetime tension between the feedforward and adventurous forces of physiology and the feedback and restraining forces of cognition is understood to provide the stimulation whereby the highest achievements of humanity individuality and curiosity are obtained. Attempts to fight these conflicts do not succeed and other methods of management must be used.

3:3: Struggles

Far from the development of personality and identity being a peaceful process, it is the outcome of a battle between strong opposing drives. This provides an advantage when it is part of a tuned

process, during which the greatest possible degrees of individuality and human potential are formed. Without sufficient powers of cognition to check its direction, early development can often be perverse, for it can regard genuine corrections that should be made as obstacles to be overcome; and this further increases the strength of the drive. The dynamics take over and the influence of any original cause may be lost. Typical or atypical gender identities can therefore develop and, from a statistical point of view alone, it is expected that a proportion of people who have gender or sexually variant identities are created without the requirement for any external cause.

This analysis also introduces the concept of allegiance. This develops because of the strength of the internal struggles. Identity defines the raw components which drive the conflict. Allegiance evolves from trying to make sense of the disparities which occur.

3:4: Identification

It has already been indicated that below the age of two or three years, development takes place in a fragmented way. No overall control or awareness is available during this time and there is no ability to co-ordinate thought. The significance of this is that the mechanisms espoused by the traditional psychodynamic and social learning theories can play little part in the initial formation of the core elements of personality and gender identity. The older psychodynamic and the social learning theories of Money and others fail because the physiological forces were not acknowledged⁸.

This investigation also reveals a much more fundamental deficiency in the traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories, because it means that these traditional psychodynamic and social learning theories can only act as overlays on what has already been formed.

3:5: Transgender Matters

It is demonstrated in this analysis that the conflicts which are associated with gender identity are the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity, rather than the cause. This means that for everyone the development of their own gender identity, atypical or not, proceeds in the same way. 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. The major structural changes in the brain which take place from around the age of two years physically and permanently lock these in place, so that from this time a constant personality and gender identity is created.

The conventional views which are put forward to explain gender and sexual variation attribute their development to the influence of hormones which act before birth. The consequence of this is that newly born male and female babies have different perspectives depending on whether or not testosterone has had the required result. This pre-natal brain differentiation is taken to be the determining factor in the development of gender identification and endocrinal influences may have an effect, however the initially primitive state of the pre-frontal cortex and the absence of neural integration do not provide the co-ordination that is needed for any meaningful concept of gender to be created during these early years of life. Instead of this it is shown that the momentum created by the contagious and self-reinforcing processes of early development creates progressions from which the core elements of personality and identity are later formed.

⁸ Money (1980; 1995); Money and Erhardt (1996)

In this analysis it is established that the massive changes in the brain structure and the advances in neural capabilities around the age of two years are the features which enable the core senses of gender identity and personality to be created. It also shows how any pre-dispositions can be carried forward from birth, before any identification with gender can exist. It demonstrates how early development can take place independently of the expectations of rearing and how the impact of gender reassignment at birth can invoke disrupting effects.

Before the neurophysiological transformation period, two initial formation mechanisms can be identified. One comes from the momentum created by the intensity of physiologically driven forces which involve the mirror neuron system⁹. The second is due to endocrinal influences before or near birth¹⁰. Neither of these excludes the other. Some indication of their relative influences may come from children who have been assigned or reassigned to a gender at or close to birth¹¹. A significant but restricted concordance is found. This indicates that gender reassignment of intersex children should never take place until they are able to decide for themselves what is right.

In both cases it is demonstrated that quorum sensing methods may be primarily responsible for creating the core gender identity¹². This occurs after the brain first becomes able to link the previously un-coordinated elements of thought. After a sufficient quorum of elements has formed others follow. Identities are set by the direction taken: they are not the product of cognitive thought.

3:6: Characteristics and conflicts

The existence of two development processes means that two different types of characteristics and conflict are encountered. Reward driven characteristics and conflicts require the existence of the later cognitive abilities. They focus on behaviour which associates desire with reward. The earlier developing identity driven characteristics and conflicts arise before the cognitive abilities have developed; they have their focus on identity on its own. With identity driven characteristics and conflicts techniques which are akin to the management of alcoholism must be used. The bipolar nature of identity driven conflicts is examined in this analysis and it is shown how these can promote the highest peaks of human achievement, as well as give rise to intense distress¹³.

It is shown that the global concepts associated with the core gender identity form at or near to the time when the cusp of the neurophysiological transformation period occurs. This also means that the sense of core gender identity arises at a time when the contagious and internally focussed neurophysiologically driven development process take the dominant role. It is established that characteristics and conflicts associated with gender and sexual variation must be classified as identity driven conflicts. With these characteristics and conflicts behaviour is not the focus and as wide a range on moral attitudes, beliefs, inclinations and responsibilities are found amongst gender and sexually variant people as that which occurs within the population at large. In the context of

⁹ Cattaneo and Rizzolatti (2009); Iacoboni and Gaffan (2009); Keysers and Fadiga (2008); Rizzolatti and Fabbri-Destro (2010).

