

Reform and the Christian Church

Susan Gilchrist

Abstract

There were many doctrinal changes which the Christian Church adopted in regard to the positions of women, in attitudes to gender complementarity and to gender and sexual variance during the first three centuries of its existence. This analysis uses the results of some recent research work on gender dysphoria and on personality development as a tool for re-considering the historical backgrounds and the reasons for these changes. A précis of this is given in this account. The history of the Church is examined from two perspectives, one works back through the Church traditions, and the second traces forward from the Jewish and the Greco/Roman backgrounds to review the social and the moral traditions which were the sources from which the Apostolic Church developed. In order for the Church to make the breakthrough from a minority and a subject Jewish sect into the universal religion of a dominant society, an initial period of true gender equality and transcendence is required and it is shown that without that period this transition could not have occurred. Early Christianity had demanded a revolution in the social attitudes, but the message of Jesus which is presented in the Gospels also required the Church to work within society in order to change it, rather than destroy it. This gave the Church a difficult choice, and it sought to compromise these first Gospel doctrines of gender transcendence to obtain the respectability which would enable it to convey the remainder of the Gospel message to the wider world. By engaging with the expectations of society, and by taking up the dogmas of gender complementarity which were associated with the surrounding Greco/Roman and Jewish societies the ability of the Church to bring the Gospel challenges to all people in the matters of gender equality and to sexual and gender variance was destroyed. This investigation also demonstrates how the teachings of Jesus had created an attitude to gender equality and to sexual and gender variance that would be acceptable in the present day. A major disconnection occurred during these first three centuries. What today is regarded as the traditional teachings of the Christian Church on all sexual and gender variance are built on the false foundation of the demand to gain respectability within Greco/Roman society and that what in the present day is regarded as the traditional teaching of the Church on homosexuality and on sexual and gender variance is not the same as that of the Gospel Church.

One of the objectives of the Reformation Movement of 16th Century was to return to the teaching of the bible alone. This included the rejection of later traditions that had been adopted by the Church. The reformers took Augustine as a frame of reference. Although they rejected many of the Church traditions which Augustine had endorsed, they continued to maintain, and may have reinforced the doctrines of an exclusive heterosexual orthodoxy, which included the abhorrence of homosexuality and other gender and sexually variant behaviour that had been propagated by the Church.

The results of this analysis challenge many of the traditional doctrines which the Church has adopted on the roles of women, gender complementarity and to gender and sexual variance. In certain Churches the social changes of the last fifty years have promoted a re-evaluation of Christian teaching but this has also resulted in a

retrenchment into literalism and to fundamentalism in others. This study supports this re-evaluation and gives historical and theological support to the changes that are now being made. The sixteenth century reformers could not have carried out this re-evaluation since the knowledge and resources were then not available to them. This analysis provides new insights into the crises about gender and sexuality which are faced by the present day Christian Church. It is hoped that this study can make the Reformation a little more complete.

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1:0. Preface

This paper on “Reform and the Christian Church” makes use of the results of a new neurophysiological and psychological investigation into the formation of self-identity, personality development and gender dysphoria. Full descriptions of the research work are given in Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach” and in Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief”. (See the footer for access). This preface contains a summary of the neurophysiological and psychological work.

The present position of the majority of Christian Churches on homosexuality and by implication on all the gender and sexually variant conditions is clearly stated in the 1997 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church¹. The labels that this catechism imposes appear to be quite clear. They decree that not only is homosexuality intrinsically disordered, but also they demand conformity to the doctrines of natural law² and that the doctrines of sexual complementarity are adopted³. The statement

¹ “Homosexuality refers to the 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.” Catechism of the Catholic Church: Paragraph 2357. The Second Edition English Translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with corrections promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 8 September 1997.

²Natural law, (or the law of nature), is a system of law which is supposedly determined by nature, therefore it is universal and it is naturally understood. In the Twelfth Century, Gratian equated natural law with divine law. However a century later, Thomas Aquinas brought natural law back to its independent state by asserting that natural law was to be considered as the rational creature's participation in the eternal law. Natural law was not only to be used to pass judgment on the moral worth of the various laws, but also to determine what the law said in the first place. However Aquinas also argued that because human reason could not fully comprehend the eternal principles on which natural law was based, it had to be supplemented by revealed Divine law, and this was interpreted by the theology of the Church. So, instead of absolute independence, these doctrines meant that natural law, as understood in the Roman Catholic tradition, provides a set of laws which is moderated by the theology of the Church.

³Current day doctrines on Gender Complementarity are perhaps best summed up in articles 2332-2335 of the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. “2332 Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others. 2333 Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity. Physical, moral, and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out. 2334 In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity. 2335 Each of the two sexes is an image of the power and tenderness of God, with equal dignity though in a different way. The union of man and woman in marriage is a way of imitating in the flesh the Creator's
Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church”. Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013 3
First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

however confirms that the genesis of homosexuality is not well understood, and that this doctrine has largely been developed from the traditions of the Church.

The doctrines and conclusions which are expressed in this statement are challenged by this investigation. This preface examines the physiological and psychological background. Therefore there are two parts to this analysis. The first involves the neurophysiological and psychological studies which examine the characteristics and the processes that are involved in personality development with particular reference to gender and sexual variation. This makes use of gender dysphoria as a case study to validate the results⁴. A further study uses the results of the neurophysiological and psychological studies to examine the development of the attitudes to sex and gender which are found within the Christian Church. Therefore the second element of this investigation consists of the social and theological studies which examine what the original Gospel doctrines were, why these were changed by the early Church and in what ways the present day perceptions are still influenced by the traditional teaching the Church. This neurophysiological and psychological research study has disproved the current Christian doctrines that exclusively attribute the driving forces which lie behind all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour to the pursuit of lust, illicit and immoral sex, and this result requires a radical reassessment of the teachings of the Church.

Current and recent research work in neurophysiology and neuropsychology, much of which has been pioneered by Gallese and others⁵, has identified the importance of features such as those of mirror neurons, the active phases of brain plasticity⁶ and of cortical development, and it has revealed the importance of the imitative processes in controlling the functioning of the brain. It is demonstrated in this account that the creation of the personal self-identity, including the sexual and gender components of it, form part of a self-reinforcing process of possessive imitation. After a particular direction has been established the core elements cannot be changed in later life. In gender dysphoria for example the core gender identity (the sense of being who one

generosity and fecundity". While few would argue about the delights of a gender complementarity which simply delights in the differences between the sexes, many more would argue against a doctrine of gender complementarity that imposes it. It is shown in this analysis that this doctrine was used to enforce the practices of gender discrimination against women and the submission of women to men for centuries in society. It is also shown that this doctrine arose because of the need for the early Church to gain respectability in male dominated Greco/Roman society, and that it is contrary to the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel itself.

⁴ Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". See footer for access.

⁵ See for example Gallese, V., & Sinigaglia, C. (2011). How the body in action shapes the self. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 18 (7–8):117–143 also Gallese V. (2013) Bodily self, affect, consciousness and the cortex. *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 15 (1), 42-45.

⁶This is the ability of the brain to shape itself. For humans the importance of timing in early brain development is emphasized in the delayed development of the pre-frontal cortex which is regarded as the part of the brain responsible for cognitive thought. The emergence of its functional capabilities is not uniform across the domains of the cortex and different abilities emerge at different times. Learning takes place through a process where those pathways in the brain that are most used become strengthened and those which are not die back. This ability, together with the subsequent process of synaptic pruning are efficient ways for the brain to achieve optimal development. The presumption that the learning capabilities in early life are similar to or equivalent to those in later life cannot be made, and any explanation must take the development of brain physiology into account when considering how identity is formed

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

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Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

is) is known to have become firmly and irrevocably locked in place, if not from birth, at the latest by three years of age⁷. These imitative processes provide confirmation of other work by Dawkins and others, who have defined the Meme as a key component in their theories⁸. However many of the concepts put forward in the research work of Dawkins et al. had already been foreshadowed by René Girard^{9 10} ¹¹ who has argued that these processes of Mimetic¹² possessive imitation provide the principal driving forces for the development of human personality, which includes the creation of the personal self-identity. Girard has extensively modelled these processes. Unlike the Freudian psychodynamics, which requires the existence of some basic “Theory of Mind”¹³ in order to be able to function, the driving forces that are identified by Girard are present immediately from birth, and they are also innate. Freud, Piaget and many others have observed that a major change in the cognitive abilities of infants rapidly takes place around the age of two years. However these psychodynamic and social learning theories cannot work without the existence of some form of active cognitive continuum¹⁴. It is shown in this investigation that this continuum is absent or ineffective during these early stages, so that up to the age of about two years it is the self-reinforcing imitative processes which exert the dominant role.

This analysis has identified a development process which remains applicable from birth to maturity and it provides new insights into the development of a personal identity. It matches the cognitive development of babies with the development of brain physiology and it is shown that a major increase in the capabilities of both of these takes place around the age of two years. It is argued that the quorum sensing

⁷Previous attempts to explain the origins of homosexuality and transsexuality using psychodynamic and social learning theories have not met with success. That is because no sufficient causal inputs can be found. Therefore the presently accepted theories argue that the creation of these conditions is due to the effect of hormones on the foetus which first causes sexual differentiation to develop in the foetal brain. However some form of psychological process is needed to transform physiological attributes into identity and thought. This paper concentrates on the latter process and it is shown that brain plasticity after birth can play a major role. See Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”. See footer for access.

