

Science and Theology in Human Sexuality

19th September 2016, 11:00 to 20th September 2016, 16:00,
St. John's College, Durham University

Durham University: Royal College of Psychiatrists



AN OVERVIEW OF SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY IN GENDER AND SEXUAL VARIATION, AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SUMMARY PRESENTATION

SUSAN GILCHRIST

An abbreviated version of this presentation was given at the conference

20 SEPTEMBER 2016

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PAPERS

There are two introductory papers that are most relevant:

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>

Other papers and a full bibliography are available via: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

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SCIENCE BACKGROUND

- ***This investigation aims to link recent neuroscientific research on early development to the approaches adopted by the traditional psychodynamic and social learning theories***
- ***Gender dysphoria is used as a case study to model the process.***
- ***A major advancement in neural capabilities occurs near two years of age. (Called here the Neurophysiological Transformation Period)***
- ***Two distinct and differently focussed development processes are shown to be involved***

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KEY DEVELOPMENT STAGES

- ***Development before this neurophysiological transformation period is dominated by contagious internally generated and inward looking forces which act in a feed-forward manner to ensure that the greatest information is obtained.***
- ***Development after the neurophysiological transformation period is increasingly moderated by the later controlling feed-back and outward looking forces of cognitive development which ensure that order is applied***
- ***Using recent research on the “Domestication of the Brain” and the results of earlier work on gender dysphoria it is shown that a basic constancy of personality develops by the age of three years.***



CORE GENDER IDENTITY AND CONSCIOUS AWARENESS

- ***The unconscious core gender identity which develops near the time of the neurophysiological transformation period is a product of the momentum that is created.***
- ***The later conscious sense of gender identity which is formed relies on these cognitive processes and is a product of rational thought***
- ***Major conflict occurs when these are in conflict.***
- ***The core gender identity is hidden from the conscious mind***
- ***When these are in harmony all awareness of the core gender identity and the way it was created disappears.***

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TUNING AND TIMING

- ***The physiological, neurological and psychological aspects of brain development act together to form a finely tuned system in which the maximum amount of individuality, possessiveness, intelligence and inquisitiveness, together with the minimum degree of energy expenditure is formed.***
- ***This analysis demonstrates how personality disorders are created. However the same processes are involved in ensuring that the highest degree of human potential, individuality and creativity is obtained.***
- ***Children do not develop a level of conscious awareness that enables them to question the inconsistencies that are encountered until about the age of four years. By this time all the earlier elements have become locked in place.***

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MORAL DUALITY

- ***Lack of cognitive influences means that development before the neurophysiological transformation period is identity driven. That includes gender and sexual variation***
- ***This means that as wide a range on moral attitudes, beliefs, inclinations and responsibilities is to be found in these groups, as those which occur in the population at large***
- ***A moral duality is therefore encountered. This demands the welcome of same-sex and gender variant behaviour which involves relationships that are given in love and faithfulness, while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex. The existence of that moral duality is denied by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church.***

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STUDY PROTOCOLS FOR HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

- ***The aim of the theological investigation is to find out how and why this contradiction occurred. This critique adopts a radical methodology which is only made possible by the results of the neurophysiological and psychological study.***
- ***The approach which is taken is in the first instance is to conduct a review, without any reference to Christianity, of first century Greek, Jewish and Roman societies in which the conclusions of the scientific study and the moral duality which is identified in it, are applied.***
- ***Only after the review is completed are the Christian interpretations assessed.***
- ***In all of the relevant first century religious traditions equivalent moral dualities are shown to exist. These are described.***

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NEW INSIGHTS

- ***By removing the veil of the theological presumptions which have dominated Church history and teaching for the last two millennia new insights are gained on the interpretation of biblical texts***
- ***It is demonstrated that, not only was the duality inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour known to Jesus, it was incorporated into his own teaching.***
- ***It also gives new insights about the nature of the transition from a Gospel which was taught without compromises to the Jewish authorities, into a Gospel which aimed to gain respect for Christianity in the Greek and worlds.***
- ***However the intense cultural wars and disagreements between the Roman and Judean societies have had a major impact on the results.***

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GENDER AND SEXUAL DISRUPTION