¹⁰ Kerlin (2004); Meriggiola and Gava (2015); Minot Presentation (2005); Rosenthal (2014).

¹¹ Dessens et al (2005); Diamond and Sigmundson (1997); Diamond and Watson (2004); Kipnis and Diamond (1998); Ochoa (1998); Reiner (2004).

¹² Quorum Sensing is encountered when separate entities find ways to communicate with others to pursue a common purpose. Much research is now carried out on bacteria colonies and the creation of artificial neural networks. Mechanisms similar to quorum sensing can also be observed in colonies of ants and bees. It is similar to crowd behaviour at a time when a point of interest is found. That point must be big enough to attract attention, but once that is gained (the quorum) all the others who are nearby rapidly join in. In this analysis it is hypothesised that the same thing happens at the time when the individual global elements that are used to make up the core senses of identity and personality are combined. That is associated with the rapid and large increase in neural interconnectivity which takes place in the brain at around the age of two years. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013d): *Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*.

¹³ Gilchrist, S. (2013c) *A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach*. See also sections 3; 5:2-5:3; 6:2-6:3; 8:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why we should Re-Think the Process*.

gender and sexual variant behaviour this demands the welcome of relationships given in love and faithfulness while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex.

Reward driven characteristics and conflicts which are associated with the pursuit of gender and sexual desire often occur. With these management methods which relate cause to effect can be employed since they directly link behaviour to goals and reward. In the traditional Church doctrines and in the psychodynamic and social learning theories it is presumed that only reward driven characteristics and conflicts can exist. That is where the failure of Church theology occurs.

Accurately identifying the type of characteristic or conflict is extremely important because the correct methods of managing identity driven conflicts and reward driven conflicts are almost opposite to each other¹⁴. Even the best intentioned attempts to manage identity driven conflicts as though they are reward driven conflicts can often create severe counterproductive effects.

4:0: Knowledge and Interpretation

The traditional understanding of gender and sexuality has been determined by the theology of the Christian Church in Christendom for 2000 years. At the beginning of the 20th century psychodynamic and social learning theories came into prominence with the work of Freud and others¹⁵. About 50 years later research work on the neurophysiological processes that are involved in the development of personality and identity began to take effect. However amongst many practitioners and research workers the existence of this neurophysiological research work has been completely ignored. That disregard may in part be because of a suitable case study to link the two processes. However the use of gender dysphoria in this study here deals with that situation. Another reason may be the resistance created by the cultural values ingrained into society by 2000 years of domination by the theology of the Church.

What stands out in this examination is the contrast between the results of the different theories. The neurophysiological study predicts a duality which requires the welcome of relationships given in love and faithfulness, and it also condemns those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex. By denying that duality the traditional teaching of the Church always condemns all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being heinous sins and illicit and immoral acts. The possibility that gender and sexually variant behaviour could be engaged in for the best of motives is denied by this theological approach.

Today a great deal of research is still being undertaken and literature is being written which relies exclusively on the psychodynamic and social learning theories to interpret their results. These also make the assumption that no other processes are involved. In this analysis it is shown that this assumption is incorrect. It is demonstrated that the social learning and psychodynamic theories are invalid if they are used to identify the processes that lead up to the creation of the core elements of identity and personality, but they can still act as overlays on what has already been formed. For everybody all of the core elements of identity and personality are formed in the same way. With this analysis it becomes possible to identify a continuous process of identity and personality development for all people which extends from infancy into adult life.

¹⁴ Gilchrist, S. (2013e): *Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with particular reference to Transsexuality*

¹⁵ See for example: Freud 1933; (1905/1915); Gruber and Voneche, Ed (1977); Strachey, Ed (1949/1994).

5:0: Theological Approaches

5:1: Overview

It is recognised that until the middle of the last century the understanding of gender and sexually variant conditions had been restricted by the knowledge that was available. More recent work removes this restriction. In this analysis has been shown that the development of the core elements of personality and development are identity driven processes; so that conflicts which arise from these are identity driven conflicts. In such conflicts behaviour is not the focus and as wide a range on moral attitudes, beliefs, inclinations and responsibilities are found in these groups as those which occur in the population at large. As a consequence a duality is encountered which demands the welcome of same-sex relationships given in love and faithfulness while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex. Christian theology and the psychodynamic and social learning theories do not make provision for this duality. As a consequence all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour is condemned as sinful acts. The major concern about the theology of today is the denial of the duality which is demanded by the scientific approach.

5:2 Science and Theology

This existence of any duality is vehemently denied by many of today's Christian Churches. In these Churches the expression of any form of gender and sexually variant behaviour for any purpose is considered to be reward driven, a lifestyle choice and always an illicit and immoral act. Article in 2357 of the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church declares 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".

