

Twilight People Trans & Faith Symposium
Thursday 5 May 2016
University of Warwick



DEUTERONOMY 22:5 AND ITS IMPACT ON GENDER AND SEXUAL VARIATION IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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5 May 2016

Some slides were omitted during the actual presentation

Use the link below to access the accompanying paper:
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>



CONTEXT

This work began in a context which had nothing to do with gender and sexuality

- ✚ It was concerned with the early formation of personal identity and allegiance in situations where violent tribal conflicts occur**
- ✚ With academic support I began to make use of this work to find out how Gender and Sexual identities are formed**
- ✚ Gender dysphoria was used as a case study to examine these processes**



PAPERS ON THE NEUROPHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

Gilchrist, S. (2016): “A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-InfluencesPersonality.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2015): “Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Taking a Different Path”: Chapter 10 in: *“This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians”*, Ed: Beardsley, T. and O’Brien, M: Darton Longman and Todd. May 2016 ISBN 978-0-232-53206-7 Notes for this chapter are available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/sourcesA/index.htm>

For a summary see:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuG0504a-ResearchSummary.pdf>



MORAL DUALITY

- ✚ It is demonstrated in the neurophysiological and psychological study that a moral duality must exist whereby gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies should be highly regarded, while those who misuse these relationships would be severely condemned for their acts.
- ✚ That moral duality is contradicted by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns without exception every expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour as inherently sinful and heinous acts.



CONTRADICTIONS

- In order to address these contradictions an extended analysis is undertaken in the form of a critique which uses the results of the neurophysiological and psychological study to examine the history, theology and traditions of the Christian Church.**
- This is done from the perspectives of the surrounding cultures and societies, for any internal examination only reveals what the Church thinks of itself.**



PAPERS ON THE THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Gilchrist, S. (2016): “Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2015): “Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2013): “A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach”:
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/207P-ReassessmentPsychologyExtended.pdf>

For a summary see:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuG0504a-ResearchSummary.pdf>



GENDER AND SEX

The distinction between these must be clearly made

In its simplest form Gender and Gender Identity is about identifying who one is. Sex and Sexual Orientation is about who one relates to.

These are largely independent of each other. For example there is as wide a range of sexual orientations amongst gender variant people as there is in society at large.

However in terms of their relationships with society gender and sexually variant people travel in parallel along the same journey.

As this paper is about these relationships with society, gender and sexually variant people will be considered together in this account.

Deuteronomy 22:5 is primarily concerned with gender interactions



DEUTERONOMY 22:5 AND ITS IMPACT ON GENDER AND SEXUAL VARIATION IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A bible passage: often of greatest concern to transgender people is Deuteronomy 22:5, which states:

“A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the Lord your God”.

For many people this means the act of cross-dressing is in itself a sin.

However in the Old and the New Testament understanding no literal interpretation has ever been applied.



ACCURACY IN TRANSLATION

Care is also needed in translating Deuteronomy 22:5 in order to preserve the differences in the words

A literal translation reads: “A man's item shall not be on a woman, and a man shall not wear a woman's garment; whoever does such a thing is an abhorrence unto Adonai”. Here there are three clauses. (a) A man's item shall not be on a woman; (b) a man shall not wear a woman's garment and (c) whoever does such a thing is an abhorrence unto God.

The first two of these clauses are not identical in structure; and this will be shown to be important later on in this presentation.



PROHIBITION OF WOMEN CARRYING WEAPONS OF WAR

This prohibition of women carrying weapons of war is one of the oldest (ca 100-200 AD)

It is quoted by various sources

The word used in the first statement (Keli) means “Mens things” i.e. clothes, armour, weapons and tools rather than just the clothes, while the word for women's things (Simlah) which is used in the second statement describes a type of women's outer clothing.

This interpretation will be returned to later



BAN ON WOMEN MAKING USE OF THINGS OF RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

Another of the Jewish Aramaic texts, which was written around the same time interprets the verse to be a ban on women wearing the tzitzit (the tallit or the prayer shawl) or the tefillin (phylacteries or prayer amulets worn by traditionally observant Jews), and on men trimming their groin or underarm hair.

It is considered that these rules are imposed by the Halakha (Jewish law) and condemning the incorrect wearing of these; or inappropriate trimming of hair is the purpose of the verse.