- ***Gender and sexual disruption pervaded first century societies. Abuses of heterosexual and same sex acts of sex were the privileges of a dominant society, and strongly enforced in the Roman world. The weapons of subject people included the gender disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults.***
- ***This was a major feature of the first century world. Jesus could hardly have been unaware of it. The moral duality that is shown to be present in the Goddess Cults gave them a much broader remit than Christianity admits.***
- ***The passage on marriage and eunuchs in Matthew 19:3-12 has a particular relevance when this moral duality and the Goddess Cults are considered.***
- ***It is shown that that all eunuchs, including the self-castrated priests of the Goddess cults who sought to fulfil the Gospel message were welcomed by Jesus; with no regard to any gender transformations they may have made***

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TRANSFORMATION

- ***Early Christianity is characterised by a transformation which enabled it to move from a movement which was attacked and seemingly destroyed by a gender and socially unequal society into a religion which could survive in a society which was probably even worse***
- ***The teaching of Jesus we have is one which has been interpreted by the traditions of the Church***
- ***However by studying the societies which Jesus taught using the results of this analysis it may be possible to break through the barriers that this creates***
- ***Present day interpretations imply that only a gradual transformation between societies was made. In this analysis it is argued that the transformation must have been present from the beginning to ensure the survival of the Church.***

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ADAPTATIONS

- ***Spreading the Gospel message to the world was one key feature that demanded the survival of the Church. To directly attack the power structures of Roman society would have destroyed it. The need conform to these is evident in the letters and epistles of Peter and Paul. In addition that had to be present from the outset if Christianity was to succeed.***
- ***The command of Jesus to work within society to change it, and also remain true to the Gospel message gave Peter and Paul a difficult choice***
- ***The passage which follows the statement on eunuchs has direct relevance when it says: “He that is able to receive it let him receive it”. In this study it is shown that the conditional nature of this statement provided the authority which Christianity needed to adapt and move forward on gender and sexual matters in a way which likewise ensured the survival of the Church. (For a more detailed explanation of this see endnote 1).***

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PRAGMATISM

- ***As a consequence it was not just on social matters, where Jesus avoided revolt by saying “Render unto Caesar”. In sexual and gender matters the same authorisation was given to Peter and Paul to involve the expectations of Roman society in the culture of the Church.***
- ***That adjustment has been made through the acceptance of gender complementary and the social roles of men and women: which in practice have since been changed into immutable doctrines of the Church.***
- ***The nature of these adaptations should not be surprising. In their character they are exactly the same as those which were required of the Jews at the time of the Exile (Jeremiah 21:8-9 Jeremiah 29:7).***
- ***Instead of arguing about absolute right or absolute wrong, Jeremiah told the Israelites to make the best available choice.***

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TIMING AND INTERPRETATION

- ***In the transition between adherence to Jewish traditions and those of Roman society a considerable degree of continuity is observed. It is argued that the early Christian Church tried to express in full the radical teaching of Jesus within the confinements of Jewish and Roman society.***
- ***It is concluded that the adaptations needed for Roman society were already present before the Epistles and Letters of Peter and Paul were written. The claim of the Christian Church that its traditional teaching on gender complementarity has Apostolic Authority is also considered to be correct.***
- ***By moderating the radical teaching of Jesus in accordance with the passage in Matthew 19:3-12, the Epistles and Letters of Peter and Paul were instead intended to deal with the needs of the Early Church. Modern attempts to understand the teaching of Jesus without regard to these adaptations give a constrained interpretation of the teaching of Jesus himself.***

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CONTEXT

- ***There were enormous cultural clashes which related to the differences in power between subject and dominant peoples and societies. Male Roman citizens could engage in same-sex rape and acts of anal penetration without penalty, but only if they were penetrators in the act. Sexual morality was seen through the prism of power and authority. For Judaism the horror of this sexual abuse is vividly described in the Bible texts.***
- ***It is shown that the prohibition of anal penetration in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: (today usually interpreted as same-sex intercourse); were also about the abuses of power, and not about obnoxiousness of the actual act.***
- ***A feature in all major first century societies, including Judaism and the early Christian Church was that sexual abuse was not primarily defined on a gendered basis. The differences were normally expressed by separating the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex.***

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PURPOSE OR ACT

- ***Setting the boundary between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex is a condemnation of purpose, not of an act. It is notable that the first century condemnations of same-sex intercourse do not focus on the specific act, the condemnations are described in terms of “Lack of Respect”***
- ***The duality inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour which is confirmed by the scientific analysis also means that any condemnation must be a condemnation of purpose not condemnation of act.***
- ***Between about four and eight passages in the Bible are taken to condemn same-sex behaviour. For the two reasons above, these should be taken to condemn the abuse that the acts are put to: not engaging in the acts.***
- ***Paul’s own condemnations attack sexual abuse and the failure to conform to the gender stereotypes that a gender and socially unequal society expects***