As well as this theology, the conventional social learning and psychodynamic theories similarly fail to predict the existence of this duality, since they too rely on cognitive capabilities and a cognitive continuum to have effect. The traditions of history and culture likewise presume these condemnations to be correct.

From a scientific point of view there is no point to any theological defence of this position because it cannot disprove the scientific results. However the rejection of the duality revealed by the neurophysiological and psychological study is a particular feature of Christianity and the Christian Church. This has enormous social and cultural implications for the societies to which it is applied and this is why the impact of gender and sexual difference in the early and modern Christian Church must be closely examined¹⁶.

New insights are gained by using the results of the neurophysiological and psychological study to remove the armour of the theological presumptions on gender and sexuality, which have dominated both Church and society for the last two thousand years, and these include alternative interpretations of bible texts.

5:3 Cultural Clashes

There were great differences in attitudes to sex and power in subject and dominant societies of the first century. In a dominant society, same-sex rape could be a plaything and the assertion of the power of a male citizen over a non-citizen and someone of lesser status. No civil censure or

¹⁶ For a more detailed examination see: Gilchrist, S. (2013 c): *A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach* and Gilchrist, S. (2015 b): *The Science and Theology of Gender and Sexual Identification in the Christian Church*.

reproductive consequences were involved. The horror and humiliation this created in subjugated societies was great. The bounds of respectability were also broken when same-sex intercourse took place between two adult male citizens of the dominant society: in such cases the penetrated partner was condemned - because he had diminished the status of citizenship by his assent. In stark contrast to this the perpetrator was condemned by subjugated societies. The latter was the position taken by Judaism, Paul and the early Christian Church.

It is also of note that almost all of the discussions in dominant societies about sexual relationships in antiquity were about relationships between two men. Responsibility was expected, and this was expressed by making the distinction between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex. Acceptable sex was not determined on a gendered basis and men were expected to engage in both same-sex and opposite-sex behaviour at the same or at different times in their lives. The cultural differences between first century and present day societies are so great that the present day definitions of heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality cannot be applied. Judgement on acceptability was instead made on the intention of the acts. This is in line with what the neurophysiological and psychological study expects. However these moral considerations tended to be applied only to the male citizens of the dominant societies, and everyone else could be subject to the abuses of sex.

Instead of the abstract styles of Greek philosophy; Judaism adopted a collective approach. Pairs of Rabbis and students in the academies would form long standing Chavruta partnerships to discuss and debate shared texts. That is important for a full understanding of this analysis. How these relationships were expressed in Judaism is the subject of a separate account¹⁷.

5:4: Gender Challenges

The first century was a time of religious upheaval in Greco/Roman society. Many of the traditional religions had lost a large part of their credibility and there was a search for a new meaning. The demand for gender fairness¹⁸ and the protection of women meant that the male dominated patriarchal society was challenged both by Christianity and the Goddess cults. The cult of Cybele was singled out for special attack. Contrary to the Christian condemnations, Cybele's myths and doctrines embraced both sex and spirituality, they gave earlier cautions against lust and the other sins of excess, and they also demonstrated that sex and gender were less important to the soul than love¹⁹. The cult's activities included those of nurture, birthing, care, protection and responsible sex. Positive features of the cult were later imported into the doctrines of Mariology practiced by the Christian Church²⁰. Many of the denunciations of sexual malpractice may be merited, others may be due to the cultural clashes between subject and dominant societies, but the intensity of the Christian condemnations of inappropriate sexual behaviour were constant and severe, and this has smothered any awareness of the positive aspects of these cults.

A detailed study of the cults suggests otherwise²¹. When it is understood that the self-castrated priests of the Goddess cults, together with their counterparts, were itinerant missionary priests who moved widely through the Roman Empire, who were known within first century Palestine, who were engaged in fortune telling, shamanic, and healing activities, who had a common mission to the disadvantaged then: both the closeness and the contest between the Cult of Cybele and Christianity

¹⁷ See sections 7 and 8 of: Gilchrist, (S. 2015 a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*. Other analyses are given in: Gilchrist, S. (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church* and in Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*.

¹⁸ See section 2:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

¹⁹ See sections 3:1:6 to 3:1:8 of Gilchrist (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation* and Section 7 of Gilchrist (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*

²⁰ See section 2:3:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²¹ See section 3:1:6 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

can hardly be missed. In Matthew 19:12 Jesus reinforced this association with the Goddess Cults by indicating that those who followed the doctrine of the New Covenant could be accepted into the fold²². Early Christianity and the Goddess cults both stepped outside the boundaries of a gender unequal and dictatorial society and both attacked the power structures which were essential to maintain it. As a consequence, if Christianity was to integrate itself into the mainstream of Greco/Roman society it had to separate itself from its own early gender challenging activities and any relationships with the Goddess cults.

