

# Disagreements between Science and Theology in the Understanding of Gender and Sexually Variant Identities and Behaviour

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One of the many positive things that have happened during the Papacy of Pope Francis is his care for humanity and his expression of pastoral care for gender and sexually variant people (LGBTI+)<sup>3</sup>. That is greatly welcomed, but against is set the determination that there can be no change in the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. On the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017 the General Synod of the Church of England, in a “Take Note” debate, refused to accept a report which would have had the same effect of greatly promoting the acceptance and inclusion of gender and sexually variant people in the Church of England, while continuing to maintain the same traditional doctrines as those of the Catholic Church<sup>4 5</sup>. In his various statements Pope Francis has warned against the dangers of “*Gender Theory*”; however this is also an area where scientific analysis can be applied to the presumptions that underlie these traditional doctrines. These presume that all gender and sexually variant behaviour is invariably a falling from grace, disordered behaviour and a lifestyle choice, which forsakes the pursuit of committed loving and fulfilling relationships for the delights of sex. However that presumption is increasingly challenged by the massive amount of knowledge and experiential evidence which has been amassed in recent years. This is additionally supported through encounters with the lived experiences of gender and sexually variant people. An additional concern arises because the traditional teaching of the Christian Churches medically misdiagnoses these conditions, and great harm has been done when the wrong methods are applied<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to note that gender and sexual identities form independently of each other. Therefore as wide a range of sexual orientations and identities are found within the gender variant communities as those which exist in the population at large. Thus being transgender is no indication of sexual identity or orientation, and the reverse also applies<sup>7</sup>. However the same types of formation processes are involved in both cases. In

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

<sup>2</sup> Issued 7 March 2017: This paper is available online at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/230P-Disagreement.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> LGBTI+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and other

<sup>4</sup> Church of England (2017): *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations. A Report from the House of Bishops*: General Synod Document 2055 <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3863472/gS-2055-marriage-and-same-sex-relationships-after-the-shared-conversations-report-from-the-house-of-bishops.pdf> :See also: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/229P-GS2055.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> For a commentary on the report, see: Gilchrist, S. (2017): “*What Next? Some thoughts following the rejection by the General Synod of the Church of England, of report issued by the “Bishop’s Reflection Group on Sexuality”*”. <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/229P-WhatNext.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> All of the major medical organizations across the UK have very strongly condemned any attempt to try to ‘cure’ gender and sexually variant people. In 2015 a “*Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK*” was issued by these health organisations. It said: “*We the undersigned UK organisations wish to state that the practice of conversion therapy has no place in the modern world. It is unethical and harmful and not supported by evidence....Sexual orientations and gender identities are not mental health disorders, although exclusion, stigma and prejudice may precipitate mental health issues for any person subjected to these abuses. Anyone accessing therapeutic help should be able to do so without fear of judgement or the threat of being pressured to change a fundamental aspect of who they are*” The signatories are: UK Council for Psychotherapy, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, British Psychoanalytic Council, British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, The British Psychological Society, College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists, The Association of LGBT Doctors and Dentists, The National Counselling Society, NHS Scotland, Pink Therapy, Royal College of General Practitioners, the Scottish Government and Stonewall. Available at: <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Memorandum-of-understanding-on-conversion-therapy.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> For an extended analysis of their formations see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

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many respects gender and sexually variant people share similar issues in terms of their relationships with society and that is why they can be considered together in this account.

The great majority of professional institutions in the Western world currently regard both gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as being naturally expected variations of the human condition which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development, and which cannot be changed by the individual concerned or by the actions of others in subsequent life. This is the position taken for example by the British Royal College of Psychiatrists<sup>8</sup>, the British Psychological Society and parallel United Kingdom organisations<sup>9</sup>. Equivalent positions are taken by the American Psychiatric Association<sup>10</sup> and the American Psychological Association<sup>11</sup>. Other international mental health organizations, including the World Health Organization have followed. Against this is set minority conservative organisations such as the American College of Paediatricians<sup>12</sup> and the might of the Christian Church.

