

Conflicts between the Science and Theology of Gender and Sexuality: A Decision Time for the Church of England and the Christian Church.

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For many Christians both biological sex and its associated gender identity are God-given attributes, where any departure from the roles expected by appearance and biology is a falling from Grace that must be condemned by the Church. That presumes that gender and sexuality are fixed by divine command at birth. Thus any departure from these expectations is a disruption of God's purpose. Because of this all forms of homosexual behaviour, for example, is condemned in the Catholic Catechism as acts of grave depravity which are always in pursuit of inappropriate sexⁱⁱⁱ For a detailed account see Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church*": Available online at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf>

The contradiction arises because modern science does not agree with this conclusion. Currently a great majority of professional institutions in the Western World regard 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^{iv}, the British Psychological Society and parallel United Kingdom organisations^v. Equivalent positions are taken by the American Psychiatric Association^{vi} and the American Psychological Association^{vii}. Other international mental health organizations, including the World Health Organization agree. This is confirmed by the author's research^{viii}. Against this are minority conservative groups like the American College of Paediatricians^{ix} and parts of the Christian Church.

What should be noted from a medical point of view; is that two very different types of conditions are being defined. Freud himself described the development of gender and sexual orientation as processes of inversion, where the development of gender and sexually variant identities takes place from the outset. No other types of gender and sexual identities ever arise. By the same criteria Freud described the traditional Christian approach as a process of perversion, where the normal process of development is disrupted or arrested by some external cause. The motives are also completely different since any expression of deviation is the result of the search for identity, while any expression of a perversion is focussed on a search for reward. The Christian interpretation medically misdiagnoses these conditions. Thus as a consequence their identity driven nature is denied. Enormous harm can be done since the management techniques are almost opposite to one another^x. So called "Gay Cures" are often advocated by Christian apologists, on the grounds that they can help to recover the God given gender and sexual identities that are presumed to first exist. However these misdiagnoses are condemned in the strongest possible terms by the major professional institutions, which have come together to issue an agreed statement about the harm they create^{xi}. That harm is also separately described by the author^{xii} and in a paper by Jayne Ozanne which has just been issued^{xiii}. The guilt which is created can be enormous. Religious euphoria may provide some form of escape but Gay Cure approaches also fail since the gender and sexual identities they wish to reinstate have never existed: therefore they can never be found^{xiv}.

Because the development of gender and sexual allegiances depend on the search for identity, rather than reward, a moral duality must exist in which gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies should be highly regarded while those who misuse these relationships ought to be very severely condemned for their acts. The existence of this moral duality directly contradicts the traditional teaching of the Christian Church: which considers all such activity to be of immoral intent. To the present time the impact of science on the traditional teaching of the Church has largely been avoided^{xv}. Consideration of this topic was absent in the "Shared Conversations" process, there is no direct reference to it in the Bishops 2017 report^{xvi} and following the rejection of that report by the February Synod the Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued a letter which demanded that a teaching document be produced offering a full welcome and pastoral care for gender and sexually variant people, but without changing traditional teaching of the Church

Not only does that decision perpetuate the medical misdiagnoses that are made by this traditional Christian doctrine. It also gives encouragement to those who wish to make use of science to pursue a particular point. The Latimer Trust Document^{xvii} and the blog by Ian Paul^{xviii} which are being made available to Synod claim to represent an objective account of the science behind transgender conditions, however their choice of references is limited to those which support the traditional teaching of the Church: there is little or no indication that these are contested views which are presented by investigators whose results have been rejected by the majority of their peers^{xix}. "Reparative Therapy", the transgender equivalent of "Gay Cures" is advocated. Opposing views tend to be dismissed as the work of "transgender activists". As a consequence the mainstream of science becomes ignored. Taken at their face value these documents mislead Synod about the scientific consensus that already exists.

At the Church of England General Synod in York from the 7th to the 11th July about half of the sessions will be concerned with issues of gender and sexuality. If pastoral care and inclusion is offered to people who, at the same time continue to be deemed to have fallen from the highest standards expected by Christianity it will have done little to affirm the identity of those people to whom it is directed. Proper care can only be provided if it unambiguously recognises the genuineness of gender and sexually variant identities, and if celebrates without reservation and without exclusion the positive contributions that gender and sexually variant people can make. The Church of England can no longer hide away from a full proper and objective consideration of the science, and the lived experiences of gender and sexually variant people. The Pastoral Advisory Group appointed by The Church of England to consider the Next steps on Human Sexuality has no transgender representation or expert medical or scientific representatives on it; and its terms of reference do not suggest that the necessary changes will be considered^{xx}. The exposure of the sexual abuse over many years by former Bishop Peter Ball in the report "Abuse of Faith"^{xxi}, together with the effective collusion by Archbishop Carey and other members of the senior hierarchy, because of their misapplication of pastoral care, demands an independent and objective re-examining of the present Church attitudes to gender and sexuality, which uses all of the medical and scientific expertise that is available. This must include a re-examination of its traditional *doctrine* "*As the Church of England has received it*": so that the Church is not misled in future years. The more the Church of England and the worldwide Church refuses to address these issues, the more it will discredit itself in the eyes of the world. It is decision time for the Church.