AVOIDANCE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

**One sage combines this with the first interpretation about war:
He says: “Womenkind is not created for anything other than procreation, and were a woman to go with men to war she would fall into prostitution en route.”**

Another says: “(A woman dresses) that she should resemble a man in order to mingle with the men, which cannot be for any reason other than to fornicate” also “A man's item should not be on a woman so she can go out among men, for this is only for the purpose of adultery.” and “A man shall not wear a women's garment: so he can go and be among the women.”



BIBLICAL PROHIBITIONS OF CULTIC PROSTITUTION

The Bible makes it very clear that cultic prostitution had no place in Judaism

Modern Christian interpretations tend to assume that the motives for cross dressing prohibited in Deuteronomy 22:5 and same-sex intercourse condemned in Leviticus 18:33 and 20:13 were always connected with temple prohibition and inappropriate sex.

However there are indications that there were broader issues

It is time to return to the first of these explanations: The prohibition of women carrying weapons of war.



BIBLICAL CONDEMNATIONS OF DESPICABLE SEX

Hebrew scripture identified the surrounding states and religions as centres for all kinds of despicable activities and depraved sex.

This evidence would have seemed incontestable before the discovery of the clay tablets and inscriptions found in Ugarit, which was one of the nearby city states that worshipped the same Canaanite gods.

The religious and mythological texts give a comprehensive view of Canaanite religious practice and belief

There is also much less evidence of the gross immorality and the strong sexual obsession that would have been expected from the Hebrew accusations



BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TO POWER AND SEX

Sexual abuse is strongly condemned in the bible

What tends to be ignored is that this sexual abuse took place in gender unequal and discriminatory societies. The abuse of power in such societies gives permission for the abuse of sex

However, the condemnations in the bible which are made against other societies and cultures almost always ignore these abuses of power. Instead they are directed at condemning the immorality of the acts

Therefore no analysis of ancient societies can be complete without a detailed examination of the relationships between power and sex.

That is a major focus of this analysis and it is shown that it is the abuse of power which largely drives the abuse of sex



GODLY LINKS

In Ugarit the chief god was El and his consort was Asherah. He had many sons and daughters of which only the son Baal and daughters Anat and Ashtoreth need to be mentioned. Ashtoreth and Asherah were usually identified as the same person.

In Judaism before the exile the chief Jewish god Yahweh (who is also referred to as Elohim in the bible) had a consort called Asherah

In Ugarit El became increasingly insignificant while Yahweh became more and more supreme.

The interactions between these religious beliefs and the timescales of the transition are key features in determining the links.



TIMESCALES

Ugarit itself destroyed by the “Sea People” about the time when the Israelites were becoming established in Canaan

The evidence from Ugarit relates to key periods in the development of both cultures and traditions

Canaanite traditions continued elsewhere and this evidence provides valuable information on the nature of the transitions that occurred.

This is described in detail in the paper.



ANAT AND ASHERAH

In the Ugaritic Baal cycle these two Goddesses, Anat and Asherah are shown to represent two opposing stereotypes of women:

Asherah represents the feminine aspects of women, which men could put on a pedestal, and keep under their control. In the Baal cycle Asherah is submissive to El.

However Anat is exactly the opposite. She is warlike, strong and controlling. She directly attacks the authority of El and would seek to dominate any male.

The conflicts between these two stereotypes are of power rather than sex. That does not correspond to the portrayal of the depictions of the Canaanite religions in the bible itself.



VIRGINITY AND THE GODDESS CULTS

Apart from the reports in the myth that, even though Anat copulated with Baal by the thousand, she always remained a virgin, there is nothing in her description to indicate any involvement or any other interest in sex.

The major Fertility Goddesses in the Middle East were all perpetual virgins. Their authority and status could not be sullied by any male (God or otherwise) engaging in a penetrative act.

A figurative understanding would be more relevant, whereby Baal and Anat was inside every person, animal, fish or plant. For every cow and every bull that produces a calf the copulation of Baal and Anat is also seen to take place. Virginity is unsullied and maintained.

Sexual abuses did occur but the focus of the cults was on fertility itself.



POWER AND THE GODDESS CULTS

In the cult of Cybele in Rome the same attitudes to sexuality are found. The myths of the cult focus on the power of the Goddess; instead of the delights of sex.