⁸ Dawkins, R. (1976). “The Selfish Gene.” Chapter 11, Oxford University Press (new edition with additional material, 1989). Heylightens, F and Chielens, K (2009) Cultural Evolution and Memetics. Article prepared for the Encyclopedia of Complexity and System Science ed. B. Meyers (Springer) Dawkins also described the resulting behaviour as Memetic behaviour

⁹ Girard, R., (1961) “Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965. [Originally published in French, 1961; translated by Yvonne Freccero.]

¹⁰ Girard, R., (1972). “Violence and the Sacred”. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. [Originally published in French, 1972; trans. by Patrick Gregory.]

¹¹ Girard, R., (1978). “Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World”. Research undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Michel Oughourlian and Guy Lefort. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987. [Originally pub. in French, 1978; trans. by Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer.]

¹² Dawkins does not cite Girard’s work. Dawkins’ meme and the mimetic process described by Girard have been independently defined.

¹³ Theory of mind is the ability to attribute mental states, beliefs, intents, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc. to oneself and others and to understand that others have beliefs, desires, and intentions that are different from one’s own. For an account, see, Doherty, Martin J. (2009) “Theory of mind: how children understand others’ thoughts and feelings.” Taylor & Francis ISBN 1841695718, 9781841695716

¹⁴ This requires some form of understanding of the relationship between cause and effect. Some basic elements of a “Theory of Mind” must be present for it to work.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church”. Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

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Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

activities, which allow the sense of individual personality to begin to form do not take place before this stage¹⁵. The coherence of selfhood that is created depends on the effectiveness of how these processes are carried out. From about the age of three years, synaptic pruning and the effects of brain plasticity have begun to lock the core foundations of self-identity in place¹⁶. This analysis also demonstrates that these are processes that are tuned to maximise the degree of personal individuality that can be developed, and it also shows how variations in the processes can lead to situations where both gender and sexually variant identities are formed. The results from the analysis also confirm that these conditions are identity driven, which means that as broad a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must be encountered among the gender and sexually variant communities as is found in society at large. However the analysis goes further than this, because it demonstrates how this understanding of gender dysphoria and its dynamics can be applied in other circumstances. It is shown that similar dynamics are encountered in conditions that involve personality disorders, such as depression, addiction etc. Therefore the results of this analysis have a much broader scope.

A consequence of the analysis is that it is necessary to make distinctions between identity and desire driven conflicts. The threshold between these two types of conflict begins to become evident between two and three years of age. The identity driven conflicts are those which have roots that have already developed before that time. These may be characterised by the obsessive and compulsive pursuit of a particular goal, but after that goal has been accomplished, the intensity of the previous drive to achieve it frequently contrasts strongly with the modesty of the outcomes that are expressed. It is not the perceived goal which is the objective. The real objective is the one which enables people to become true to themselves; so that after the goal has been achieved a coherence of selfhood can be created.

In desire driven conflicts the strength of the desire and the obsession with the result often possess a matching intensity. The same fundamental issues of self identity are not encountered, and the roots of this type of conflict are likely to have formed after the threshold has been passed. In Freudian psychodynamics these differences are characterised by deviation and perversion. Freud believed deviation to be a condition where the atypical development takes place from the outset, but in a perversion the normal course of development has been interrupted. This investigation can make a corresponding distinction, however it is argued that the difference between the two types of conflict is defined by the sudden change in the cognitive ability which takes place between the ages of two and three years. The correct identification of the type of conflict is also very important since almost the opposite management methods are needed. The management methods are described in a further paper: Gilchrist, S.

¹⁵In this analysis it is argued that the development of self identity begins with the creation of individual and independent strands of thought. Initially these strands are not linked together but as the cortical development progresses, increasing linkage occurs. Both Dawkins and Girard consider this to be a contagious process. An analogy to quorum sensing can be that of the behaviour of people in a crowd. Initially there is disorder, but once it is sensed that some people are moving in a particular direction, others follow. The consequence is a self generating movement when a decision is made on a path to be taken without a majority being reached. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". See footer for access.

¹⁶As previously described synaptic pruning reduces the number of synapses in the brain using a process which reinforces those neural pathways that are relevant and discards those that are not. Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013
First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.
Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

(2013). "Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality". (See the footer for access). In an identity driven conflict a threshold may be crossed where all evidence of the desire for the goal may disappear, but that can only work if a state of mind is created which is sufficiently motivated to be able to dismiss the forces of the self-identity which lie behind it. That can sometimes be produced through the euphoria of religious belief. This has enabled some religious groups to claim that a "Cure" can be found, however that rarely lasts, and continued attempts to fight or to suppress these underlying demands leads to a self-reinforcing outcome which continually increases the strength of the conflict. If this is allowed to progress it often results in a mental breakdown or in complete collapse. The best management methods seek total acceptance and acknowledgement of the richness that these experiences can bring. Attempting to treat gender and sexual variation, or to give well intentioned support by adopting the presumptions which are enforced by the doctrines of the Church, or with the conviction that it is a desire driven conflict, have a very damaging counterproductive effect.

Despite the great advances in research which have been made during the last sixty years, in social opinion and indeed in much of psychiatry, the breakthrough into the everyday practices of psychology and psychiatry has still not been made. Many of the practitioners in the psychiatric disciplines, authors of books and other people still continue to employ psychodynamic approaches, social learning theories, cognitive behavioural methods and the various other techniques which are derived ultimately from the presumptions about early childhood development which Freud first made during the progress of his work. There is a compelling need for change but change has been impeded for two principal reasons. One arises from the limitations of the psychodynamic and social learning theories that are used. Freud considered that the first two years were a period of seething, disordered and conflicting emotions where limited constructive development occurred. That is perhaps not surprising because, without an active cognitive continuum, Freud's theory of psychosexual dynamics will not work¹⁷. This perception that little development happens during the first two years of life diminishes its importance. That then leads to the presumption that the only type of dynamics to be considered are those which lead to the desire driven conflicts, and these are considered to apply to the whole of life. Many books and articles on childhood learning for example are still published where this philosophy is applied. That perception is further reinforced by the doctrines of the Christian Church which decree that all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour are lifestyle choices which are in pursuit of lust, illicit or inappropriate sex.

The Freudian view that little happens during these early years has since been blown apart by a very great deal of later research, but the importance of the need to bring the results of current research into everyday practice has still not been completely understood. This failure is still encountered in current research studies, and this has

¹⁷Freud understood that he needed a strong driving force to propel his psychodynamic ideas and he identified this with the motives for sex. However Freud was also aware of its limitations. In his attitude to what he considered to be personality deviation, (of which homosexuality is one), he argued for a process of inversion instead. Had Freud been able to develop this further he might have come closer to Girard's views. However that capability was removed by the unavailability of any better argument at the time, the attitudes of his colleagues, of society and also the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church

dominated the traditional understanding of the moral values which are found inside the first century Greek and Roman societies. It has also condemned all of the Greek and Roman religions and cults to be perceived as hotbeds of lewd and improper sex.

Far from diminishing its importance, this analysis demonstrates that these first two years of life are absolutely crucial for the development of self-identity. These are examined in this study. There is also an urgent need to define effective mechanisms which can explain the transition from the self reinforcing imitative processes which dominate the personal development in infancy to the more complex management of thought, identity and ideas in adult life. Some work has been carried out by Garrels¹⁸ and Gallese¹⁹, which concentrate on linking the Girardian dynamics to the imitative processes which have been discovered by the neurological research. However little other work has been undertaken. This analysis addresses both of these issues, and that is more fully written up elsewhere²⁰. Two case studies have been used. One is that of gender dysphoria. The other study applies the results of this analysis to an examination of the history and the development of attitudes to sex and gender within the Christian Church. That investigation requires an evaluation not only of the early Christian and Church history, but also that of the Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures and religions which provide the background to the early developments of the Church. For that to be completed effectively the presumptions of the Church doctrine which decrees that all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour are lifestyle choices which are in pursuit of lust and illicit or inappropriate sex, must be replaced by the conclusions of this analysis which state that the sexual and gender variant conditions are identity driven, and that as extensive a range of moral attitudes, goals, desires and perceptions will be found amongst these groups as there are in society at large.

This does not condone sexual misuse, and major cultural clashes took place²¹, but examining first century society from this standpoint gives a very different perspective on the roles which were played by many institutions, and perhaps most notably in the

¹⁸Garrels, S.R. (2006) "Imitation, Mirror Neurons, and Mimetic Desire: Convergence Between The Mimetic Theory of Rene Girard and Empirical Research on Imitation Contagion": Journal of Violence, mimesis and Culture Vol 12-13, 2006 pp 47-86 ISSN 1075-7201 Garrels

¹⁹Gallese, Vittorio. (2009). "The Two Sides of Mimesis Girard's Mimetic Theory, Embodied Simulation and Social Identification" Journal of Consciousness studies, 16, No 4, 2009 Gallese

²⁰Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Also: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief". See footer for access.

