

Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church

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At the General Synod of the Church of England in York on the 8th and 9th July 2017, two motions were carried by substantial majority of all three houses of the Synod: (bishops, clergy and laity). The first motion condemns “Conversion Therapy” which aims to change a person’s sexual orientation. The second motion gives an unconditional welcome to transgender people in the Church. It also requires it to consider preparing officially sanctioned liturgies for welcoming and giving full affirmation of the identities of transgender people within it. A key feature of both of these motions is that they dispute the traditional teaching of the Church which condemns homosexuality and other forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as acts of grave depravity which always pursue desires for inappropriate or immoral sex. All forms of sexual abuse remain very strongly and unconditionally condemned. However by approving these motions the Church of England has recognised that gender and sexually variant identities are natural variations of the human condition which are intrinsic to the personality created. They pursue the search for identity, not sexual desire, they also arise very early in development and they cannot be changed, either by the individual concerned or by the predations and actions of others in subsequent life. This has now brought the teaching of the Church of England into line with current knowledge and the beliefs of the great majority of professional medical and psychiatric institutions in the Western World,

For many years with Academic and community support, this author in company with others from different academic institutions, has been conducting research into the initial development of personality and self-identity in tribal conflict situations, where the type of institutional tribal violence which affects the whole of society occurs. With the same community and academic support this author has also used the results of this research to examine how gender and sexual identities are created and how the early development of self-identity and personality in these areas takes place. See the “*Further Reading*” section in this document for details. This is totally secularly focussed research. Even though religious issues cannot be totally avoided great care has been taken to ensure that no religious doctrines and theology distort the conduct of this work. It is shown that the results of this scientific research contradict the traditional teaching of the Church. However, because the author is very aware of the great harm that is being done through this scientifically incorrect teaching being applied in a Christian context, an independent theological study has been undertaken to determine how and why the contradiction between religion and science has occurred. Although this investigation involves both scientific and theological elements, these two sections are kept strictly apart in their methodologies and in the interpretation of their results.

The scientific study on the development of personality and self-identity 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. As a consequence a

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² Available online at: Gilchrist, S. (2017): “*Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church*”. At: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf>

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continuous process extending from infancy to adulthood can be described. The development 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 may be severely condemned for their acts. That contradicts the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns all such behaviour as reward driven disordered lifestyle choices that always pursue inappropriate sex.

Tribal conflicts are characterised by the battles of power between different groups and societies. However victory within these conflicts is not usually sought for its own sake, it is normally in pursuit of restricted resources, or the fear of what would happen to one side if the other side won. The consequence of the scapegoating that also occurs is that everyone on the other side is presumed to have evil intent. In this research each infant's sense of identity, as defined by his or her place in society, is shown to be created before the concepts of the personal self are formed. This is demonstrated to be why the sense of tribal identity is so enduring, and why extremities of conflict can develop without any evidence of a significant material cause.

The development of gender and sexual identities and behaviour arise from the same types of processes. However there is no reference whatever to the interactions between power and sex in the traditional Christian doctrines which condemn homosexuality and the other types of gender and sexual variation in the Christian Church. This is despite Christianity's urgent efforts to combat the sexual abuse arising from abuses of power and gender based coercion in a despotic and gender unequal first century Roman society. An explanation for this absence is needed, that is why the relationships between power, gender and sex form a key part of this study.

The condemnation and later criminalisation of homosexuality of gender and sexually variant behaviour removed any knowledge of the moral duality which is inherent to these conditions. The doctrines of the Church could not easily be challenged and the condemnations became more extreme. This outlawing, which was only lifted in the 1960's, prohibited any study of the lived experiences of these people and it prevented long term stable relationships being created. The advances in science, and the acceptance of gender and sexually variant people in society since the 1960's have shown that the type of gender and sexually variant behaviour associated with homosexuality and transgender conditions is about the search for identity and not reward. This major change in understanding is now accepted on a worldwide basis. It means that these conditions are medically misdiagnosed by the traditional Christian doctrines. Schisms are developing in the Church of England and in other Christian Churches because sections of Christianity have failed to respond to the science. The management methods for the two types of condition are almost opposite to one and other, as a consequence great harm is often done when techniques like "Gay Cures" and "Reparative Therapy" are applied when these outdated and medically incorrect Christian doctrines and disapprovals continue to be used.

The extended theological and historical study uses these scientific results to determine how and why this contradiction exists. The cultures and moralities of the surrounding Greek and Roman cults and societies are examined in detail using the same techniques. This is done before considering the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. It is demonstrated that the major concern in first century Judaism was about the abuses of power in these despotic societies. That, with their enforcement of humiliation and domination over subject people, gave permission for the gross abuses of sex. In the victimised, and gender unequal, Jewish society the denunciation of same-sex intercourse was complete. The specific condemnations of same-sex intercourse in Leviticus 20:13: and 18:22 are shown to be a denunciation of the evils of power and domination: they are not primarily the

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condemnations of alleged temple prostitution and the desire for sex. When the abuses of power are absent the prohibitions on same-sex intercourse should be identical to those applied to any other sexual act.

