

What Celtic Christianity and The Ancient Church of The East Can Tell Us About Christian Attitudes to Women and LGBTI Relationships

Susan Gilchrist

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9 February 2024

Preface

On the 7th. February 2024 in the United Kingdom Parliament, during Prime Minister's Questions the Prime Minister, Richi Sunak, jibed at the leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer by saying "*I know what a woman is*". Those who are aware of the present conflicts in the United Kingdom over the legitimacy of the gender identities will know precisely what this meant. Only the single definition of biology alone as an "*Adult human female*" can be used to define a woman, and no other is allowed. There is also a fundamental disagreement between the two opposing groups. The World Authorities and the Professional Medical Institutions now invariably define transgender identities as "*naturally expected variations of the human condition, intrinsic to the personality created, arising very early in life, and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life*". And this is a basic or fundamental sense of belonging which lies at the core, or the heart of the personalities and identities that every one of us possesses. However, gender-critical feminist groups deny the existence or relevance of this core gender identity. They instead attribute gender identity wholly to a "*nebulous and collectively created social construct determined entirely through association with the gender role*". This means that any deviation from the pattern of behaviour associated with biology must be regarded as a personality disruption, paraphilia, or perversion instead. Applying the diagnosis of personality variations, now universally adopted by the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, identifies the creation of transgender identities as inwardly focussed and compulsive searches for identity involving the rejection of what is wrong. These do not threaten others: This must be set against the views of opposing gender-critical feminists who, along with many religious groups, instead identify transgender conditions as sexually driven but sublimated personality disruptions, involving motives and feelings of behaviour and desire. Since both the motives and methods of management profoundly differ... to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded as one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, it is crucial that the correct diagnosis is made: And it is hardly surprising that strong and toxic disputes occur. There is also a fundamental contradiction. If the depth and legitimacy of transgender and transsexual identities are to be accepted, then the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach must be discredited. If the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is instead accepted, then the depth and integrity of transgender identities must be denied.

With such deep seated and opposing viewpoints it is crucial that a truly impartial analysis is undertaken. That does not happen: The viewpoints of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions are dismissed by gender-critical groups as not being based on credible science, and as irresponsible work of transgender activists. The motives of the people and organisations presenting them are likewise discredited. No approach other than one which preserves gender-critical ideologies is accepted. Far from adopting the egalitarianism of the feminist pioneers and modern inclusive Christian theology, gender-critical groups adopt a gender complementarity similar to traditional Christian doctrines, where all acceptable social behaviour is indissolubly linked to biological sex: so the reality of transgender identities is denied. When the Prime Minister made the statement that "*I know what a woman is*", he was too was misdiagnosing and denying the depth and legitimacy of transgender identities. This was when he understood the mother of a murdered teenage transgender girl, Brianna Ghey, was listening to him in the Public Gallery of the House of Commons, just a few days after two other teenagers had been sentenced for Brianna's murder, and where transgender hate crime was identified by the trial judge to be a part of the motives involved. When challenged the Prime Minister also refused to apologise for his statement. In another sad coincidence, just one day after the guilty verdict had been passed, the Government released its new advice on the treatment of transgender children. The statement is made in the document explaining it that "*This guidance is intended to give teachers and school leaders greater confidence when dealing with an issue that has been hijacked by activists misrepresenting the law*". This statement destroys the impartiality of any current Government approach: That is discussed in this article. This consultation remains open to the 12th. March 2024. Please complete it at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gender-questioning-children-draft-schools-and-colleges-guidance>

Although the topic of this article is as given in the title, it is also a part of a series which examines these issues. The others are: Gilchrist, S. (2020f): "*Managing Transgender Conditions Correctly: A Commentary on the Bell v Tavistock Case*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/249P-JudgmentResponse.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2022): "*No Blacks, No Irish, No Homosexuals, No Transgender People*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/252P-NoBlacks.pdf> . And a blow-by-blow account is given in: Gilchrist, S. (2023): "*How to Trash the Economy, Transgender Identities and Human Rights*" <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/255P-HowToTrash.pdf>