²¹The major cultural clashes between the Judean and the Greco/Roman cultures were characteristic of the different attitudes to sexual practice in a dominant society and those in a subjugated one. Within the dominant Greco/Roman societies sexual morality was determined through responsibility and authority. This meant that any Greek or Roman male citizen could engage with an unattached woman or with a man of lesser status without penalty for the purposes of sexual gratification, and this included the penetrative acts. Same-sex rape was also used as a weapon to humiliate a beaten enemy. Humiliation was the dominant concern, maintaining the social status had an absolute priority and in any same-sex relationships between two male citizens who were of equal status only the penetrated or the submissive partner was condemned. In a victimised and subjugated society the reverse situation is encountered. The horror of same-sex rape being inflicted upon the Israelites is evident in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and this resonates through all of the Jewish tradition. It was same-sex rape and not consensual same-sex relationships which was condemned as Sodomy by the Christian Church. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

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Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

behaviour of the Goddess cults²². Like the Goddess cults, early Christianity did not only challenge gender inequality through the importance and the esteem that it gave to women. It also challenged the moral precepts and the perceptions upon which a patriarchal society is based^{23 24}. This analysis shows how and why early Christianity first rejected the principles of gender complementarity and it demonstrates how the teachings of Jesus created an attitude to gender equality and to sexual and gender variance that would be acceptable in the present day. Regrettably that attitude did not continue. Early Christianity had demanded a revolution in the social attitudes, but the message of Jesus which is presented in the Gospels also required the Church to work within society in order to change it, rather than destroy it. This gave the Church a difficult choice and it sought to compromise the first Gospel doctrines of gender transcendence to obtain the respectability which would enable it to convey the rest of the Gospel message into the wider world. By its engagement with the expectations of society and with its adoption of the dogmas of gender complementarity associated with the surrounding Greek, Roman and Jewish societies the, ability of the Church to bring the Gospel challenges to all people in matters of gender equality and sexual and gender variance was destroyed. That transformation leads to the simple and direct conclusion which states that, what today are considered to be the traditional teachings of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance are built on a false foundation. They come from of the need to obtain respectability within Greco/Roman society. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself.

However more was required, for order to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, Christianity quickly had to separate itself from the still continuing social and gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. Thus instead of just adopting the social divisions and the gender complementarity of a gender unequal society, Christianity had to be seen to take an active role in its enforcement of them, and this pursuit of respectability has led to the imposition of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and exclusive orthodoxy where every expression of gender or sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be a sinful and an immoral act. It has also led to the great severity of the Christian condemnations of all gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of these acts.

This document Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church" provides an overview of the more extended analysis which is given in Gilchrist, S. (2013). "An Unfinished Reformation". Issues of gender complementarity are examined in greater length in the paper: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early

²²Contrary to the Christian condemnations, Cybele's myths and doctrines embraced both sex and spirituality, they gave earlier cautions against lust and the other sins of excess, and they also demonstrated that sex and gender were less important to the soul than love. Those included nurture, care, protection and responsible sex.

²³It is shown that a major driving force behind the gender disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults was defined by the pursuit of power for female protection, concerns and rights. The Christian Church instead makes the presumption that this disruptive behaviour was entirely in pursuit of illicit sex.

²⁴By the first century women had become an increasingly powerful influence on society and at this time the social status of women had developed to a point where the breakthrough was needed, however the existence of gender defined Gods and Goddesses in a polytheistic society created divinely ordained boundaries that could not be crossed. This is a barrier which the gender transcendent God of Christianity was able to cross.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

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and the Modern Church”. Other papers are also available, see the footer for access to these documents.

2:0. Introduction

2:1. Respectability and the Christian Church

One of the principal concerns about determining what the correct Christian attitudes should be to the issues of gender transcendence, gender complementarity, gender equality, gender identity, gender role, and to sexual orientation arises through the contradictions that the bible seems to present. This is most obvious in the apparently changing attitudes which Paul adopts in the New Testament, where his declaration which demands the total Christian transcendence of gender and of sex in Galatians 3:28²⁵ is subsequently contradicted or amended in the later epistles and letters by the segregation of the gender roles that were expected of men and women. By the time the later epistles were written a form of gender complementarity which demands the submission of women is to be enforced²⁶. These differences are frequently explained by the increasing length of time it was expected to have to wait before the end of the world, when the second coming of Christ would be fulfilled.

In early Christianity an immediate second coming was expected, so there was no requirement to conform to the social and cultural divisions of the strongly gender stratified Greek and Roman societies. As time went on and the coming did not take place, the requirement to conform to the social expectations of this dominant and patristic society increased, and thus its gender segregation came to be more strongly imposed. It is usually understood that many of the later Christian doctrines on gender and sexually variant behaviour which have been arrived at through the development of the church traditions arise as a consequence of this delay.

²⁵ The statement made by Paul in Galatians 3:28 that: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”, is a declaration which challenged both gender complementarity and the male domination within Greco/Roman society. The later statements by Peter and Paul seem to contradict that by re-imposing these requirements. Indeed they do even more than this for they re-impose the demand that women should always be in submission to men

²⁶ See for example the statement by Paul: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24) and also Peter “ Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (1 Peter 3:1-6) (The statement said to be by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34: “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church”, is often considered to be a later addition to the text of this earlier epistle).

However other strong forces were also involved. These arise because of the cultural differences between the subject Jewish and the dominant Greco/Roman society. The early Christian teaching on gender and sexuality in the Gospels challenged both, but Christianity also made the transition from the religion of a subject society to become that of a dominant one, and it is established that the changes from the early teaching have been driven through the requirement for the Church to obtain respectability in this strongly gender polarised Greco/Roman society. The cultural clashes which occur between a dominating society, such as that of Greece and Rome and those of a subjugated society, such as Judaism, were a major issue. This pressing need for respectability is evident in all of the Pauline epistles and letters. The development of this accommodation can be observed at various points in the New Testament texts, and also within the early Church; where the Church had come to accept the social norms of the surrounding societies and then tried to adapt these to fit its own theology and beliefs. The need to make these adaptations has set the Church on a trajectory whereby the original Gospel teachings on gender transcendence and on sexually variant conditions were lost. By the time of Augustine (354-430) and the fourth century Church, an almost complete transformation in outlook had occurred.

It will be demonstrated in this analysis that the traditional teachings, together with the present day Church doctrines on gender complementarity and on sexual and gender variance, do not form any part of the original Gospel message. This is even though the doctrines related to gender complementarity possess an apostolic imprint, and they developed very early in the life of the Church. It will also be shown how and why early Christianity rejected the principles of gender complementarity associated with both Greco/Roman and Jewish societies, why this was subsequently embraced as a doctrine of the Church, and why the teaching of Jesus created an attitude to gender equality which would be acceptable in the present day. A major disconnection has therefore occurred, and this has significant implications for the current Church²⁷

This is a radical statement, which clearly needs to be justified. It is the focus of the new examination which is presented in these documents. The presumption is often made that the statement of gender and social transcendence by Paul in Galatians 3:28 simply represents an abstract Christian ideal. Therefore the consequence of the attacks which this doctrine made on the social values and the power structures of the dominant surrounding gender polarised and unequal societies tends to be ignored. That is very far from the case, and a more detailed examination of the attitudes to gender equality is given in more extended accounts^{28 29}. The early Apostolic Church gave women a very high place in the Gospel ministry. This is evident not only in the attitude of Jesus as this is described in the Gospels, by Mary Magdalene's role in announcing the resurrection, by the high worth which Paul gives to the missionary work of women, together with the influence they had in running the early Church and

²⁷ See Gilchrist, S. (2013) "An Unfinished Reformation". Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access.

²⁸ See Section 2:2:4 in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation"

²⁹ Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church"

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

in their roles in spreading the Gospel of Christ.³⁰ In those societies where the social roles of men and women were inflexibly segregated through the customs and divine influences, these were challenging acts³¹. A further examination of the biblical texts and contemporary literature which is undertaken in this analysis indicates in greater detail the radical impact on Greco/Roman society which was created by the early Gospel message. It also reveals the ways in which early Christianity in common with the principal Goddess cults of the Greco/Roman Empire, disrupted and challenged the gendered security of a male dominated society³². The boldness of this challenge had a major impact on the formation of the Christian Church, but the magnitude of that challenge has since been hidden by the later doctrines of the Church.

2:2. Social Dynamics

In the terms of their social messages, both Christianity and the Goddess cults shared some key elements in common. This was because both represented minority groups in dominant societies. Therefore a major challenge (and achievement) that was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into a dominant culture. That success meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and the sexual values which were characteristic of the Greco/Roman male dominated society. This additionally meant challenging and usurping the power structures which are formed inside these powerful societies by placing the concern for the victims and the suppressed first on the religious and the social agendas of those cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality that is founded on compassion, nurturing and love. These moral characteristics were more typical of the first century female expectations, and women were also a subject group. However this was a barrier which could not be crossed by any gender defined Goddess cult.

Even though women in Greco/Roman society were subject to male authority in every way the attitudes them are often misunderstood. In principle gender complementarity was expected to be practiced, but that would depend entirely on the attitude that was taken by each "Pater Familias", who held full responsibility for the household, even over the matters of life and death. Restrictive rules could be placed on women and this meant that severe gender discrimination could always occur. The Christian apologists of today cite this gender discrimination for their condemnations, but many of them only provide a partial account because they simply describe the numerous restrictive rules. However this discrimination and separation of role broke down to a large extent in Greece around 400 BC, and again in Rome around 205 BC³³. War

³⁰ See Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships"

³¹ This is fully discussed in section 2:2:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation"

³² See section 3:1:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation".