It is therefore demonstrated that a paradigm shift has occurred in Christianity, in which the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse, which had been based on the abuses of power and hospitality have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act. The abuses of power have removed from the Church teaching. The doctrine of papal infallibility protected a powerful Church against attacks for its own abuses. However the sexual scandals inside it led to the Cathar Revolt. Aquinas avoided the issues of power in his own teaching on gender and sex by concentrating exclusively on the condemnation of lust and inappropriate sex. That exclusion is shown most vividly in those passages in the bible where rape by the Israelites in victory seems to be endorsed. Under Aquinas these acts were justified by divine providence, however all other acts of rape, which were not given this protection, he virulently condemns. As a consequence all of the references to the abuses of power have been written out of what today is regarded as the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality and gender and sexually variant behaviour. Engaging in it for any purpose is invariably condemned as a disordered act of grave depravity which always desires inappropriate or immoral sex. It is no longer possible to separate same-sex relationships given in love from those which pursue abusive sex.

These abuses of power are not discussed in the New Testament condemnations, and that absence is addressed in this analysis. Peter and Paul demanded obedience to the Roman authorities. This meant that Christianity could not challenge the social structure of society, but it still vociferously condemned its gross abuses of sex. As the moral duality shown by the scientific study is inherent to gender and sexually variant behaviour, its influence must be present in all societies at all times. In societies where same-sex relationships were expressed, that duality would also have been evident to Jesus, Paul and the other disciples. In this analysis it is shown that the teachings of Jesus and Paul do not conflict with the results of the scientific study. The same is true in the first century Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament texts. This means that the contradictions with science must derive from changes in the Church. It is therefore concluded that the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance are built on the wrong foundation. They come from the need to gain respectability and to combat same-sex abuse in Roman society, and are reinforced by the paradigm shift which occurred in the later Church. They do not come from 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 all cross-gender identification and heterosexual and same-sex acts of sex. In accord 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 must be those of combatting all forms of abusive sex.

The need to seek respectability and acceptance in Roman society was considered essential if Christianity was to continue to survive and bring its Gospel message to the world. That need for respectability is clearly set out in Peter and Paul's New Testament Letters and Epistles. Paul's letter to Philemon suggests that the early Christian community sought to express the Gospel message in full within its own boundaries, while adjusting to the demands that society made outside it. One of the strengths of Christianity is that it has been able to adapt to local circumstances. However the compromises which this demanded swapped the most radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sexuality for the respectability of the Church. Nevertheless that gives no excuse for the gross gender discrimination of the 4th Century Church. The need to protect the 13th century Church from its own abuses was an action that made the paradigm shift complete.

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It is important to note 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 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 which departs from the normal expectations of that society, for any purpose, challenges this distinction. These transformations in Christian doctrine have brought the Church to collude with the secular demands of society rather than to challenge them. Not only has this collusion reinforced the secular prejudices of such discriminatory societies; it gave and it still gives religious legitimacy to them. One only needs to look today at the behaviour of Daesh and Boko Haram to see how extreme this can become. 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 it has been enormous. 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 sex. 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.

It is reported that in June 2017 Thomas Paprocki, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Springfield, Illinois called on priests under his jurisdiction to deny Holy Communion and even funeral rites to people in same-sex unions unless they show "some signs of repentance" for their relationships before death. His decree also said that people "living publicly" in same-sex marriages may not receive the sacrament of confirmation or be admitted to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, a process by which many converts become Catholic, preparing them for baptism and confirmation. At the same time, Paprocki said that children living with a Catholic parent or parents in a same-sex marriage may be baptized. But when it comes to same-sex unions, priests cannot bless couples, church property cannot be used for ceremonies and diocesan employees are forbidden from participating in any such events. 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, derided and trivialised the reality of the identities of transgender people in an 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: in which access to bathroom and toilet facilities was discussed. These religious attitudes are compounded by the political changes that have taken place. In the USA the adviser to President Trump on domestic matters is on record as saying: "*Gays can be reformed, just like arsonists*". For all of these reasons there is now an urgent need to reconsider the traditional teaching of the Church.

Throughout its history, priestly sexual abuse has been a major concern for the Christian Church. On the 22nd June 2017 an independent report by Dame Moira Gibbs commissioned by the Church of England, into the sexual abuse and wrongdoing by a former Church of England Bishop Peter Ball was released. In it Dame Moira states that this abuse is not just shocking in itself: but it is compounded by the failure of the Church to respond appropriately to Ball's misconduct, again over a period of many years. Ball's priority was to protect and promote himself and he maligned the abused. Dame Moira concluded that the Church colluded with that rather than seeking to help those he had harmed, or assuring itself of the safety of others. This exposure of this sexual abuse in the report "*Abuse of Faith*", together with the effective collusion by Archbishop Carey and other members of the senior hierarchy 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. Other allegations continue to emerge in which Church of England

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Bishops have failed either to take action or to respond adequately to multiple claims of sexual abuse. These are not just concerns for the Church of England. On Thursday the 29th June Cardinal George Pell, the Vatican treasurer, was charged with multiple sexual offences. Of course Pell must be presumed innocent until he is proven guilty: however this is only part of the long history of clerical sexual abuse.