In addition to this, a new scientific study by the author on the development of personality and self-identity is reported in this document<sup>13</sup>. It uses a novel approach to map the transition between the internally created neurophysiological processes propelling early development, to the externally moderated cognitive processes in later life. This means that for the first time a continuous path of development extending from infancy to adulthood can be described. The creation of atypical gender and sexual identities is used to examine how this occurs. It is demonstrated that the formations of these core features are driven by the search for identity, before cognition seeks behavioural rewards. A moral duality therefore exists whereby gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities while conforming to the highest standards of their societies should be highly regarded. Those engaged in misuse must expect to be severely condemned for their acts<sup>14</sup>. That moral duality contradicts the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns

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<sup>8</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists' statement on sexual orientation [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/ps02\\_2014.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/ps02_2014.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> British Psychological Society and other organisations: Conversion Therapy: Consensus Statement.

[http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/conversion\\_therapy\\_final\\_version.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/conversion_therapy_final_version.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> APA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Statement: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> APA Policy Statements on LGBT Concerns <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/>

<sup>12</sup> American College of Paediatricians <https://www.acped.org/> : 'Transgender' Conditioning Is 'Child Abuse':

<http://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/j-matt-barber/american-college-pediatricians-transgender-conditioning-child-abuse>

<sup>13</sup> A more detailed account of these investigations is given in a paper: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Disapproval of same-sex intercourse appeared early in the Christian Church. Aristides of Athens around A.D. 140 and Clement of Alexandria about A.D. 190 denounced it as sin. However the most commonly mentioned aspect of same-sex gratification that was condemned, was intercourse with boys. Polycarp in early second-century Turkey, the Revelation of Peter in the mid second century, Irenaeus in France around A.D. 180 and Origen also condemned same-sex intercourse as "men abusing themselves with men" and "men defiling each other". These viewpoints also parallel Paul's condemnations in the New Testament. Given the social prohibitions of Greek and Roman society, this is unlikely to be between two men of equal status. The abuses of power were a major concern and these abuses were often more akin to acts of same-sex rape, where slaves and others had little protection from these same-sex acts. See 4:5:1 "Paul and Deuteronomy" and the other sections 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>. Justin Martyr, c. A.D. 155, Theophilus of Antioch, A.D. 168, Clement of Alexandria, c. A.D. 190, Tertullian, c. A.D. 210, Origen, c. A.D. 230, Cyprian, c. A.D. 250, Eusebius of Caesarea, c. A.D. 325 and others condemned same-sex intercourse as sexual abuse. They also attacked as abuse, its employment in fertility rites in Roman society. Effeminacy and unseemly behaviour were also disparaged. Many Church Fathers who condemned these as abuses, wrote nothing which condemned other types of close relationships between two adult males. Indeed from at least as early as the fourth century, close relationships between two males were solemnised in services of "Brother making", or in Greek, Adelphopoiesis, which were conducted by the Christian Church. It is shown that these have characteristics similar to those of first century Jewish Chavruta and Rabbinic partnerships, and this concept may have been carried over into the Christian Church. In these Jewish partnerships, intense same-sex relationships could form; in which the only act that was specifically prohibited was anal penetrative sex. Both of these features closely correspond to the contemporary Jewish understanding where the rabbinic prohibition of same-sex intercourse was focussed strongly on lack of hospitality and its abuse in enforcing humiliation and domination in these grossly socially and gender unequal first century societies. Sexual abuse in general was not primarily defined on a gendered basis: instead it was made by making the distinction between actions pursued for the noble pursuit of love and those engaged in for the carnal abuse of sex. Same-sex intercourse in rabbinic partnerships, and total celibacy in the Christian priesthood, was strongly enforced to avoid any association with abuses of power in sexual acts. Augustine (354–430) may have been the first to condemn what may be regarded as homosexuality as it is understood in the present day. For details of these services and their relationship to the present day controversies over same-sex marriage, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/008B-ReformChristianChurchArticle.pdf>. For a study of the development of Christianity during the first millennium see: Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

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all such behaviour as disordered lifestyle choices, and acts of grave depravity, which always pursue inappropriate sex<sup>15</sup>.

An extended social, theological and historical analysis has therefore been undertaken to determine how and why this contradiction has occurred. A critique of the history, development and theology of the Christian Church, and of the surrounding Greek, Roman and Jewish societies has been completed which uses the results of the neurophysiological study, acting in combination with the knowledge of the moral duality that this science based investigation has shown to exist. By removing the theological presumptions which have existed for most of the last two thousand years, new perspectives on first century Greek, Roman and Jewish societies are obtained, as well as new insights into bible texts<sup>16</sup>.