³³ In earlier Greek Societies before 400 BC women had to have their husband's permission to leave their homes. With the exception of women in ancient Sparta, Greek women at this time had very limited freedom outside the home. If they had their husband's permission, they could attend weddings, funerals, some religious festivals, and visit female neighbours for brief periods of time. But without their husband's permission, they could do none of these things. However inside the house at this time Greek women were in charge. After 400 BC there was a rapid change and a transformation in the freedom of women, largely because of the reverses Greece suffered in war. Not every boundary was broken, however it is undeniable that the visibility and role of women during this time of violent change in ancient Greece greatly increased. See Scott, Michael (2009) "The Rise of Women in Ancient Greece".

had decimated the male population, and women then became even more essential for maintaining key functions of society³⁴. Within the marriage relationships, as well as in the occupations which men and women fulfilled in society, compatibility of intellect between men and women was also expected³⁵. By the time of the first century many women had become well educated; they made significant contributions to society; nevertheless they were still denied any form of power and authority over their own lives. The first century was a period of religious upheaval within Greek and Roman society. Many of the traditional religions had lost credibility, the Goddess cults were undergoing a major resurgence, there was a proliferation of new religious beliefs, and the male domination of society was being put to the test³⁶.

Greece" History Today Volume: 59 Issue: 11 2009. Also: Pomeroy, Sarah B. (1994) *Goddesses, Whores, Wives And Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*". Publisher: Pimlico; New Edition (5 May 1994) ISBN-10: 0712660542 ISBN-13: 978-0712660549

³⁴Between the fall of Athens in 404 BC and the rise of Alexander the Great in the 330s BC, the Greek world was turned on its head. The transformations were motivated in part by the catastrophic effects of the Peloponnesian War, the 30-year conflict which had brought democratic Athens to its knees. In response to the increased poverty that resulted, Greek women began to work outside the home. The orator Demosthenes, writing in the middle of the fourth century, complained that they now worked as nurses, wool-workers and grape-pickers because of the city's penury. This primarily economic drive was coupled with great political upheaval, an increasingly muddled distinction between public and private worlds and new forms of religious expression. In different parts of ancient Greece women become visible for different reasons and in Athens they appear centre stage in comic discussions of sexual and political equality and in the law courts on issues relating to citizenship. See Scott, Michael. (2009) "The Rise of Women in Ancient Greece" History Today Volume: 59 Issue: 11 <http://www.historytoday.com/michael-scott/rise-women-ancient-greece>

³⁵Plato considered that the only innate differences between males and females were the reproductive ones. Socrates likewise believed that that males and females have no distinct qualifications for any particular pursuits and that no particular function should be reserved for men and women, but both sexes should be treated alike. In Plato's Republic, the Guardians are put into place to defend morality and to rule society because they know the truth and possess the knowledge and wisdom of true forms. The equality of opportunity for both men and women to enter the Guardian Class requires an equality of education for both sexes, and this principle of the equality of education for both men and women was adopted in the real world. This meant that, rather than gender polarisation, a gender complementarity was exercised in which men and women were placed into separate and exclusive gender roles which were considered to have equivalent esteem. In Roman society, at least among the upper classes, women seem to have been very well-educated. Only after children had come of age did the standards differ. See: Blundell, Sue. (1995) "Women in ancient Greece: Harvard University Press, 1995 ISBN 0674954734, 780674954731: Plato, The Republic. Books I–V: The eutopia portraying the ideal community and the education of the Guardians: See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/> "Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic" First published Tue Apr 1, 2003; substantive revision Mon Aug 31, 2009: Rawson, Beryl (1987) "The Roman Family," in "The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives" Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 30, 40–41. ISBN0801494605, 9780801494604.

³⁶This analysis gives a very different perspective on the role and function of the Goddess cults from that the traditional Christian viewpoint, which regards them as havens for lust, promiscuity and inappropriate sex. In this analysis it is demonstrated that the rituals and activities of the Goddess cults also embraced the attributes of protecting female interests against the attacks of male aggression and domination. They additionally included support for women's concerns, for birthing and nurture, for fertility and renewal, and in total contrast to the Christian condemnations, they further emphasised the requirement for responsible sex. Therefore, far from any thoughts that their existence was purely to promote the sexual orgies, the cult's activities had an important role. This included fortune telling, the production of charms and healing and welfare activities. They were also associated with the power struggles within these gender unequal societies, and the diversity, disruption and the nature of this behaviour caused both a strong disapproval and a high respect. A full analysis is given in Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church. See footer for availability.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013
First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.
Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

The gender challenging behaviour of all of these Goddess cults may be regarded as a challenge to this male domination, and the examination of the cult of Cybele shows that the “Women’s liberation” element which is contained within it cannot be ignored. Nevertheless none of the presently published research work on the Cult of Cybele takes full account of this women’s liberation element³⁷ and in this analysis it is shown that this omission has had significant consequences for interpreting the behaviour of the cult³⁸. However the existence of gender defined Gods and Goddesses within a polytheistic society erects a glass ceiling which can never be crossed³⁹. Therefore, even if full gender equality could be achieved in a polytheistic society, the rewards it brings could only be expressed in terms of the sex-gender ideologies of that society.

³⁷For a description of the cult of Cybele see: Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. ISBN 0-520-21024-7. Philippe Borgeaud, *Mother of the Gods. From Cybele to the Virgin Mary*. Originally published as *La Mère des dieux: De Cybele à la Vierge Marie*. Éditions de Seuil, Collection "La Librairie du XXe siècle", 1996. Translated from the French by Lysa Hochroth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8018-7985-X. Eugene N. Lane (ed.), *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Religions in the Greco-Roman World, 131. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996. ISBN 90-04-10196-9. The attitude taken to gender and sexually variant behaviour tends to follow the presumptions embodied in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This implies that the gender disruptive behaviour of the cults self-castrated Gallae priests can only be in pursuit of immoral sex. That is not perhaps surprising given the nature of the ancient myths. See for example, Borgeaud pages 48-49, 54-55. Borgeaud is reciting the ancient myths which surround such behaviour. The possibility of other types of behaviour does not appear to be given full value and the changes to the social attitudes to women are not fully considered in these accounts. See Gilchrist, S. (2013) “Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church. See footer for availability.

³⁸ Roller, Borgeaud and others perceive a single boundary between reputable and disruptive behaviour. The popular viewpoints exclusively associate the Gallae and the morals of the cult with sexual orgies, prostitution and for the practice of immoral sex. This analysis argues that both these presumptions are incorrect, and that more than one boundary must exist. It also follows from this argument that two boundaries must be set. One is that between co-operative and disruptive behaviour in the pursuit of female interests and rights. The second is the boundary between proper and improper sex. The importance of identifying these separate boundaries is a key feature which has not been identified in previous studies, since the creation of these separate boundaries permits a re-evaluation of the roles of the self-castrated Gallae priests. The psychological analysis has demonstrated that as wide a range of attitudes must be found in the gender and sexually variant section of the population as there are in society at large. This also allows the Gallae priests to be treated in the same way as those belonging to other religious beliefs, where across cultures and across continents the equivalent people who seek to transcend gender may be understood to celebrate and to express the ideals of both lives. Some religions believe that holding both the male and female experience in one body is the closest that human beings can get to a total holiness and that within this relationship the worshipper "Receives the inner-most essence and power of a God." Within these traditions the descriptions of “Two spirit” or “Double gendered” may be used and in yet other cultures these people may, as with the Gallae, be considered to belong to a “Third Sex”. Possession of this inclusiveness is often considered to be appropriate to a priestly role and in those societies where the requisite outlets for behaviour are provided such people can have a very high status. Indeed the reverence which they are accorded can commonly exceed the esteem that is given to other people who conform to the normal expectations of their sex. In Ancient Rome those people who transcended the sex-gender boundaries could be described as “The Wise Ones, the Pure Ones and the Holy Ones” and the myths of the cult indicate that those who crossed the sex gender boundaries were given special status. For the full account see Gilchrist, S. (2013) “Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church. See footer for availability.

³⁹Gilchrist, S. (2013) “Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church. See footer for availability.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church”. Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

Males and females would continue to be separated into their religiously determined and socially segregated roles^{40 41 42 43}. What was required to make the breakthrough was a religion which worshipped a single gender transcendent God, but which also possessed a social perspective that was close to the cults.

This is the transformation which Christianity brought. Yet that achievement carried its own dangers because this meant that in order to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, Christianity had to quickly separate itself from the still continuing social and gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. In addition there were many other moral, cultural and theological differences between the two religious groups, and these equally required an absolute and an immediate rejection of any possible links with the Goddess cults⁴⁴. Therefore, instead of continuing with the challenges and social disruption of following the doctrine of true gender transcendence contained in the Gospel message which is taught by Jesus, and also by Paul in Galatians 3:28, Christianity came to adopt the form of gender complementarity which demanded the submission of women as described by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 14:34, and 1 Timothy 2:1-7⁴⁵, and additionally by Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-6. This dogma

⁴⁰ In 395 BC, just nine years after Athens had suffered catastrophic defeat in war the comic playwright Aristophanes wrote and produced a play called *Women in the Assembly* (*Ecclesiazusae*). The plot is simple and striking. The women of Athens are fed up with the mess men have made of the city and its affairs. They infiltrate the political assembly and persuade it to hand over all power to the women. It is a comedy, and the demand for true gender equality is taken to excess so that for example if a man wanted to have sex with a pretty woman he had to have sex with an ugly one first. In ancient society the different roles assigned to men and women were determined by their perceived usefulness to society and not by modern ideas of universal equality. In Greece at this time plays were used to criticise authority and society. Despite the different roles this play illustrates the parity of esteem that was given. See Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church. See footer for availability.