5:5: Voices

Vast amounts of Greek and Roman literature is available which discusses sexual practice and relationships between male citizens of a dominant society. Little is said about sex with women, slaves and members of subjugated societies. On the couches of philosophers, these voices are rarely heard. Their tales of oppression are sunken by noises of sex.

Their voices are however available, not in the form of words but in the actions of the Goddess Cults. These cults were popular, not just with women but with men, slaves and other members of subjugated groups. Rome tried to tame the Cult of Cybele by creating an authorised version to which it gave high status²³. However a duality always existed, the Roman establishment was never comfortable with the cult of Cybele; and the unapproved sections of the cult were strongly condemned for their gender disruptive activities, ecstatic behaviour and unregulated acts²⁴. There was a great deal of decadence and sexual immorality in first century Greco/Roman society and Christianity was totally right to condemn it. There is no doubt that the need for these condemnations also applied to the Goddess cults, however a duality is also found in the attitudes to the self-castrated male priests. Those who conformed to the ideals of the cults could be highly regarded but those who did not were very severely condemned for their acts²⁵. Cultural clashes were also an important issue and what was seen to be acceptable in a dominant society could be horrific in a subject one. For its own purposes Christianity has attributed the disruptive behaviour of the cults exclusively to the pursuit of the lust or sex. That attribution does not match the myths of the Cult which are more about the wild strength of nature, culture, power and the protection of women rather than male focussed obsessions with sex.

All voices must be heard in any discussion. The magnitude of the gender disruptive activities and the cult's reliance on self-castrated male priests were significant affronts to the gender based power structures of a male dominated and authoritarian society. In same-sex relationships it has been shown that feature in these societies concerns of power were the dominant rather than the rectitude of sexual acts. Any discussion that takes place must consider the relationships between power and sex; it must not, as has happened in the Christian tradition, just be confined to the lust for sex.

5:6: Transformation and Integration

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. That meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and the sexual values which were characteristic of Greco/Roman male dominated society. This additionally meant challenging 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

²² See section 7:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*. Also sections 3:1:8 and 3:2:1 of Gilchrist (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²³ See section 3:1:3 of Gilchrist (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²⁴ See section 2:3:2 of Gilchrist (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²⁵ See section 3:1:9 of Gilchrist (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

of their cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality which is founded on compassion, nurturing and love.

From his identification with the poor, women, the rejected and the outcast Jesus had turned that search for authority completely on its head. His rejection of all worldly power led to his sacrifice and death as a scapegoat on the Cross. Paul accurately described the teaching of Jesus in Galatians 3:28 and Jesus applied this without compromise to the whole of society, but Paul and Peter sought respectability for the Christian Church. This meant that the command of Jesus to work within society to change it rather than to destroy it, forced Peter and Paul to make a difficult choice. The early Church sought to achieve that transformation by endorsing the power structures of Greco/Roman society while seeking to keep the social gospel intact.

5:7: Pragmatism

The pragmatic approach that Peter, Paul and the early Church²⁶ took was similar to the recommendations of Jeremiah at the time of the Jewish exile²⁷. It was not simply a matter of choosing right from wrong; it was about making the best available choice. If the refusal of Jesus to compromise had continued; it would have led the Church to make direct attacks on the power structures of Greco/Roman society. Alternatively if the early Church chose to compromise with these power structures it could gain the influence it needed to take the Gospel message to the wider world. It is demonstrated in the Letter to Philemon that the early Church sought to fulfil in full the radical nature of Christ's teaching within the Christian community, while accepting the need to conform to the social structure of society outside it. However the admonitions attributed to Peter and Paul in the later Epistles and Letters meant that this separation of the Christian community from the rest of society could never be complete.

For years there has been discussion and argument about what Peter and Paul meant in the Letters and Epistles attributed to them in the New Testament. On the one hand there is Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28 which would find total acceptance in the present day. On the other there are the statements that Peter and Paul made which define the behaviour which women and men should adopt to obtain respect for the Church. This was urgent because one of the first tasks the Church had to do was to separate itself as far as possible from the gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. It also had to adopt a code of behaviour which did not threaten the power structures of Greco/Roman society. By embracing a form of gender complementarity which originated from and was amenable to that society it could resolve both issues and gain respect for the Church. However this search for respectability meant that the Church could no longer attack the power structures of Greco/Roman society by direct methods. Instead it redoubled its attack the abuses of sex.