RELATIONSHIPS

- ***The Christian interpretation that marriage must only be between a man and a woman is held to be paramount in many Christian groups. Any loving and committed sexual relationship between two people of the same sex is always presumed to be decadent and destructive of family life,***
- ***That automatic presumption is denied by the duality in this analysis. It is also of note that close partnerships between two men were endorsed in ceremonies of Adelpopoiesis conducted by the early Christian Church.***
- ***Some may regard these as precursors to same-sex marriage. However in this study they are considered more likely to mark the closeness found in Jewish Rabbinic partnerships that were carried over into the Christian Church.***
- ***Paradoxically these may have more in common with today's concept of marriage than any first century marriage could present.***

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GENDER, POWER AND SEX

- ***When gender complementarity is enforced, gender discrimination may be expected to follow. That was strongly evident in the fourth Century Church***
- ***It is shown that the greatest concern in Jewish Society and in the early Christian Church was not about condemning the sexual acts. Instead they were condemned for their abuse, their roles in gender coercion and the enforcement of power and domination over subject groups and individuals by the dictatorial and dominant first century societies.***
- ***Later Christianity turned condemnation of action into condemnation of act.***
- ***Because of these battles it is not surprising that all awareness of the duality in gender and sexually variant relationships disappeared, and that all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour came universally to be condemned as mortally sinful and evil acts.***

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SUMMARY 1

- ***In this investigation the teaching of the Church is examined from the perspectives of the teaching of Jesus, Old Testament interpretations, the neurophysiological and psychological study, the doctrines of the New Covenant and the Jewish Midrashim traditions.***
- ***The scientific, historic, theological and social standpoints are examined. In all of these it is demonstrated that a moral duality exists in gender and sexually variant behaviour which demands the welcome of cross-gender activities and same-sex relationships that are the outpourings of love and faithfulness, while condemning those that are pursued for abusive and illicit sex.***
- ***Identical criteria in relation to use and abuse should be applied to heterosexual and same-sex acts of sex. There is no reduction in moral standards and no toleration of abusive sex.***

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SUMMARY 2

- ***It is shown that the traditional teaching of the Church is built on an incorrect foundation. Instead of being based on the teaching of Jesus it results from struggles between society and the Church***
- ***All sexual and cross-gender behaviour is governed by the purity of intention, and in every faithful, loving and committed relationship where the abuses of power are absent, there is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex or cross-gender act.***
- ***The denial of the duality inherent in gender and sexually variant behaviour continues to cause great distress***
- ***Much harm is still being done today to gender and sexually variant people by the misdiagnoses pursued in defiance of science by sections of the Christian Church***

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SUMMARY 3

- ***This is not a neutral analysis because it uses the results of the neurophysiological study to conduct a critique of the Christian Church. The danger of this approach is that it can create its own agenda. Therefore its success or failure depends upon whether it brings a greater or lesser understanding to the development of the Christian tradition and to the teaching of Jesus himself.***
- ***The condemnation of all gender and sexually variant people for the misdemeanours of some colludes with the secular scapegoating by society of any minority group. In some countries extreme penalties are applied.***
- ***There is therefore an urgent need to address the schisms and conflicts caused by disagreements in the present day Christian Church.***
- ***That need is considered in the sections which follow.***

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CHALLENGE AND POWER

- ***The statement in Matthew 12:19: “He that is able to receive it let him receive it” was not just a statement of compromise.***
- ***It was also the command for the Christian Church to express in full the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sex as soon as it had the power in society to do so.***
- ***Once it was dominant in society, Christianity had the potential to return to this radical teaching. Changes at the times of Ambrose and Aquinas in theory created two possibilities.***
- ***Further transformations in power structure took place at the time of the Reformation. However instead of any return, Christianity has chosen to reinforce the power and authority of the Church. (see endnote 2)***

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REFORMATION

- ***This needs to be the subject of a separate presentation. The full details re given in two documents. These are:***
- ***Gilchrist, S. (2013a): “An Unfinished Reformation”:***
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>
- ***Gilchrist, S. (2013b): “Reform and the Christian Church”:***
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/008B-ReformChristianChurchArticle.pdf>
- ***The limitations on information available to Luther and others concealed all evidence of the duality: this instead reinforced the universal condemnation of all gender and sexually variant behaviour by the Christian Church.***
- ***Today that return has still not happened. The reasons for this have been firmly fixed in the history of condemnation by the Christian Church.***