⁴¹ Frymer-Kensky, Tivka. (1993) "In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth" Ballantine Books; (First Edition February 10, 1993) ISBN-10: 0449907465 ISBN-13: 978-0449907467.

⁴² That there were public official duties for women in Rome contradicts the commonplace notion that women in ancient Rome took part only in private or domestic religion. The dual male-female priesthoods may reflect the Roman tendency to seek a gender complement within the religious sphere. Most divine powers are represented by both a male and a female deity, as seen in divine pairs such as Liber and Libera. The twelve major gods were presented as six gender-balanced pairs, and Roman religion departed from Indo-European tradition in installing two goddesses in its supreme triad of patron deities, Juno and Minerva along with Jupiter. This triad "formed the core of Roman religion." (See Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic*, pp. 79–81. Lipka, Michael. (2009), "Roman Gods: A Conceptual Approach". Brill, pp. 141–142)

⁴³ Barker, Margaret. (2001) "The Temple Roots Of The Liturgy"

This is developed from a paper read in Dublin in November 2000 subsequently published in *Sourozh. A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought*. Available online at:

<http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TempleRootsofChristianLiturgy.pdf>

See also Barker, Margaret. (2003) "Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy": T&T Clark; ISBN-10: 0567089428 ISBN-13: 978-0567089427

⁴⁴ It should be noted that sexual morality in these dominant societies was determined by authority.

Responsibility in all activities was demanded, but provided the recipient was of a lesser status than the perpetrator, these societies endorsed what in the present day would be considered to be same-sex or heterosexual rape. That was horrendous to subject societies, whose members could be the victims of such actions. However this difference arises due to cultural clashes between subject and dominant societies more than the theologies of the cults

⁴⁵ "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires
Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013 15
First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

of gender complementarity was identical to that practiced by Roman society, and it shared much with Judaism as well. Therefore instead of just adopting the social divisions and the gender complementarity of a gender unequal society, Christianity had to be seen to take an active role in enforcing them as well, and this pursuit of respectability has led to the imposition of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and exclusive orthodoxy in Christianity, where every expression of gender or of sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be an immoral act. It has also led to the great severity of the Christian condemnations of all gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of these acts.

However short or long this early period of absolute gender transcendence was, it had to be complete, for without this Christianity could never have made the transition into a world religion from a local gender defined sect. Therefore instead of simply seeking gender neutrality the Christian Gospel provided a major role for women. A doctrine of full gender equality was expressed in early Christianity, which would find acceptance in present day society and it is also not surprising that women figure prominently in the early church. However even though these important roles at first were given to women, the social constraints imposed by gender complementarity meant that the public spokespeople for this new religion could only be men. Through their pursuit of a male agenda and from its pursuit of authority and respectability, the doctrines of the early Church have been disconnected from the traditions and the doctrines adopted by the later Church⁴⁶. Therefore the theological justifications which in the present day are used to validate the presumptions for a male leadership, together with its male prerogatives, and its arguments for an exclusively male priesthood are also built on these later traditions. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus and the Gospel Church.

2:3. Changing Perceptions

The principal objective of the Reformation movements of the 16th Century was to eliminate the spurious traditions that had developed within the Church, and to restore it to the fundamental teachings of the bible itself. Many changes were made by the reformers, but their understanding of the position of gender and sexually variant behaviour within the Church was largely unchanged by their reforms⁴⁷. Therefore the doctrines which were embraced by the fourth century Church on these matters were believed to be correct. However the Reformer's own attitudes to the sexual and gender variant conditions would also be filtered through the theology that they themselves developed. This has provided the background against which the present day attitudes to homosexuality and to gender and sexual variance have come to be created. The contributions of the reformers must therefore be recognised as crucial, but the key period for dealing with the Church doctrines on these matters is that of the first three hundred years of the Church.

everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all --this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth".

⁴⁶ See Section 3:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation".

⁴⁷ Many transformations were made by the reformers in attitudes to celibacy, marriage and sex.

However a strong and exclusive heterosexual orthodoxy was retained both by the reformers and the Catholic Church. Reasons are discussed later in this account

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

3:0. Context

3:1. Analytical Framework.

The analysis which is presented in this document examines the reasons for this disconnection, the driving forces and the nature of the changes that occurred. Two complementary approaches are adopted. The first, and the most obvious one of these, is to try to trace back through the history and the traditions of the Church. The second method seeks to examine the Greek, Jewish and Roman backgrounds from which the early Church developed, and this study is done independently of the New Testament and the traditions of the Church. That approach is much more difficult since all of the records and information from the inception of the Church onwards has been filtered through the prisms of Christian belief. The consequences of this filtration are examined through a critical examination of the bible texts.

Without the provision of a fresh perspective, any new analysis would only be the recycling of previous work. This different perspective comes through new research on personality development that was carried out by the author which employs gender and sexually variant conditions as a model to test the accuracy of the results⁴⁸. That research demonstrates that these conditions are identity driven⁴⁹. Even though the conflicts that they create may be expressed through a desire for engaging in certain types of relationship, or because of the craving for gender reassignment, the driving forces that lie behind them are not driven either by gender or by sexual desires. They are driven by the need to create a coherent sense of self identity which enables people to be true to themselves⁵⁰.

Therefore the recognition of the differences between goal driven and identity driven conflicts is crucial for this understanding⁵¹. In the goal driven conflict the desire which is expressed is identical to the real goal which is being sought. Once that goal has been achieved, the behaviour which then results expresses the delights of that same goal, now fulfilled. In an identity driven conflict the real goal that people seek is to be able to be true to who they are. Thus in these cases the change which is made is to the frame of reference alone. No other changes need be made, and these types of identity driven conflicts are characterised by the rejection of what is wrong. Often no behavioural changes or any further goals are sought, and as wide a range of

⁴⁸ The impetus for this research has come through personal experience. For further information on this, see: Gilchrist, S. (2011). "LGB&T People: Labels and Faith". See footer for access.

⁴⁹ This is summarised in the preface to this document.

⁵⁰ Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach".. See also: Gilchrist, Susan. (2013). "Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief" See footer for access.

⁵¹ Each type of process represents different stages in the process of personality development. Up to the age of about two years identity driven conflicts, which are characterised by the rejection of what is wrong dominate. After the age of two years children have a sufficient sense of self identity to enable goal driven conflicts to be formed, here the desire that is expressed matches the goal that is sought. For the full implications of this, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief". See footer for access.

moral attitudes, goals, desires and perceptions are found amongst these groups as there are in society at large.

This viewpoint has been expressed by gender and sexually variant people for many years, but in the past it has only been based on the word of one group against the other. That view has now been confirmed by this research. There are four particular implications for this analysis. These are:

1. The first of these is the requirement to distinguish gender and sexually variant behaviour which is identity driven, and is about being oneself, from all goal driven behaviour which is instead pursued for sexual gratification, prostitution and irresponsible sex.
2. The second is to recognise that the conclusions of this analysis destroy the validity of all attempts of the Church to make homosexuality or every other type of identity driven sexual and gender variance a scapegoat for abusive or inappropriate sex.
3. The third requirement is to examine the cultures from which Christianity has developed while taking the first two of these criteria into account.
4. The fourth requirement is to re-examine the doctrines that are contained in the 1997 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This decrees that: "Tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity"⁵².

Therefore, according to this definition all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour arise from a goal driven conflict. This means that they can only be engaged in for reasons of lust, promiscuity, prostitution or inappropriate sex. This analysis challenges that presumption, not only on experiential, but also on psychological grounds.

3:2. Cultural Differences

It is important to ensure that the differences in the moral structures of the different societies are recognised. Although it is perfectly valid to compare the moral codes and attributes of one society against another, the behaviour of any individual within a particular society must be judged by the standards of that society, on its own and not

⁵² Catechism of the Catholic Church: Paragraph 2357. The Second Edition English Translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with corrections promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 8 September 1997: "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."

by any other⁵³. The differences in the attitudes to anal penetration provide a strong case in point. For the Greeks and Romans the freedom to engage in sexual activity was based on authority, thus only the male citizen who adopted the submissive role in a same-sex relationship was condemned. It also meant that Greek or Roman male citizens could engage with any unattached woman or man who was of lesser status without any penalty for the purposes of sexual gratification, and this included the penetrative acts⁵⁴. Same-sex rape was also used as a weapon to humiliate a beaten enemy. The horror of same-sex rape being inflicted on the Israelites is evident in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and throughout the Jewish tradition⁵⁵. Therefore very different attitudes to anal penetration may be expected from within a subject Jewish society⁵⁶. For Jews the freedom to engage in these penetrative relationships was governed by love. Authority played no role and even a slave would be protected by this requirement. Therefore the Greeks and Romans could be regarded as people who penetrated at will, but the Jews did not.

It is also essential to acknowledge that none of the goddess religions of the ancient Middle East expressed the kind of accepting feminine behaviour that Christianity might expect. As well as embodying a religious tradition, they were strong political movements which were concerned with the power structures within society. This analysis challenges current perceptions and a full analysis is given elsewhere⁵⁷.