Contrary 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. They also demonstrated that sex and gender were less important to the soul than love. The cult's activities included those of nurture, care, protection and responsible sex.

The Goddess Cults attacked the security of the male dominated societies

Christian condemnations were constant and severe, and this destroyed any awareness of these positive aspects of the cults



THE SUBMISSION OF WOMEN

Asherah continued to be recognised as the consort of Yahweh up to the time of the exile. All other Canaanite Gods and Goddesses became enemies. When it is seen from this perspective the prohibition of Deuteronomy 22:5 is not as benign as it might at first seem.

The consequence of making Anat an enemy, together with the prohibition of women putting on weapons of warfare was the denial of the assertive role that was given to women in Canaanite culture, which Anat represents.

The only example which was left for women to follow is the submissive role of Asherah. This establishes the framework which all Jewish women would be expected to adopt, and it provides a religious justification for the gender discrimination that occurred.



GENDER COMPLEMENTARITY IN JUDAISM

In Judaism men and women were considered different in essence but equal in value

Men were expected to love their wives at least as much, if not more than themselves

Women were given a high place in Judean society: however their authority was largely confined to family matters and inheritance.

Men had the public and intellectual role, and these divisions were rigidly enforced.

The submission of women to men was required. This reflected the history described above but this expectation is found in the New Testament itself.



PETER IN ROME

Peter does not directly quote Deuteronomy 22:5 but he makes of the same theme 1 Peter 3:1-6, when he states:

“Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God’s sight. It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you”.



PAUL AND THE SUBMISSION OF WOMEN

This is described in Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 14:34, Colossians 3:18 and 1Timothy 2: 9-15.

“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint”. 1Timothy 2: 9-15



MANLY AUTHORITY

In the Paedagogus (the Instructor) Clement defines appropriate standards for Christian clothing and behaviour as part of an extensive discussion about how Christians should behave.

Around AD 195 Clement wrote:

“What is the purpose in the Law’s prohibition against a man wearing woman’s clothing? Is it not that the Law would have us to be masculine and not to be effeminate in either person or actions - or in thought and word? Rather, it would have the man who devotes himself to the truth to be masculine both in acts of endurance and patience - in life, conduct, word, and discipline”.



ABUSES OF POWER, GENDER AND SEX

In Roman society sexual behaviour was viewed through the perspective of power and domination. A male Roman citizen was able to rape another male of lesser status without penalty, but only if he was the penetrator in the act.

A Roman citizen was expected to exercise responsibility, but what this meant varied according to the status of the person being raped

Prostitution and sexual immorality were rife

The horror of this sexual act; and the cultural clashes between Rome and Judean Societies which it created were great

The Goddess cults were popular, not just with women but with slaves and others who could be victims of gender discrimination and such sexual acts.

The Gospel message forcibly attacked all abuses of power, gender and sex.



TEACHING OF JESUS

By stepping outside the boundaries of a gender unequal and dictatorial society Jesus mounted a direct attack on those power structures which were essential to maintain it. In Mark 7:1-23 he said to the Scribes and Pharisees

“Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

***“This people honours me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.”***

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.



COMPROMISE AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

Without compromise Jesus had usurped the power structures on which his own society was built. From his own identification with the poor, women, the rejected and the outcast Jesus likewise turned the demands of authority completely on its head.

His rejection of all worldly power led to his sacrifice and death as a scapegoat on the Cross and the emphasis in Christianity has always been on the power and the significance of this redemptive act.

However the message Jesus gave in the Gospels was to work within society to transform it. That gave Peter, Paul and the early Church a difficult choice.

By seeking respectability in Greco/Roman society it sided with the social structures of that society, while continuing to attack the abuses of sex.



ADAPTATION AND RESPECT

The nature of that adaptation is perhaps best seen in Paul's attitude to the authorities in Romans 13: 1-7

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer”.



CONFORMITY TO ROMAN SOCIETY

For the early Church the Parousia, or the second coming, with the end of the world, was expected to occur very soon after the death of Jesus

When this was delayed, the practical needs of Christianity had to be satisfied. In order to spread the Gospel message as quickly and effectively as possible, this meant minimising disruption to the framework of Roman society.