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AUTHORITY

- ***No change was possible for as long as the duality in same-sex relations remained hidden by the criminalisation and denunciation of same-sex acts.***
- ***What began as a pragmatic policy by Peter, Paul and the early Church to ensure its success in taking the Gospel to the world, has been changed into immutable doctrines of the Church***
- ***Attempts by GAFCON and others to argue for the authority of scripture without recognising these adaptations in teaching and tradition, do not recover the Gospel message: They return instead to the adapted Christianity of the 13th Century Church***
- ***The social changes of the last fifty years have again exposed this duality to view. It is now time to adopt in full the message of Jesus and restore the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sex to the present day Church.***

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FUTURE

- ***Recent movements in many Western Christian Churches have been towards creating pastoral accommodation within the Church structures***
- ***However there has been resolute refusal to consider any changes in the traditional teaching of the Church***
- ***Not only has this teaching been found wanting from the point of view of scientific analysis, it is also found to be wanting in societies where it can be freely expressed.***
- ***The Church of England and other Churches have to move out of the enclosed bubbles of their own theologies.***
- ***These issues of science must be fully addressed.***

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CREDIBILITY

- ***Despite this urgency the refusal to listen still continues.***
- ***The moral duality does not have to be proved by a scientific investigation. it is already available for others to see in the lives of gender and sexually people, who are now enabled to openly express it in everyday life.***
- ***There is already a great deal of empirical, professional and experiential evidence which demonstrates that the traditional Church Teaching on gender and sexual variation is incorrect.***
- ***This investigation supplements other evidence by giving explanations for causes of these conditions.***
- ***The continuing retreat by the Church into explanations which are based on its own theology is destroying the credibility of Christianity itself.***

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CONTRADICTION

- ***The neurophysiological and psychological study demonstrates that a duality must exist which demands the welcome of same-sex and gender variant behaviour involving relationships that are given in love and faithfulness, while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex.***
- ***On the other hand the traditional teaching of the Christian Church condemns all gender and sexually variant behaviour as mortally sinful and disordered reward driven lifestyle choices, which are always in pursuit of immoral or inappropriate sex***
- ***No theological or sociological analysis of Church history can resolve this contradiction: these studies can only show how the contradiction arises.***
- ***If the Christian Church is still not willing to reconsider its own history and theology, much harm and distress will continue to be caused***

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IT IS NOW TIME FOR CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

References and Bibliography Continues

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THE BIG READ

Two introductory papers were introduced at the start of this presentation. For comprehensive reports of the scientific and theological elements of this study see:

Gilchrist, S. (2013): “Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Other papers and a full bibliography are available via:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

These presentation slides are available online at:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuG0915h-SlidePresentation1.pdf> .

A summary sheet is available at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuG0918d-DurhamLeaflet3.pdf>

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THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?

The slides which follow are some that were not used in the original presentation

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HARM

On scientific, social, and theological grounds it has been demonstrated that the moral duality exists which demands the welcome of same-sex and gender variant behaviour which involves relationships that are given in love and faithfulness, while condemning those engaged in for abusive and illicit sex. If the Christian Churches:

- Continue to condemn the behaviour of all gender and variant people for the misdemeanours of some, they give support to the secular scapegoating in all societies which condemn every member of a minority tribe or culture in place of individual members that group who engage in evil or harmful acts***
- Continue to pursue the doctrine that gender and sexual identities and gender sexually variant behaviour are lifestyle choices, they will fail to recognise the differences between reward driven and identity driven conflicts and characteristics, and much harm will continue to be done because of the medical misdiagnoses that result.***

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ENDNOTE 1

***The interpretation of Matthew 19 3-12 given here is different from the usual present day ones. It comes from a detailed examination of the Goddess cults and their roles in ancient society. This is fully written up in Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church”:
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>***

***Also: See: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”:
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>***

ENDNOTE 2

In practice a reinstatement of the traditional teaching was very unlikely because of the cultural clashes and the battles with the Goddess Cults. Ambrose is mentioned here since during his bishopric a Roman Emperor first gave obedience to the authority of the Church. However this was also a time when the

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“gay” lobby was getting too strong and needed to be held in check See: Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>

Aquinas liberalised the teaching of the Christian Church after the Cathar Revolt. However another part of this work was also to restore the authority of the Institution of the Christian Church. Therefore his actions had the effect of liberalising sex inside marriage while condemning every form of behaviour and intention outside it as lust and immoral and depraved sex.

The traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexual variation largely derives from Aquinas’ work. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>