Further reading:

- Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Gay Cures and Transgender Liturgies: The Interactions between Science and Theology in the Life of the Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/234P-SynodMotionSupport.pdf>
- Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Future Approaches to the Science and Theology of Gender and Sexual Variation in the Church of England and the Christian Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/232P-FutureApproaches.pdf>
- 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>
- Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?" <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/226P-ConsiderScience.pdf>
- Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-PaperPersonality.pdf>

A full bibliography is also available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

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ⁱ Personal biography available at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Available online at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/235P-DecisionTime.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ That theology is most explicitly expressed Catechism of the Catholic Churchⁱⁱⁱ. Paragraph 2357 states: "Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

^{iv} Royal College of Psychiatrists' statement on sexual orientation http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/ps02_2014.pdf

^v British Psychological Society and other organisations: Conversion Therapy: Consensus Statement.

http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/conversion_therapy_final_version.pdf

^{vi} APA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Statement: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

^{vii} APA Policy Statements on LGBT Concerns <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/>

^{viii} For a key papers and a full bibliography see: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm>

^{ix} 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>

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

^{xi} 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>

^{xii} Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf> ; Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church":

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

^{xiii} Ozanne, Jayne. (2017): "Spiritual abuse – the next great scandal for the Church": Royal College of Psychiatrists

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/jayneozannespiritualabusethenextgreatscandalforthechurch.pdf>

^{xiv} See section 11:1: Present Day Issues in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New

Approach": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

^{xv} Gilchrist, S. (2014): "Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian

Church": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversoryAndCrisis.pdf>

^{xvi} 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>

^{xvii} Davie, Martin (2015): "Transgender Liturgies: Should the Church of England develop liturgical materials to mark gender transition?" Latimer Briefing 20: <http://www.latimertrust.org/index.php/publications/briefings/276-lb20>. In this document the case for the acceptance of gender transition is made out in three representative documents by Christina Beardsley, Chris Dowd and Justin Tanis. Against this it is argued that these do not provide a convincing basis for accepting the idea at the heart of gender transition, that "someone's true self can be separated from their biological sex". The document then sets out an alternative Christian theological framework for approaching gender transition and for giving pastoral care for transgender people. It argues that liturgies which recognise the transition of transgender people should not be endorsed by the Church.

^{xviii} Paul, Ian: (2017): "What do we need to know in order to have an informed debate about transgenderism?": <https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/debating-transgender/>. This document, which purports to be an objective account about scientific transgender and theological matters has been made available to General Synod Members, who will be attending the General Synod Meeting of The Church of England in York in July 2017

^{xix} In pursuit of his argument Davies cites a number of articles including: The Evangelical Alliance, "Transsexuality", Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000. He also cites Walt Heyer: (2015), "A Transgender's Faith". This makes use of the articles by Paul McHugh. Paul Mc Hugh is also cited in, 'Transgenderism: A Pathogenic Meme,' Public Discourse, 10 June 2015, also in Lawrence S Meyer and Paul McHugh, 'Sexuality and Gender,' The New Atlantis, No. 50, Fall 2016 at <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/number-50-fall-2016>. Further books cited include Oliver O'Donovan, "Transsexualism, Issues and Argument", Cambridge: Grove Book, 2007. Vaughan Roberts, "Transgender": The Good Book Company, 2016. And Mark Yarhouse: "Understanding Gender Dysphoria", Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015. All of these approach the issue from a Christian perspective. The article fails to note that McHugh's views have been rejected in an open letter signed by at least 600 scientists. (See: https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/lgbti/files/lgbti/publication_files/ExpertLGBTIConcensusLetter.pdf). Also the work by Money cited in this article has been discredited, not because it disproves transgender issues, but because of irregularities in the approach. Furthermore the whole thesis of the argument which is presented by Davies fails, because it presumes that the development of the true self, which includes gender identities and sexual identities, cannot be separated from biological sex. That presumption is shown in independent studies to be incorrect. These issues are more fully discussed in: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>.

For independent research on gender identity see also: <http://www.gires.org.uk/>

^{xx} Church of England (2017): gs-misc-1158-next-steps-on-human-sexuality.pdf

^{xxi} Church of England (2017): "The Independent Peter Ball Review: AN ABUSE OF FAITH" by Dame Moira Gibbs:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3999908/report-of-the-peter-ball-review-210617.pdf>