5:8: Successes

²⁶ Many scholars argue that these passages may be later additions, and that they cannot be directly attributed to Peter or Paul themselves. In this document no judgement is made on this issue but the internal evidence from this analysis suggests that this is in line with what they would have been expected to write, and that there is much less tampering with meanings in these early documents than some scholarship suggests. See section 3:7:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²⁷ By doing this, Peter and Paul were also following the advice given by Jeremiah to the Israelites at the time of the exile: (Jeremiah 29:7). "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare". That was the path taken by the Christian Church. However Jeremiah also had something to say about the compromises that were required: (Jeremiah 21:8-9): "This is what the Lord says: See; I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in the city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives". Jeremiah had asked the Israelites to choose between two evils. Peter and Paul adopted a pragmatic policy in their attempts to gain the respectability that was needed to spread the Gospel message to the world. This compromise of gender complementarity sacrificed the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sexuality for the respectability of the Church.

Judged by the fact that Christianity exists in the present today one must presume that Peter and Paul were right. Far from any capitulation, this change brought great advantages to the Church and in place of the earlier more complex interactions with the Goddess Cults; Christianity could now attack these without restriction with allegations of the lust for sex.

In Greco/Roman society the Gods and Goddesses had equal status. Whatever happened on earth, the equality of gender was a Godly ideal and from that perspective men and women had equal esteem²⁸. As a voluntary way of living life on earth the practice of gender complementarity has much to recommend it, but the perils of first century life, including responsibilities for nurturing children, families, pregnancies and the dangers of childbirth could be expected to force women into this position. When gender complementarity is made compulsory, severe gender discrimination is likely to occur²⁹. However for the early Church which was infused with the teaching of Jesus, as Paul expressed it in Galatians 3:28, no gender discrimination within the Christian Community should ever take place. From the perspective of Christian ideals, this form of gender complementary could also be capable of redemption. By accepting its principles, but by then seeking to change it, opened the gateway to the continuing presence of Christianity in the world.

The evidence from history shows that early Christianity did not seek to limit the Gospel message in any other way; and its history of martyrdom and persecution demonstrates how much Christianity continued to be a thorn in the side of the ruling authorities. There is much that could be agreed with in the pragmatism of the decisions that Peter and Paul made. The cost has been to compromise the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sexuality. The failure of Christianity today comes from turning the disciplines that came from practical and pragmatic decisions into unchangeable doctrines of the Church.

5:9: Power and Sex

The condemnations by Paul of same-sex activities are examined in the light of the duality identified by the neurophysiological and psychological study, the abyss in perceptions of sexual moralities, the enforcement of power between subject and dominant societies and the first-century interpretation of these texts. It is very well attested from contemporary first century and other sources that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 prohibits the act of anal penetration alone. Unlike later interpretations, the rabbis of the first century were very specific about confining the prohibition exclusively to the physical act: It is demonstrated that this was enforced entirely because of misuse, social disruption and the humiliation it caused. It was not because of any intrinsic horror of the act.³⁰

That is the first century interpretation which Paul knew and understood and it is shown that Paul's own condemnation of same-sex activities in the New Testament was confined to the abusive use of this act. It is equally strongly attested from first century and earlier Jewish and Christian sources that the prohibition of cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5 applied only to its use for abusive purposes, as codes for war, and to condemn the gender disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults. No purely literal interpretation was ever applied. The Christian condemnations reflected the cultural chasms between dominant and subjugated societies. The real targets in Christianity were the abuses of power rather than an intrinsic horror of the acts. But Christianity had changed sides. By seeking the

²⁸ Rome was unique in having two Goddesses and one God as the members of its triad of supreme deities (Juno and Minerva plus Jupiter). The statues of the Gods and Goddesses in the Roman Forum were set out as equally as equally balanced gender pairs. About half of the Greco/Roman Goddesses, including Cybele were virgins who gave birth by miraculous means. The idea that a Goddess had to be penetrated by a God to give birth was intolerable because of the equal status that was given to them in Greco/Roman Society. See section 1:1:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

²⁹ See section 2:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

³⁰ See sections 4:3 and 6:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships* and section 7:7 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*

stability and respectability of Greco/Roman society instead of the type of disruption caused by the Goddess cults, Christianity now could only direct its attack the abuses of sex.

What tends to be ignored completely is the way in which these acts of anal penetration enforced subjection and domination in and between gender and socially unequal societies. The prohibitions of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are examined from the perspectives of the teaching of Jesus, the neurophysiological and psychological study, the doctrines of the New Covenant and the Jewish Midrashim traditions. A full analysis is given elsewhere³¹. It is confirmed that the abuses of power were the major concern instead of the pleasures of sex. It is also shown that in loving and faithful relationships where the dynamics of power are not involved, there should be no prohibition of anal penetration, and that includes same-sex acts.

5:10: Teaching

An extended analysis of the teaching of Jesus is given elsewhere³². Paul also outlines that teaching in Galatians 3:26-28 when he states: "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".