The experience of the Jews at the time of the Exile gave Peter, Paul and the early Church an example to follow

Instead of simply accepting the Roman values. It is argued in this investigation that the Christian Church made use of the attitudes to gender complementarity that were already present inside Jewish society as the model to base the doctrines it sought to adopt.



ACCOMMODATION AND FAILURE

It is seen from the letter to Philemon that the initial aim of the early Church was to seek to fulfil the true message of the Gospel inside it, (as Paul expressed it in Galatians 3:28), while conforming to the social requirements of society outside the Church

However this could not be complete. The silencing of the public voice of women was demanded. Women had to submit to the authority of their husbands. Paul also condemned “Soft Men” and a strict heterosexual orthodoxy was enforced.

The early Church saw that the purpose of Deuteronomy 22:5 was to enforce male authority a gender unequal society. There is no place for that, or for this interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5 in the teaching of Jesus himself



CONSEQUENCES OF COMPROMISE

By making these compromises, Christianity could still continue to attack the abuses of sex in these societies with the same ferocity

However it could no longer attack the power structures which led to them

There is little evidence of these power struggles in the Jewish and Christian scriptures

Instead of challenging the power structures within gender unequal and discriminatory societies which led to these abuses, the Christian Church has colluded with them.

The duality that is present in gender and sexually variant behaviour is denied and all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviours are condemned as being in pursuit of illicit or immoral sex.



JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

This analysis compares the teaching of the Church with the results of a neurophysiological and psychological analysis.

The neurophysiological and psychological study demonstrates that as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour must exist among gender and sexually variant people as there are in the population at large.

Jesus makes exactly the same distinction in his teaching in the Gospels and the New Covenant, where the prohibitions that were previously based on the letter of the Law are now to be interpreted within the context of love, and also upon the intention of the acts.



CONCLUSIONS

The result of this examination is the simple and direct conclusion which states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance are built on a false foundation. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself

It is demonstrated that in the teaching of Jesus, all transgendered, transsexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in the roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted alike. All behaviour is governed by the purity of intention and there is no automatic condemnation of any cross-gender or same-sex act.

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INTERPRETATIONS OF DEUTERONOMY 22:5

Over the centuries much effort has been put into finding what the correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5 should be. The accepted interpretation of the verse changes as society changes

It is shown in this investigation that the prohibitions of Deuteronomy 22:5 were used to reinforce the power structures and gender divisions in a gender unfair and discriminatory society in an equivalent way to that in which Leviticus was employed to condemn the same-sex sexual acts.

The use of one single Old Testament verse is also a very weak foundation for the different fundamental theological and pastoral judgements that have been applied to it, especially in light of 1 Samuel 16:7:

“God does not see as mortals see: they look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart”.

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ANY QUESTIONS?

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May 2016



FINAL COMMENTS

Sexual abuse must always be totally condemned. It is demonstrated that the abuses of power in gender and socially unequal societies give permission for the abuse of sex.

An absolute priority for the early Christian Church had to be the tackling of sexual abuse in Roman Society

No consideration of sexual behaviour in the Bible can be complete without a full examination of the relationships between power and sex.

The need to seek respectability and acceptance in Roman society was considered essential if Christianity was to continue to survive and bring its Gospel message to the world.



ORIGINS OF DISCRIMINATION

It is also important to note that discrimination against gender and sexually variant people is a socially led phenomenon and it would be a mistake to identify its cause with religious belief.

A major feature of gender complementarity comes from the way it separates the male from the female roles.

Any form of gender and sexually variant behaviour which departs from the normal expectations of that society, for any purpose, challenges this distinction and may be seen as a danger to the social order

However the compromises which were adopted sacrificed the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sexuality for the respectability of the Church.



COLLUSION

That transformation brought the Church to collude with these secular demands of society rather than to challenge them.

Not only has this consent reinforced the secular prejudices of such discriminatory societies; it gave and it still gives religious legitimacy to them, it reinforces the severity of the penalties that are encountered and it contradicts the results which the neurophysiological and psychological analysis presents.

One only needs to look today at the behaviour of Daesh and Boko Haram to see how extreme this can become. The persecution and slaughter of gender and sexually variant people, not only in Christianity but in Islam, Judaism and all other religions, states and cultures which have drawn their teachings from it has been enormous. Repentance is needed for these acts.