An account of the nature and the relevance of the cult of Cybele to Christianity have already been given in section 2:2 of this article. However its introduction to, and its place in Roman society is also considered here. The Roman State had adopted the cult of Cybele in response its urgent need for success in battle, and it claimed that her conscription was a key religious component in their victory over Carthage during the Punic Wars. Certain of the cult practices and processions show Cybele to be an essentially foreign and exotic mystery-goddess who arrives in Rome driving a lion-drawn chariot to the accompaniment of wild music, wine and with a disorderly and ecstatic following⁵⁸. Within Roman society Gods and Goddesses were given equal status. Of the three of these who were regarded as the principal Roman deities, two were goddesses, and the goddess religions were given a prominent place in Roman society. Even though the roles of women and men were strongly segregated, women still had a strong influence within their own realm. In the banquets organised by male supporters of the cult and in the other events there is no doubt that a great deal of

⁵³ Subject to a general overriding principle of the common good.

⁵⁴ Maintaining social status was extremely important. For a male citizen to be anally penetrated was regarded as a debasement of his citizenship to that of a woman. Conquest was also affirmed by the use of same-sex rape to humiliate a beaten enemy.

⁵⁵ This need not only be in battle. A male Roman citizen could rape a Jewish man without legal consequence.

⁵⁶ A full discussion is given in Gilchrist, S. (2011) "Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships". However Greenberg, Steven; (2004) "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition" The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3 gives a very complete account of Jewish attitudes to same-sex relationships.

⁵⁷ For a more complete account see: Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church". See footer for availability.

⁵⁸ Christian apologists consider these gender disruptive activities to be concerned with the delights of sex rather than statements of power in a male dominated society.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

sexual misbehaviour did occur⁵⁹, however rampant sex tends not to be represented within the theology of the cult. The Roman attitudes to Cybele and her self-castrated Gallae priests were always ambivalent. A strong duality was perceived. On the one hand there were severe condemnations of gross immorality of the Gallae priests. On the other hand this was countered by considerable respect for the moral purity and the high prominence of many of the devotees of the cult⁶⁰. The current presumption that the ecstatic and disorderly processions were entirely used for the delights of sex has to be queried. They certainly disrupted the gendered security of male dominated society. In line with the gender liberating elements of the cult, one of their purposes may well have been to protect the needs, concerns and the interests of women by reminding that male dominated society about the consideration and influence which women needed and sought.

Cultural clashes between the Judean and Greco/Roman societies were often strong and deeply felt. Therefore from the Jewish understanding a great deal of sexual misbehaviour took place in Greco/Roman society, but according to the moral codes of that society this sexual behaviour could be considered acceptable instead. The most obvious way for Christianity to respond to these cultural differences, and also to distance itself from the activities of the various gender disrupting Goddess cults, was to condemn their activities by decreeing that their principal purpose was to provide opportunities for people to engage in licentious behaviour and in irresponsible sex⁶¹.

Every other motive was excluded, and this exclusion established the Church doctrine that gender and sexually variant behaviour could only be engaged in for purposes of lust, promiscuity, prostitution or inappropriate sex. That view is clearly expressed in the 1997 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. However to do this the Church has had to define every type of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being the result of a goal driven conflict, and this leaves no legitimate place for any form of identity driven sexual and gender variant behaviour, where relationships are given in love, commitment and faithfulness instead of immorality and lust. Not only does this Christian doctrine contradict the results of this analysis, it also contradicts the lived experience of many gender and sexually variant people, whose constant persecution and condemnation over many centuries, which has initially been created because of the search by the Church for full social respectability, status and authority within a gender unequal society, brings shame on the Church.

⁵⁹ The attitudes of the different cultures must be taken into account before judgement is made.

⁶⁰ This duality also applied to the Gallae priests. On the one hand they were condemned by mainstream Roman society because their rejection and their effeminacy attacked the foundations of a male dominated society. On the other their act of self-castration was seen as an act of extreme devotion, greater even than that of voluntary celibates, through their inability to penetrate or to sexually climax in the worship of a Goddess who could never herself be penetrated, whose perpetual virginity was an important feature of the cult, and because there was no turning back. Also on one hand the Gallae priests were often accused of extreme sexual immorality, on the other hand they were involved in the healing roles of the cult. Possibly they could be considered to have occupied a shamanic role. However because of the violent condemnations of Christianity the awareness of any of the positive aspects of their activities has been lost.

⁶¹ The issue of temple prostitution is a complex topic. Some of the Gallae may have taken advantage of their situation entirely for the misuse of sex, but there were other reasons for eunuch priests to offer themselves to men for anal penetration. It could be a method of transmitting the blessings of the virgin goddess to laymen who were seeking fertility in their own reproductive lives. Within the moral values of Greco/Roman society this would be a positive act.

3:3. Duality and Belief

Virtually every religion monitors the moral standards of its society and it imposes distinctions between what is wrong and what is right. When the myths and theologies of the cults are examined after this sexual background is excluded a much broader perspective is observed. A duality is shown to exist whereby those people who try to live to the highest moral standards which their society expects can live according to the way of light. Those who do the reverse will follow the way of darkness instead. Similar dualities are encountered across cultures and continents, where people who seek to transcend the sex/gender boundaries by living in ways that are true to the ideals of both lives may be given a high and often priestly status⁶². However those who choose the path of transgression instead are very severely condemned for their acts.

Extended studies on the first century Greek, Jewish and Roman backgrounds have been carried out within this analysis, to discover if this sense of duality exists, and also how it is expressed. It is demonstrated that the same sense of duality occurs in all of the first century Middle Eastern traditions. The results of this research are only summarised within this document. A more extended analysis is provided in Gilchrist, S. (2013) "An Unfinished Reformation" and also in: Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 2: Gender Complementarity and Gender Transcendence in the Early and Modern Church", and Gilchrist, S. (2013) "Crisis and Christianity Part 3: Gender and Sexual Variation in the Early and Modern Church". However the full account has also been written up in three (unpublished) resource documents and these results have been, or they will be, published elsewhere⁶³. Cybele was no meek goddess. As well as this, she was perpetually a virgin because the idea that she could be penetrated by a man or by another male god would have diminished her status⁶⁴. Some studies have suggested that the interactions between Christianity and the cults have mainly led the cults to modify their own religious beliefs to meet the Christian challenge. In relation to the cult of Cybele it is argued that the reverse is the case and that Christianity has taken from the cult the values it needs. When the cult of the Virgin Mary is compared with that of Cybele, what is more seen is not what is gained by the cult of the Virgin Mary, but what is removed from the cult of Cybele itself.⁶⁵

⁶² See Gilchrist S. (2013): Part 3 of "An Unfinished Reformation" where it is shown that this also applied to the early Church

⁶³ See details at the end of this document.

⁶⁴ About half of the Greek and Roman Goddesses were parthenogenic, (that is to be born without the participation of a male partner). These goddesses were required to stand alone, so that each acted as a primordial creatrix who required no male to create the cosmos, the earth, life, matter and even other gods, out of her own essence. The Greek and Roman myths ensured that this took place. As such a goddess, Cybele's own virginity had to remain intact, and it is instead through the death and resurrection of Attis that fertility and renewal takes place. The castration of Attis meant that there could be no threat to Cybele's virginity, just as the castration of the Gallae priests removed any threat to the virginity of the priestesses in the temple, and symbolically to the goddess herself

⁶⁵The status of women may be worse of under a gender transcendent, since there is no longer an independent goddess who could be invoked to protect their interests.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

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Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

3:4. Sexual Moralities

In all of these traditions a common approach to gender and sexual variation is also found. This demanded that full responsibility was exercised in all types of sexual activity. The distinctions which were made between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour were those which separated the sexual acts engaged in for the noble pursuit of love from those which were pursued for the carnal abuse of sex.

The Greeks, Jews and Romans had no separate word for homosexuality and that term would not have been understood within the context of their societies. However different words were used for different types of love; nevertheless these words were not usually applied on a gendered basis, and the moral judgements were made on the motives and the exercise of responsibility, rather than the acts. In contrast to this first century understanding, the present day attitudes to the acceptability of gender and sexual behaviour concentrate their attention more upon the nature of the gender relationships and on condemning the acts. The issues of responsibility are ignored.

In the discussions of the Greek philosophers it was normally assumed that the ideas of love between two people related to love between two men, and it was accepted that this love could be fulfilled through engagement in same-sex acts. The permitted degree of expression varied across and within cultures, and even between the city states. Plato adopted an ascetic approach and he advocated the sublimation of all sexual acts. This was on the grounds that they distracted from the purity of the pursuit of the higher philosophical ideals. However Judaism embraced a different outlook. It encouraged the expression of relationships between two men because of the positive benefits in terms of the stimulation and depth of argument that this could create. It also meant that the rabbis supported ever increasing degrees of intimacy within Chavruta partnerships, irrespective of whether it was committed heterosexual friendships or loving same-sex relationships that were formed⁶⁶. (A Chavruta study involves a didactic learning process in which pairs of students discuss and analyse the biblical texts). This approach was almost directly the opposite of that which was adopted by Plato, since in the Jewish tradition it was considered that the vibrancy and the closeness which was developed within these Chavruta relationships would enable the partners to explore together to even greater depths, the meaning of the biblical texts. From the period of the Exile to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 a Zugot, or "Pairs" culture was dominant within the mainstream of Jewish society, and in this context strong male pair bonding could occur⁶⁷. It is significant that the first century understanding of Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 was that it prohibited only anal penetration. This understanding is also cited in the Babylonian Talmud and it is well attested in the other first century texts. The same interpretation was further reaffirmed by the Conservative Judaism's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards in America in December 2006.