This statement can be tested both from the scientific and the theological perspectives. The neurophysiological and psychological study demonstrates that as wide a range of moral attitudes exist among gender and sexually variant people as there are in the population at large. Jesus makes exactly the same distinction in his teaching in the Gospels and the New Covenant, where the prohibitions that were previously based on the letter of the Law are now to be interpreted in the context of love and on the intention of the acts. Therefore, judged from both the psychological and the religious criteria the traditional teaching of the church has no foundation, because of its allegation that every expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour is always a sinful and heinous act.

An extended examination of biblical passages is undertaken and a study of the parallel developments in Judaism is given elsewhere³³. From these arguments, and from the more detailed considerations which are presented in the additional papers, it is demonstrated that in the teaching of Jesus, all transgendered, 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 alike. All sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention and there is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act.

A major feature of gender complementarity comes from the way it separates the male from the female roles. Any form of gender and sexually variant behaviour, for any purpose challenges this distinction and may be a danger to the social order. Peter and Paul reflected these concerns by declaring that in public women should submit to men. The more gender unequal a society becomes the greater is its threat to the social order of that society. Doctrines of gender complementarity make no allowance for the duality that is inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour. Contrary to

³¹ See sections 7:12 and 8:8 of Gilchrist, (S. 2015 a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*.

³² See sections 7 and 8 of: Gilchrist, (S. 2015 a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*. Other analyses are given in: Gilchrist, S. (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church* and Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*.

³³ See sections 3:2 to 3:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*.

the Gospel teaching, the total condemnation of all expression of such gender and sexually variant behaviour, for any purpose, became and still continues as the official teaching of the Church.³⁴

6:0: Consequences

A result of this investigation is the simple and direct conclusion that states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance rest on a false foundation. They arose from the need to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society and not from the teaching of Jesus himself. Christianity adopted a form of gender complementarity which was amenable to Greco/Roman society and the failure of this would lead to horrendous gender discrimination in the later Church³⁵.

So far this discussion has concentrated on the scientific and theological arguments. The practical, cultural and pragmatic arguments must also be considered. 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 situations³⁶, and Onan was advised to spill his seed on the ground³⁷. The Christian traditions of celibacy also departed far more from the spirit of this command than the Judaism ever did. Peter and Paul do not call directly on the teaching of Christ in demanding respectability of the Church^{38 39}.

The pragmatic decision to adapt gender complementarity allowed Peter and Paul to preserve Christianity for the world. But this was a choice between the available alternatives and not just wrong from right. Because these were strategies needed to meet the requirements of first century Greco/Roman society they should be regarded as Church disciplines, but Christianity has turned them into unchangeable doctrines of the Church. That change is important because a discipline must work out anew in every generation what any doctrine should teach. The consequences of turning discipline into doctrine are set out in Mark 7:1-23⁴⁰. That transformation may shore up an institution, but it comes at the expense of the teaching it should present. Maybe the strength of the comments which Jesus made in this passage should be noted.

The same disruptions still continue in gender unequal and gender polarised societies of the present day because of the social implications of same-sex sex acts. The denial of the duality which is inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour also leads the Church to make all gender and sexually variant people the scapegoats for abusive sex. Translation drift and re-interpretation are further concerns. Many contemporary translations of the bible incorrectly state that Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 condemns homosexuality instead of abusive same-sex acts⁴¹. Similar concerns relate to the interpretations of *agapē*⁴² and *pais*⁴³, where changes in meaning have tended to support the traditional theology of the Church. Great harm has been done by the Church's collusion in these matters. This will continue until the scapegoating stops and these issues are addressed.

³⁴ This was reaffirmed on the 24th October 2015 at the closing of the meeting of the October 2015 meeting of the Synod on the Family: Pulella, P (2015): *Pope, Ending Synod excoriates Bishops with Closed Hearts*: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/25/us-pope-synod-idUSKCN0SH20620151025>

³⁵ See section 2:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

³⁶ See section 4:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

³⁷ See section 4:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

³⁸ See section 8:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

³⁹ See section 12 of Gilchrist, S. (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*

⁴⁰ See section 3:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

⁴¹ See section 3:6 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

⁴² See section 9 of Gilchrist, S. (2014a): *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church* and section 6:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*:

⁴³ *Pais* is the Greek word for servant or slave used in the story of the Centurion and the slave, which is given in Luke, Chapter 7:1-10 and Matthew, Chapter 8:5-13. See sections 7:12 and 8:8 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*

It should be emphasised that in this analysis a clear distinction is made between same sex and cross-gender behaviour which is engaged in for the highest of motives, and that pursued for illicit or immoral purposes. This is the basis for the duality here considered. There is no toleration of improper or immoral sex, and the same degrees of moral condemnation can still be applied without compromise to those who misuse all same-sex acts.