If these disgraces are to come to a better resolution, there must be no cover-ups, and no holding back. For as long as any Christian church continues to proclaim a doctrine which medically misdiagnoses how gender and sexual identities develop and excludes any consideration of the relationships between power, gender and sex from its remit, such sexual abuses will continue to take place. This must include a re-examination of its traditional doctrines on homosexuality and on gender and sexually variant behaviour *“As the Church of England has received it: so that the Church is not misled in future years. Yet despite all of these abuses and concerns there is little evidence that the Churches are willing to move sufficiently on these matters. The 2017 report of the Church England “Bishop’s Reflection Group on Sexuality” confined any future consideration to that of: “Interpreting the existing law and guidance to permit maximum freedom within it, without changes to the law, or the doctrine of the Church”.* On the 16th February 2017 following the decision by the General Synod not to take note of the report of the Bishops Reflection Group the Archbishops of Canterbury and York wrote a letter to members of the Church of England which restated the same position. In the paper: *“Next Steps on Human Sexuality”* also written by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and which was presented to the General of the Church of England on the 7th July 2017, the same constraints were again applied to all future work. Pope Francis has repeatedly stated that there can be no possibility of change to the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church.

This investigation considers the development of tribal, sexual and gender identities and the relationships between power and sex. Separate scientific and theological analyses are undertaken. The purpose of the theological analysis is to determine how and why the contradiction between science and theology occurs. It is demonstrated that paradigm shift has taken place, in which the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse, which had been based on the abuses of power and hospitality, have been turned into the unchangeable condemnation of the sexual act. As a consequence it is necessary to examine this paradigm shift and then reverse it, in order to recover the teaching of the early Church. While people will continue to discuss the origins and nature of gender and sexually variant conditions, the greatest harm created by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church is that it treats every gender and sexually variant person who attempts to express their true identity as fallen tribal outcasts within it. Because of this tribalism, many have been rejected from their own Church communities. The centuries of criminalisation and condemnation of Sodomy and gender and sexually variant behaviour means that the only knowledge that many people have about these conditions, is what their enemies tell them. Conservative groups, such as GAFCON, who claim that the Church teaching has never changed, do not succeed in returning to the Gospel message, instead they return to a Christianity determined by the needs of the 13th century Church.

Despite their refusal to change their traditional doctrine, both the Catholic Church and the Church of England emphasise the need to develop pastoral care and radical inclusion of all gender and sexually variant people. However no pastoral care, however well-meant and intently pursued, can ever be effective if the foundations on which it is based are incorrect. This study demands that there should be absolutely no toleration of abuses of gender or sex. The aim instead should be to restore the identity driven nature and the moral duality inherent in gender and sexual behaviour to the teaching of the Church. This means that gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities and conform to the highest standards of their societies should be highly regarded, while those engaged in misuse can be severely condemned for their acts

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The thesis presented in this argument is that it is not Christianity which is responsible for creating the persecution of gender and sexually variant people. That is already present in society. It is the collusion of the Church in these matters which lead to extremes of abuse. Any departure from stereotypically male or female behaviour challenges the institutional frameworks of socially and gender unequal societies. These departures can be seen as disordered actions which threaten the social status and the stability which a socially divided society requires. In Galatians 3:28 Paul did not say that there is no male or female, he said there is no male and female. In Acts 8:26-40 it was a eunuch who was charged with taking the Christian message to the world. No matter how high their rank and ability, eunuchs were reviled and regarded as social and sexual outcasts inside Roman and other first century societies. Therefore these actions and statements challenged at source the institutional structure of Roman Society and the gender and sexual abuses that lay within it. They also expressed the radical inclusion that was present in the teaching of Jesus and the Gospel Church.

Instead of following this radical teaching, which combats the secular scapegoating and persecution of gender and sexually variant people in society, the paradigm shift has occurred whereby Christianity has come to collude with these secular condemnations. This is why change today is urgently required, not just in Christianity, for in many religions and societies great harm is being done throughout the world. Extreme penalties continue to be exacted against gender and sexually variant people in many countries. The changes which were endorsed by the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2017 and the advocacy of radical inclusion do not go far enough. If Christianity is to be true to the Gospel message, it also needs its modern day eunuchs, in the form of gender and sexually variant people: which includes all transgender, transsexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities within roles that are true to themselves, to take the Gospel to the world.

An earlier paper covering equivalent topics was prepared in advance of the Church of England General Synod Meeting in York in July 2017. This has the title "*Gender and Sexual Malpractice and Abuse in the Christian Church*" and can be downloaded at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/236P-Malpractice.pdf> . It contains critiques of the documents presented to Synod and it describes the latest research.

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Further reading:

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>

References to all sources are given in the detailed papers

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

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