Since the moral duality identified by the neurophysiological and psychological study is inherent to these gender and sexually variant conditions it must be present in all societies at all times. Therefore changes in culture can only reveal or suppress the expression of the duality which always exists. Same-sex behaviour and intercourse were endemic in first century Roman society. Roman culture also viewed sexual behaviour through the prism of domination and suppression. Thus a male Roman citizen could engage in same-sex intercourse with a man or boy of lesser status, provided the citizen was the penetrator in the act. This could be tantamount to same-sex rape. In first century Roman, and in other dictatorial societies, these blatant abuses of power gave permission for the gross abuses of sex, which is most notably evident in same-sex acts<sup>17</sup>. The Christian Church rightly and virulently condemned such behaviour but in the course of its condemnations of these great abuses of sex in society, it is not surprising that all sense of the moral duality that is inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour was lost. In a society where power and domination was enforced through same-sex intercourse a set of doctrines which demanded the celibacy of Jesus and the virginity of John also became essential for the life of the Church<sup>18</sup>.

There is no evidence for these power struggles in the Letters and Epistles of the New Testament. Instead of this, Peter and Paul repeatedly emphasise the need to obey the Roman authorities. They also made strong efforts to ensure the respectability of Christian behaviour, in ways that conformed to the social codes which applied in the first century Roman world. This meant that Christianity could no longer attack those institutional power structures. However it could still attack the personal sexual abuses that arose from them. As a consequence the denunciations contained in the New Testament focus entirely on the abuses of sex.

In the Old Testament, the equivalent interactions between power and sex are shown to have had a key role. The prohibitions of same-sex intercourse in Leviticus 20:13 and 18:22 are examined from both the first century Jewish perspectives and the Old Testament viewpoints, where sources such as those from Ugarit are used. It is demonstrated that the specific reason for this prohibition in Leviticus was to condemn its use in

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<sup>15</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>16</sup> For an account of the social, historical and theological studies, see the following papers: Gilchrist, S. (2016f): "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. (2016e): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2016j): "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. (2013a): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> In the societies of antiquity discussions about sex were almost invariably concerned with sex between men. There is no equivalent condemnation of sex between women in the Old Testament. Acts of sexual abuse by men on women, and sex between women did not impact on the social structures of these male dominated societies and these concerns, at least in public, were largely ignored.

<sup>18</sup> The virginity of John is repeatedly emphasised in the writings of the Early Church Fathers. It is still celebrated today in the Orthodox Churches. See Gilchrist, S. (2016f): "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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enforcing power, humiliation, domination and subjugation inside and across the different grossly gender and socially unequal societies. Contrary to present day expectations this condemnation was not primarily concerned with the denunciations of sexual abuse, temple prostitution or fertility rites<sup>19</sup>. However this does not indicate a reduction in moral standards. Sexual abuse is condemned in many passages in the bible and in other halachic literature. In addition heterosexual intercourse was permitted for “*the good of relationships*” as well as procreation. Contraception was also endorsed in some limited circumstances; however ejaculation for any other purpose was strongly condemned as “*spilling one’s seed in vain*”. Jews were also required to “*populate the world*”<sup>20</sup>. These criteria put strict boundaries on what was acceptable. Nevertheless the Rabbis were quite specific in citing the abuse of power as the particular reason for the prohibition in Leviticus 20:13 and 18:22<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, unlike to today’s understanding, the focus of this prohibition in Leviticus was on the abuse of its purpose in enforcing power and domination: and not due to the abhorrence of sexual penetration or the ecstasies of the act. That understanding corresponds with the condemnations of Sodom and Gomorrah for “*Lack of hospitality*” by Jesus in the New Testament and the misbehaviours in Jewish first century Chavruta and Rabbinic partnerships; which were condemned for “*Lack of respect*”<sup>22</sup>. It is also supported in the Old Testament analysis<sup>23 24</sup>. Significantly this means that when these abuses of power are absent, the moral judgements that are applied to same-sex intercourse should be the same as those which are applied to any other same-sex or heterosexual act of sex.