6:1: Personality and Identity

This investigation combines the neurophysiological and psychological research work on early development carried out by Gallese, Dawkins, Girard and others with the more traditional cognitively based approaches that are employed by the psychodynamic and social learning theories. It is noted that a major advance in neural capability takes place around the age of two years, and gender dysphoria is used as a case study to link the different processes. However the limitations imposed by Christian theology and the psychodynamic and social learning theories means the impact and the existence of the first development processes are ignored. That omission is addressed in this analysis. It is demonstrated that the processes that lead up to the creation of the core elements of identity and personality are primarily enforced by physiologically driven forces acting alone. This means that the traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories can only be used as overlays on what has already been formed.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are both identity driven conditions. They are fellow travellers in terms of their relationships with society and this is why they are considered together in this investigation. However each develops largely independently of the other and only limited interaction between gender identity and sexual orientation is found⁴⁴. It is shown in this analysis that the physiological, neurological and psychological aspects of brain development together 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 created. This is an analysis which reveals the full potential and richness of human life.

6:2: Present Day Concerns

For nearly two thousand years the criminalisation by society and the doctrines of the church have denied any legitimate expression of same-sex acts. That has allowed the church to condemn with impunity all forms of gender and sexual variant behaviour as mortally sinful and heinous acts. However, from the 1960's onwards, and with the de-criminalisation of homosexuality, society is no longer held captive to the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church. This duality is now available for everybody to see in the love expressed in same-sex marriage and civil partnerships. It has also become easy for an unbiased observer to separate a same-sex relationship given in faithfulness, love and lifetime commitment from a strong heterosexual friendship, and to discriminate between loving and illicit same-sex behaviour, even in the absence of sex.

The public attitudes to the same-sex behaviour which is openly experienced in many societies of the present time would also have been known to Jesus, John, Paul, and to others in a first century society, where same-sex relationships were widely expressed. These changes have exposed the failures of the Church. Today it is the clashes between what is seen by society as the common sense values, and the fervent reliance by the Church on its traditional doctrines, which is destroying the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the world. Change is urgently required, but it is not change which departs from the Gospel message, it is change which returns to the Gospel texts.

⁴⁴ See sections 5 and 6 of Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*

6:3: Discussions

Since April 2015 the Church of England has been conducting a programme of “Facilitated or Shared Conversations”⁴⁵ intended to create safe spaces in which questions of difference and disagreement can be explored in relation to questions of scripture, mission and human sexuality. Results from this analysis have been submitted for consideration in this consultation⁴⁶.

There are multitudes of people in the world today who are honestly, faithfully and assiduously following from different viewpoints what they believe to be the correct Christian teaching, who all are concerned about what is happening in the Christian Church. Evidence for that concern is seen in the establishment of the “Shared Conversations” process in the Church of England and in the “Synod on the Family”⁴⁷ called by Pope Francis in 2014. There is one great hurdle that has still to be overcome. What is not up for change are the preconditions set by the Church hierarchies for these activities, and these demand that there will be no change to the traditional teaching of the Church. This unwillingness to change has also been documented by the author elsewhere⁴⁸, and it is this refusal which is destroying the credibility, not just of the Churches, but of all Christian belief.

The unwillingness to change still continues. In the concluding Mass and statement associated with the October 2015 meeting of the Synod on the Family⁴⁹, Pope Francis berated immovable Church leaders who “bury their heads in the sand” and hide behind rigid doctrine⁵⁰, the outcome of this gathering, over which the Pope presided, marked a victory for conservatives on homosexual issues. The final synod statement restated the traditional Church teachings⁵¹. It indicated that homosexuals should not suffer discrimination in society and it also repeated the stand that there was “no foundation whatsoever” for same-sex marriage, which “could not even remotely” be compared to heterosexual unions. These relationship issues are discussed in this analysis⁵². During the synod, the African bishops were particularly adamant in their opposition to the inclusion of any welcoming language toward homosexuals in its reports, saying it would only confuse the faithful. All suggestions of including statements of welcome were refused⁵³. Acting against this declaration; which puts the authority of the institution above the intelligence of its followers, is the issue of the scapegoating of homosexuality, and by implication all forms of gender and sexually variant acts⁵⁴. This is a particular issue for the African Church.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has invited all 37 Primates of the Anglican Communion to attend a special Primates’ gathering from 11-16 January 2016 in Canterbury to reflect and pray together concerning the future of the Anglican Communion⁵⁵. The invitation has been accepted even by the leaders of the conservative evangelical Global South churches. The Archbishop said: “The difference between our societies and cultures, as well as the speed of cultural change in much of

⁴⁵ Church of England (2015b). *Shared Conversations Website* <http://www.sharedconversations.org/>

⁴⁶ Gilchrist, S. (2014c): *Articles Offered to The Church of England for use in its Process of Shared Discussions on LGBTI Matters*

⁴⁷ Vatican (2013): Synod on the Family: Preparatory Document: *Pastoral Challenges To The Family In The Context Of Evangelization* http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-assemblea-sinodovescovi_en.html

⁴⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2014b) *Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*

⁴⁹ Vatican: Synod of Bishops (2015): *Final Report of the 2015 Synod of Bishops on The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141209_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html

⁵⁰ BBC (2015) :For a news report on the Synod on the Family, see: *Catholic bishops end divisive synod on family*: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34629539> .