⁶⁶The Rabbis were also very concerned about problems of misuse and strong moral boundaries were set.

⁶⁷Zugot refers to the period during the time of the Second Temple (515 BC – 70 AD), in which the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people was in the hands of five successive generations of zugot ("pairs") of religious teachers. The term zugot refers to pairs generally and the Babylonian Talmud (Pesachim 109b-112a) contains an extensive discussion of dangers of zugot and of performing various activities in pairs.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

It is also significant that no other type of sexual act is prohibited by the bible, and that includes oral sex. The Jewish history is frequented with Rabbinic partnerships where strong same-sex relationships were encountered, but where present day labels of heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual cannot easily be applied. This is far from the background that people would expect from the attitude that the Christian Church has since adopted to gender and sex⁶⁸.

4:0. Church and Society

4:1. Early Fourth Century

It has earlier been demonstrated that early Christianity did not just challenge gender inequality: it also challenged all the moral precepts and the perceptions upon which a patriarchal society is based. The potential for social disturbance was great, however that attitude regrettably did not continue. Because of its search for respectability and its eventual assumption of state authority in the gender segregated Greco/Roman society, this challenge was lost. Instead of continuing with the challenges involved in following the doctrine of true gender transcendence which is contained in the Gospel message, and is expressed by Jesus and also by Paul in Galatians 3:28, Christianity instead embraced a form of gender complementarity that demanded the submission of women. This was the same as that of the surrounding Greco/Roman cultures and a complete transformation had occurred by the time of Augustine and the early fourth century Church.

In place of the prominent role which had been given to women and the pursuit of gender transcendence which was found in the early Church, women had become second class members⁶⁹. Redemption did still remain available for women on earth, but this now came entirely through the blessings of childbirth, or else it required their total rejection of femininity, together with the refusal of all earthly sexual passions or acts. Any form of sex was perceived as a necessary evil, to be used for procreation alone. Gender equality was still preached, but it was now at the discretion of the male and on the terms that the male decides.

In place of the celibacy which was the call of duty advocated by Jesus in the Gospels a Neo-Platonic form of celibacy was instead adopted. This first form of celibacy saw marriage as "Second best", so it did not prohibit relationships involving sexual and affectionate acts. The second form denied not only the practice of all sexual acts; it condemned every thought of sex. Within Greco/Roman society some eunuchs had become essential members of the state administration⁷⁰. These eunuchs undertook important official roles, but their loyalty was always suspected. This may be because they had not been made to be eunuchs by choice. However by willingly adopting a compulsorily applied Neo-Platonic form of celibacy which denied all sexual activity to

⁶⁸See also: Greenberg, Steven; (2004) "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition" The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3

⁶⁹ For the degree of gender discrimination that was encountered see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access.

⁷⁰ Most had very menial roles.

Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Reform and the Christian Church". Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

those who were the religious or priests, the Christian Church was able to create an equivalent class of people who the Emperor Constantine could more easily trust, and in return for this the Church was able to create an organisation that possessed the stature and the strength to undertake many of the important civil and social functions which society and the Empire required. Therefore the enforcement of this type of Neo-Platonic celibacy locked the Church into that social structure of society, from which there could be no easy escape, but the compact gave Constantine what he needed and the Church the authority it sought.

4:2 Reformation Changes

The Protestant Reformation was an attempt to reform the traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church which, in the view of the Reformers, had come to be governed by its own traditions in preference to those of the bible itself. The Reform movement rejected many of the traditional teachings with the argument that these did not come from the Apostolic Church. However the Reformers were limited by the resources that were available and they relied on Augustine for much of their theology. This investigation takes this one step further and it argues that that the doctrines which were adopted by Augustine and the early fourth century Church on gender equality, gender role and sexuality did not come from the Gospel Church either, and by the time of the early fourth century Church a major disconnect had already occurred. By examining the changes that took place in the Church during the first three centuries of its existence, it is hoped that the Reformation can be made a little more complete.

4:3 Present Day Issues

The consequence of the suppression of all types of same-sex relationships by the Christian Church for over one thousand years has meant that the ability to make these key distinctions between love and lust has vanished. Therefore the belief that lust is always the driving force for these actions has been written into the doctrines of the Church. The outcome is that the principle that homosexuality is exclusively about promiscuity and sexual immorality would become universally accepted and that any engagement in homosexual acts has been made the scapegoat for abusive sex. For as long as the Christian church was able to retain its social monopoly there was no possibility of any change in these attitudes. The social changes of the last fifty years mean that the true nature of the situation can no longer be hidden. There is nothing in this account that condones immorality in any way. In this analysis it is shown how faithful and committed same-sex relationships could be celebrated within Christianity at the time of the Apostolic Church and how and why the Christian Church during the first three centuries of its existence came to vehemently condemn all such acts.

5:0. Christian Relationships

5:1. Early Church

There is no evidence that the early Christian Church attempted in any way to change the traditional Jewish teachings on the attitudes to sex or to gender. Indeed Paul in

the epistles makes use of the first century interpretations of Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 as the foundation for his arguments on illicit sex. The main question to be asked and answered is about how these attitudes came to be translated into the present day Christian Church. There are eight major passages which people have used to condemn homosexual acts⁷¹. However to regard any of these bible texts, particularly the writings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, and Romans 1:21-31, to condemn homosexuality is a gross trivialisation of their meaning and of their intent. What Paul was writing about was the cultural clashes between the two very different societies. It has already been demonstrated that the dominant Greco/Roman society had a culture which used anal penetration to subjugate and control inferior people or groups. These were societies in which only the penetrated was condemned, and the penetrator was not. In total contrast to this the subject Jewish society had a fear of the humiliation of anal penetration being inflicted on them as a consequence of sexual misuse or the outcome of defeat. What Paul was discussing was what Judaism would have regarded as same-sex rape. The idea that these passages were specifically concerned with homosexuality and consensual same-sex relationships is incorrect. Paul's own need to define a new word for the activities he was condemning suggests that he was taking care to ensure that these consensual relationships were not the targets for his attack⁷². An extended analysis of the biblical texts and of early church history has been conducted as part of this investigation and the results demonstrate that these Jewish understandings were also represented in the ministry of Jesus and were indeed carried forward into the Christian Church⁷³. However an area of major concern is how translation drift and re-interpretation of bible passages have been used to impose the traditional doctrines of the Church⁷⁴.

5:2. Early Relationships

The relationship between Jesus and John has always been the subject of a great deal of debate. This analysis does not attempt to determine if Jesus and John were involved in any form of homosexual relationship. This is not least because the moral approaches which were embraced by first century Jewish society destroy the validity of these terms. However it does suggest that Jesus and John were in a relationship which had an intimacy that was at least the equivalent of a rabbinic partnership. This further implies that the same degrees of sexual expression which were permitted within these rabbinic partnerships could also be enacted, and John is singled out as the disciple who Jesus loved. The nature of their relationship is more fully discussed

⁷¹ There are eight references in the bible that have been used to condemn homosexuality. Four of these (Genesis 19:1-5, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 23:17) are found in the Old Testament while the other four (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Romans 1:21-31 and Jude 1:6-7) are located in the New Testament. The passages from Leviticus are fully discussed in this account. Deuteronomy 23:17 is essentially about what is called cult prostitution. Genesis 19:1-5 is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Jude 1:6-7 states that Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.

⁷² The word "arsenokoitai" has been variously interpreted as "Abusers of themselves with Mankind". It was coined by Paul. If he had wished to refer to homosexuality there were different words he could have used.

⁷³ Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:2:2 and 4:2. See footer for access.

⁷⁴ Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:5. See footer for access.

elsewhere⁷⁵. There is no way of knowing what did happen in private, but when the bible is read from these perspectives it no longer seems to be coy on the subject. If these arguments are accepted they also have the additional effect of affirming and validating the authenticity of the Gospel texts^{76 77}.

During many centuries the Christian Church had conducted services of what were called “Brother making” or in Greek, Adelphopoiesis. These united same-sex couples and liturgies for the services survive in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church^{78 79}. Many of the religious symbols and declarations used in the services mirrored those of a marriage, and the full social and legal commitments of marriage were also embraced. However anal penetration was prohibited. The sexual elements of these also appear to be identical to the rabbinic partnerships. Therefore instead of being regarded as proto-marriages⁸⁰, these same-sex relationships seem to be the equivalent of the first century Jewish rabbinic partnerships which have been carried over into the Christian Church.

5:3. Present Day Marriage

This conclusion has implications for the controversies about marriage in the present day. The Church of England study document on “Men and Women in Marriage”⁸¹ has provided a useful indication of the current Church of England thinking. However this document fails to take a proper account of how the social and legal attitudes to gender equality and to marriage have changed over the centuries. Thus paragraph 19 of the document declares: “There have been cultures (the patriarchal period of the Old Testament among them) in which compromises have been accepted especially over exogamy and monogamy, but these compromises have tended to be of limited scope. It is possible to exaggerate the cultural relativity of marriage-forms.

⁷⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2013). “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. See also: Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”. See footer for access.

⁷⁶ Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 3:4:1. See footer for access.

⁷⁷ For a full account see Gilchrist, S. (2011). “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”

⁷⁸ Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 3:2:2 and 4:2. See footer for access.