A paradigm shift has therefore occurred. This has moved the understanding from, what in New Testament times was the condemnation of same-sex intercourse based on denouncing the purpose of the act, into the unvarying condemnation of the same act: as something which is invariably depraved, disordered, and in pursuit of inappropriate sex. This transference was consolidated in the work of Aquinas, who was largely responsible for formulating what today is regarded as the traditional teaching of the Church on same-sex intercourse, and by extension on gender and sexually variant behaviour. For Aquinas the supremacy of the Church, which was vested in the Popes, was greater than that of Kings and Emperors. Aquinas also sought to restore the authority of the Church after the Cathar revolt which began in 1243. This revolt was partly due to repulsion at the abuses of power and sex that had been taking place within the socially dominant Church. Aquinas enforced the paradigm shift by excluding consideration of these abuses of power on sexual behaviour, by focussing his condemnations solely on the motives of sex, and by condemning all sexual behaviour outside marriage as mortal sins which are always in pursuit of lust and improper sex. The presumption that same-sex relationships attack the sanctity of marriage is also inherent in these doctrines which Aquinas developed. The sanctity of marriage is very highly valued in the teaching of Jesus, and in the Jewish tradition, yet none of the statements in the bible automatically condemn the possibility of other relationships. Neither does Jesus do this in his own teaching. As a consequence there is no equivalent condemnation to that which Aquinas imposes in the Bible itself.

This paradigm shift is shown to be the reason why the contradiction between science and theology has occurred. The teaching of Jesus is also examined in the light of this transformation and the neurophysiological and psychological study. It is shown that there is no contradiction with the results of the scientific work<sup>25</sup>. It is concluded that the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance are built on a

<sup>19</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>20</sup> See Genesis 1:28 and other passages. In Genesis Chapter 35 Onan was stuck dead for “*spilling his seed on the ground*”. This was an act of coitus interruptus. However it is sometimes taken to condemn masturbation. It can also be regarded as the penalty Onan endured because of his failure to obey God’s command to populate the world. The attitudes and prohibitions involved in same-sex and heterosexual intercourse are extensively discussed 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> and 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>

<sup>21</sup> For discussions on temple prostitution and its relationship to fertility acts and sex, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2014): “*Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/017B-ChristianityAndCrisisOverview.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> 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>24</sup> Among the Early Church Fathers, Origen considered that this condemnation was about the lack of hospitality.

<sup>25</sup> 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>

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false foundation. They were driven by the need to gain respectability and to counteract same-sex abuses in Roman society. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself. From the theological, social and scientific standpoints it is established that identical criteria in relation to use and abuse should be applied to heterosexual and same-sex acts of sex. With the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant, all behaviour should be guided by love, wellbeing and purity of intention. There is no automatic condemnation of any sexual act. Instead of centuries of making homosexuality the scapegoat for all sexual abuse, the correct objectives for the Christian Church should be those of combatting all forms of abusive sex.

This is a radical conclusion. However it is tacitly admitted by the Christian Church. That sense of moral duality is already recognised in the pastoral care which is increasingly being offered by Pope Francis and other Churches to gender and sexually variant people. However the existence of this moral duality still continues to be contradicted by the traditional teaching of the Church. The social changes of the last sixty years have enabled people to see for themselves this moral duality and the love and faithfulness that can be expressed in same-sex relationships. In this investigation it is demonstrated that from scientific, social, theological and historical grounds this traditional teaching is either wanting or incorrect. In the face of all of this evidence, the continued refusal to even contemplate any change to the traditional teaching of the Church is destroying the credibility, not just of the Church, but of Christianity in the world.

The crucial feature that must be resolved is identified by the scientific analysis. This demonstrates that there is a fundamental contradiction between the conclusions of science and the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. The theological, historical and social analyses, at most, can only show how and why this conflict occurs, and chart ways of escape. A radical approach is taken in this investigation. It is not necessary to agree with this historical, theological and social study, however it is essential to find ways to resolve the contradiction between science and theology that occurs. This demands that there must be some changes to the traditional teaching of the Church. However the change that is needed is not one which departs from the Gospel message. It is one that returns to the Gospel texts.