⁵¹ Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (2015): Media Release 26 October 2015: “A new era for inclusive pastoral care of LGBT people is going to start after the Synod.” examines positive and negative aspects of the Synod’s report.

⁵² For a discussion on Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex marriage, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013b) *Reform and the Christian Church*.

⁵³ For a discussion of these present day issues, see section 4: of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*. Also section 8:14 on Christian Scapegoating in Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*.

⁵⁴ See sections 5:6 and 8:14 of: Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*.

⁵⁵ Archbishop of Canterbury Website (2015): *Archbishop of Canterbury calls for Primates’ Gathering*: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5613/archbishop-of-canterbury-calls-for-primates-gathering->

the Global North; tempts us to divide as Christians, when the command of scripture, the prayer of Jesus, the tradition of the church and our theological understanding urges unity. A 21st century Anglican family must have space for deep disagreement, and even mutual criticism, so long as we are faithful to the revelation of Jesus Christ, together”⁵⁶.

The desire for unity is rightly welcomed. However this examination deals with more than just the issues of gender and sexuality for it challenges the way in which certain bible texts have been used to enforce the authority of the Church⁵⁷. At the World Conference of Anglican Bishops, Lambeth 1998, West African Bishops sponsored an amendment which had the aim of condemning homosexuality as “a sin which could only be adopted by the church if it wanted to commit evangelical suicide”⁵⁸. That takes the discussion back to Mark 7:1-23⁵⁹, where, like Jesus, Pope Francis castigated those who put unbearable loads on people by turning disciplines into doctrines of the Church. Peter and Paul took pragmatic decisions when they interpreted the teaching of Jesus in accordance with the expectations of respectability in Greco/Roman society. However they created a Church and a Christian Community, where according to the teaching of Jesus, LGBTI people would have found a greater welcome inside it than outside it. Today the reverse is the case. The Primates meeting in January 2016 should look for a way forward that embraces this message of Christ.

The reasons why the traditional teaching should be considered incorrect are given in this analysis, which also lays bare the falseness of the scapegoating itself, because it shows that all people must be accepted alike. This means that the issues are the same for everyone - they are those of enabling people to live in ways that are true to their own identities in the love of Christ, and the condemnation of all abusive and illicit sex in whatever form it takes, heterosexual or homosexual alike. Not only has the scapegoating of homosexuality taken attention away from these issues, it has enabled people who engage in them to diminish the consequences of evil acts⁶⁰. This real issue is that of combatting all forms of abusive sex. It is an issue which everyone should be able to agree on, churches in Africa, liberal and conservative churches in the West, Orthodox Churches and many gender and sexually variant people themselves.

Currently the author has chosen to work within the Church of England to change it. However in the call for the Primate’s meeting and in the “Shared Conversations Process”⁶¹.the Archbishop of Canterbury has indicated that a “Good Disagreement” may be the best that can be hoped for. If “Good Disagreement” means that in some parts of the Anglican Communion LGBTI people can continue to be fully accepted and be appointed as bishops in their own Church structure, while in other parts of the world bishops in the same communion can condemn homosexual people to long prison sentences, or even advocate the death penalty for any expression of their identity, the question has to be asked of the Church of England, the Anglican Communion, the Catholic Church and all Church institutions is this: “If good disagreement is the only option that is available under the terms of your discussions, what has happened, and will happen, to the moral values of your Church?”. This is a radical analysis, not just in relation to the teaching of Jesus but also for the understanding of what was expected of Jesus inside first century Jewish society; and this includes the way in which he lived his life. I believe that difficult ideas need to be heard. Much of present

⁵⁶Gledhill, R. (2015): *Archbishop of Canterbury moves to heal Anglican divide*: Christianity Today: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop.of.canterbury.moves.to.heal.anglican.divide/64966.htm>

⁵⁷ See section 8:13 of: Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*.

⁵⁸ Hoad, N.W. (2007) *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*. Chapter 3 Neoliberalism and the Church: p65 University of Minnesota Press: ISBN 978-0-8166-4916-7 ISBN 978-0-8166-4915-0

⁵⁹ See section 3:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

⁶⁰ For an examination of concerns about this in the history of the church see: Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*

⁶¹ Church of England (2015a):Grace and Disagreement article: *Grace and Disagreement Shared Conversations on Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality*: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2165248/grace2.pdf>

society has already lost faith with the Christian Church. It is now time for it to face up to the real issues and make an honest choice.

A shorter version of this analysis has been published in: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *Taking a Different Path*: Chapter 10 in "This is My Body", Ed: Beardsley, T. and O'Brien, M: Darton Longman and Todd. Publication date: May 2016

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