⁷⁹ For a full account see also Gilchrist, S. (2011). “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”

⁸⁰ There is little reference to same-sex marriage within the Jewish literature, however the Talmud teaches against same-sex marriage in Chullin 92a, saying that the nations of the world, however sinful, corrupt or perverse, still have the merit of at least three behaviours, one of which is “they do not write a ketubah (marriage contract) for two males.” In a commentary on Genesis Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Joseph, “The generation of the Flood was not wiped out until they wrote marriage documents for the union of a man to a male or to an animal.” (Genesis Rabbah 26:5; Leviticus Rabbah 23:9). Same-sex marriage was anathema to the first Century Jewish Rabbis, but it is also notable that their real objection is to the writing of a marriage contract, for that would have the consequence of diminishing the status of at least one of the partners to that of a woman. According to English Common Law which developed from the 12th century onward, all property which a wife held at the time of a marriage became a possession of her husband. The idea that a woman is a legally equal partner in a marriage is a modern perception for women only obtained suffrage and equality in property rights after 1928 and the requirement to enact the Gender Equality act in 2010, (with the special exemption for religious organisations!), indicates that this is still a live issue. Such major changes in the legal standing of women must have had a profound effect on married relationships, yet these are changes to which the Church did not object.

⁸¹ “Men and Women in Marriage”. A document from the Faith and Order Commission published with the agreement of the House of Bishops of the Church of England and approved for study GS Misc 1046. Church House Publishing April 2013

Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church”. Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013

First Issued: 24 April 2013. Last update: 1 November 2013.

Access via: <http://www.qndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

Many differences there have been, but they hardly amount to a significant challenge to these structural foundations.” This statement should be strongly challenged for it ignores the profound changes in the social and legal outlooks which have taken place⁸². The understanding that a marriage is an equal relationship for men and women is a modern idea and it is necessary to look again at what the relationship of Adelpoiesis involved.

Paradoxically in the gender equal societies of the present day these services of fraternisation appear closer to the present day attitudes to marriage than first century views. The major area of difference would seem to be that of anal penetration. In the Western societies of today, where all men and women are treated equally, and when loving, committed, responsible and faithful same-sex relationships can be entered into without any humiliation being involved, all of the arguments used in the bible for the prohibition of anal penetration in these relationships disappear. Therefore in all same-sex relationships, which are given in love and commitment in a gender equal society, there should be no prohibition of any type of loving act which involves anal penetrative sex. Neither should there be any condemnation of this activity by the Church.

The question of the social changes which are likely to occur after the passing of the United Kingdom Equal Marriage act are addressed in Paragraph 50 of the report on “Men and Women in Marriage”⁸³. This states that: “It has seemed to some that the disagreement over same-sex marriage is a disagreement over mere names. But names govern how we think, and how we think governs what we learn to appreciate. When marriage is spoken of unclearly or misleadingly, it distorts the way couples try to conduct their relationship and makes for frustration and disappointment. The reality of marriage between one man and one woman will not disappear as the result of any legislative change, for God has given this gift, and it will remain part of our created human endowment. But the disciplines of living in it may become more difficult to acquire, and the path to fulfilment, in marriage and in other relationships, more difficult to find.” With the great changes in the social and legal structures of marriage that have taken place over the centuries this would appear to be a weak argument to make. Given that the Gender Equality Act 2010 exempts the religious bodies from its provisions, and that people are perfectly entitled to continue to treat marriage in the traditional ways, it is difficult to see any significant justification for the argument that it presents.

The weakness of the argument in Paragraph 50 may then lead to the reverse of what it intends. There could indeed be a case for describing one of these relationships as a “Marriage” and the other “Adelpoiesis”, or employ some other word to what must be a totally equal but a complementary relationship. However the previous and continued opposition of the church to recognise or to endorse the legitimacy of civil partnerships, despite the well-established social attitudes of many people in society has removed any possibility of this happening⁸⁴. It can now be argued that society

⁸² For a more detailed analysis see: Hensman, Savitri (2013). “Men and Women in Marriage; Renewal in Christ”. Ekklesia. In press <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/>

⁸³ The English Equal Marriage Act passes into law on June 17th 2013.

⁸⁴ It is interesting to note the transformation that has occurred. From the outright and total condemnation at the time they were introduced, the Church has now come to accept the secular
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Access via: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

would no longer recognise this distinction. Through this opposition the Church has lost the initiative, and the case is thereby made that the same word “Marriage” for both should be used.

6:0 Worldwide and Modern Church

6:1. Cultural Differences in the Worldwide Church

During its attempt to gain respectability within a gender unequal society it might be argued that the early Christian Church had adopted the most practical option. By maintaining the segregated roles which were associated with a gender unequal society, but by claiming that these roles are divinely ordained and that they must be considered to be equivalent in value, it then could argue that full gender equality is achieved. The cult of the Virgin Mary indeed places women on a pedestal, but this veneration of Mary as a divine mediator and redemptrix also acts to reinforce gender discrimination and the segregation of roles⁸⁵. Such a doctrine of segregated equality did not come from the Gospel Church. The challenges of early Christianity to the sex and gender orthodoxy of a male dominated society threatened to disrupt the whole structure of that society, and in this analysis it has been demonstrated that gender transcendence and absolute equality was the goal which was sought. This is not purely a matter of gender alone since the same arguments also apply to same-sex relationships, where the search for respectability within a gender unequal society has resulted in the condemnation of every gender or sexually variant act, irrespective of the purity of the motives that are involved.

The situation which is encountered by the Christian Churches in Africa and in any society where institutionalised gender inequality exists is the same as that faced by the Christian Church during the first three centuries of its existence⁸⁶. A view has been expressed which declares that “The Church will commit Gospel suicide if it preaches tolerance of homosexuality in Africa and in most of the third world, and that the Church will commit Gospel suicide in the developed countries of the West if it does not”. The dilemma that the Church faces in Africa and the third world is the same as the one which was faced by the first Century Church. Does the Church try to gain respectability by endorsing the traditions of a gender unequal society? Or does challenge these traditions by seeking to express the Gospel of Christ? Will these present day churches do the same as the predecessor church? Will these churches seek to preserve their institutions and endorse a Gender Complementarity which demands the submission of women, or can they become the Resurrection Church?

value of these relationships. The possibility of services of blessing for civil partnerships is now more actively being considered.

⁸⁵ Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 4:4. See footer for access.

⁸⁶ Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 4:4. See footer for access.

6:2. Church and Present Day Society

For as long as the Christian Church was able to maintain its secular authority these traditional views on sexual and gender variance and the traditional teaching about homosexuality could not be challenged. In some Churches the social changes from the last fifty years have promoted a re-evaluation of Christian teaching, but these have also resulted in a retrenchment into literalism and fundamentalism in others. Social developments include the disappearance of Church authority, the rejection of religious belief, the widespread introduction of contraception, the acceptance the enacting of anti-discrimination legislation, the legalisation of same-sex relationships in the form of Civil Partnerships, and since June 2013, the legalisation of Equal (or same-sex) Marriage.

These changes have also meant that most people now have had a personal and direct experience of relating to homosexual couples and other people who are gender variant or in other same-sex relationships. Such observers do not need to have any special knowledge to perceive that the same values of love and care and commitment can be expressed in loving same-sex partnerships as there are in heterosexual marriages. It is also easy for them to distinguish between the behaviour of two people who are involved in a heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are involved in a homosexual relationship, even in the circumstances where there is a total absence of sex. It is these clashes between what is perceived today as the common sense values and the fervent reliance on traditional doctrine which is destroying the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the world.

This analysis is necessary since it demonstrates that the present day attitudes to gender and sexual variation which have been adopted by much of society are the ones which are and were closer to the teaching of Jesus. Therefore it is the people who hold to the traditional teachings of the Church who are out of step with the Gospel message and a rediscovery of the first century values is urgently required.

6:3 Making the Choice

The present position of the Christian church is no longer sustainable and it is necessary for it to change its approach. However any change must always be to affirm the Gospel of Christ. There are a number of impediments that have to be overcome. One of these is found in the way that reinterpretation and translation drift has been used to reinforce the traditional doctrines of the Church. This is examined in detail elsewhere⁸⁷. A further concern which fuels the opposition to change comes from the fear that any liberalisation of the traditional teachings on homosexuality and gender and sexual variation will destroy the moral authority of Christianity and the Church. However there is nothing in this analysis which can justify these fears or reduce the moral expectations in any way, for it only requires that all people, irrespective of their gender identity or their sexual orientation, are treated alike.

In the moral compass of all religions there is the freedom to choose between actions of good and evil. This can sometimes be described as the difference between “The

⁸⁷ Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 3:5:1. See footer for access.
Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church”. Draft: Printed: 01/11/2013
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way of darkness and the way of light". That equivalent duality is shown to exist within the first century Judean and Greco/Roman traditions, where those people who attempt to live to the highest moral standards that their society expects can live according to the way of light. Those who do the reverse follow a way of darkness instead, and they are strongly condemned for their actions. Through its search for authority and for respectability in a gender unequal society the Christian Church has condemned every type of gender and sexually variant behaviour to the way of darkness instead. The result of this has been that the traditions of the later church do not represent those that belonged to the Apostolic Church. A major disconnect has occurred and its correction is a reform that must now be made.

This analysis offers an opportunity for the Church to return from that exile. The contribution of the Church to the good of mankind has been, is, and it always should be enormous, for the Christian message rises above every label and restriction, it is about a God of Love with whom and in whom, everyone can be truly become who they are in the unconditional Love of Christ.

7:0. Documents

For information on access and the current status of other documents check the website: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

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