That needs much more than theology. Irrespective of its motive, all gender and sexually variant behaviour can challenge the good ordering of societies where legally and socially enforced gender divisions exist. This means that discrimination against gender and sexually variant people is a socially led phenomenon and it would be a mistake to identify its cause with religious belief. A great deal of harm can occur when these traditional doctrines are pursued. The transformation needed to gain acceptability in the Greco/Roman culture brought the Church to collude with these secular demands of society rather than to challenge them. Not only has this consent reinforced the secular prejudices of such discriminatory societies; it gave and it still continues to give religious legitimacy to them. In many African countries extreme penalties against homosexual behaviour are being advocated or applied. There is no doubt that there was a great deal of sexual abuse in first century society, where the blatant abuses of power gave permission for extreme abuses of same-sex acts. However to condemn all gender and sexually variant behaviour for the abuses of some, is akin to saying today that all members of a minority community are terrorists because some engage in terrorist acts.

In the United States at the present time, senior members of the Catholic Church have been using its traditional teaching to collude with the conservative Christian right when they condemn all transgender people as invariably being in pursuit of illicit or depraved sex<sup>26</sup>. That scapegoating has also been endorsed by at least one senior prelate in the Catholic Church<sup>27</sup>. Instead of recognising the moral duality which is inherent in gender and sexual behaviour, without exception all of these people have been made the scapegoats for abusive sex. The actions of the present president of the United States illustrate how easily this scapegoating can occur, and the administration of Present Trump has removed the federal guidance which protected transgender children from some of these attacks. Harm has also been done by the medical misdiagnoses that

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<sup>26</sup> For details see: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> That position was supported by Cardinal Robert Sarah, Archbishop emeritus of Conakry (Guinea) and Prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in the Catholic Church, during the address he gave to the, 12th Annual National Catholic Prayer Breakfast held on Tuesday, May 17th, 2016 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Washington DC. For details 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>

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have been, and still continue to be made. The persecution and slaughter of gender and sexually variant people, not only in Christianity but in Islam, Judaism and all other religions, states and cultures which have drawn their teachings from this has been enormous, and repentance is needed for these acts. However repentance and a change of tone is not enough. If there is no move to reconsider the Christian doctrine which has led to or supported this discrimination against gender and sexually variant people, the same misuses will still continue to occur.

Pope Francis you have made great strides in increasing the pastoral care and welcome for gender and sexually variant people. During the in-flight press conference which you gave following your recent visit to Georgia, you said in relation to transgender issues<sup>28</sup>. *No, that no, but in every case I accept it, I accompany it, I study it, I discern it and I integrate it. This is what Jesus would do today!*" However a document you approved on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016 still reiterates the traditional teaching of the Church<sup>29</sup>. On January 12, 2016, in an interview with a journalist about your new book: *"The Name of God is Mercy"*<sup>30</sup> you discussed the statement you made during the in-flight press you gave when you returned from Brazil in July 2013<sup>31</sup>: In the book you state<sup>32</sup>: *"On that occasion I said this: If a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person?" "I was paraphrasing by heart the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it says that these people should be treated with delicacy and not be marginalized."* Despite the pastoral support to gender and sexually variant people which is given in these statements it still continues to be made clear by you, Pope Francis, and the Vatican, that there must be no change in the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. Your concerns about *"Gender Theory"* are addressed in more detail in the paper: Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*<sup>33</sup>. Please do as you said in the in-flight press conference on your return from Georgia, please seek to understand the latest scientific understanding, please study it, please discern it, please integrate it, and use it to reassess the traditional teaching of your Church.

More detailed accounts of these investigations are given in the following two papers:

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

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>

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<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis. (2016): In-Flight Press Conference Of His Holiness Pope Francis From Azerbaijan To Rome: Papal Flight Sunday, 2 October 2016 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161002\\_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/october/documents/papa-francesco_20161002_georgia-azerbaijan-conferenza-stampa.html) also <https://newwaysministryblog.wordpress.com/2016/10/03/pope-francis-says-accompanying-lgbt-people-is-what-jesus-would-do-today/>

<sup>29</sup> Vatican. (2016): *"The Gift of the Priestly Vocation"* Page 81: Congregation for the Clergy  
<http://www.clerus.va/content/dam/clerus/Ratio%20Fundamentalis/The%20Gift%20of%20the%20Priestly%20Vocation.pdf>

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