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Abstract

Disputes over sexual relationships, and in particular same-sex relationships have been a cause of major tensions for centuries in the Christian Churches. I consider both women and gender and sexually variant (LGBTI) people together in this account, since both are affected by male domination in similar or equivalent ways. Although much of this document is concerned with the roles that women are given in Christian traditions, the validity and nature of gender and sexually variant (LGBTI) conditions are currently the subject of very bitter disputes which spill over into both science and religion. These major disputes and disagreements about the legitimacy of LGBTI identities also span across secular societies, religious traditions, and between different sections of the feminist movements. Celtic Christianity took its inspiration from the Desert Fathers and the Ancient Church of the East, which, like the Irish Celtic cultures, had its roots in a relatively much more egalitarian Persian and Zoroastrian world. In this study a comparison is made between how Christianity developed in these comparatively egalitarian societies, and how it developed within the much more patriarchal and strongly gender and sexually unequal Roman Empire, also within Judean culture, where it had its roots. Because of the high degree of interaction between these two elements and the intensity of the present disputes, a detailed scientific examination of nature and origin of gender and sexually variant conditions, which includes a full study of the current understandings and the disagreements within neurology and psychology, is also provided in this extended account. The interactions between science and theology are also examined.

In our present-day gender equal and inclusive societies, we have largely returned to the same teaching on relationships between men and women, gender, and sexuality as that offered by a certain Jewish Rabbi in Palestine just over 2000 years ago. If we also wish to establish a Christianity which truly reflects the teaching of Jesus and is appropriate to present day, we must re-examine how we in pursuit of our own exclusions, self-interests, tribal barriers, and ideologies, we have destroyed the egalitarian teachings of Jesus, and how we have included these exclusions, self-interests, tribal barriers, and ideologies within the Christian Church. The arguments I present in this analysis both on religious and feminist viewpoints are radical, they may be wrong, or they may be right. But that is not the point. When the motives and methods of management of personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, it is hardly surprising that strong and toxic disputes occur. At the present time there is a retrenchment into false certainty and simple ideology. This is a danger which must urgently be addressed, and it something we must not deny or avoid.

How and why the present United Kingdom Human Rights watchdog body (the EHRC) has come to adopt a policy which is entirely in accordance with that of the current United Kingdom Government is examined in this paper. And how their combined support of only one side, together with their denials of validity and credibility of any other, in this hotly contested dispute, threatens all our human rights.

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1:0 Introduction

Disputes over sexual relationships, and in particular same-sex relationships have been a cause of major tensions for centuries in the Christian Churches. In November 2013, the Church of England House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality recommended that: *“The subject of sexuality, with its history of deeply entrenched views, would be best addressed by facilitated conversations or a similar process to which the Church of England needs to commit itself at national and diocesan level.”* That began a *“Shared Conversations”* process which focussed upon obtaining *“Good Disagreement.”* It was followed by a *“Living in Love and Faith Programme (LLF)”*. This programme was about developing an egalitarian approach to Christianity, which asks for the equal inclusion of all men and women, and for all gender and sexually variant people who live lives that are true to their own identities: and who seek to fulfil the Gospel message². Some of you may know that I have been involved with the Shared Conversations process. Although, I have provided the LLF programme with access to all of my work, and given it my full support, I refused to become formally involved in it because I believed that the brief it was given was too restrictive. This demanded that there could be no change in the traditional teaching and doctrine as *“The Church of England has Received it”*. In my view that brief disregarded how the development of Christianity proceeded through the first millennium, when enormous changes took place³. I consider both women and gender and sexually variant (LGBTI) people together in this account, since both are affected by male domination in similar or equivalent ways. Although much of this document is concerned with the roles that women are given in Christian traditions, the validity and nature of gender and sexually variant (LGBTI) conditions are currently the subject of very bitter disputes which spill over into both science and religion. Because of the high degree of interaction between these two elements, a detailed scientific examination of nature and origin of gender and sexually variant conditions, which includes a full study of the current understandings and disputes within neurology and psychology, is also provided in this extended account. And the interactions between science and theology are examined.

¹ Cite: Gilchrist, S. (2024): *“What Celtic Christianity and the Ancient Church of the East Can Tell us about Christian Attitudes to Women and LGBTI Relationships”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-CelticChristianityWomenGenderSex.pdf>. IN THIS DOCUMENT I HAVE TRIED TO KEEP REFERENCES ETC. TO THE MINIMUM: FULL REFERENCES TO ORIGINAL SOURCES ARE INSTEAD GIVEN IN ALL OF MY DOCUMENTS IN THE FOOTNOTES PROVIDED. This document contains material extracted from the presentation series Gilchrist, S. (2022): *“Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions”* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>. And, Gilchrist, S. (2022): *“Transgender Disputes, Conversion Therapy and Government actions”* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/254p-PresTransDisputesAndGovActions.pdf> These are fully annotated presentations where full references and cross-references to the original sources are given. Additional resources, including a full bibliography, from which papers can be downloaded are available on my website www.tgdr.co.uk. Some of these papers are still in preparation, although draft copies may now be posted: Go to the website and click on the bibliography or download tabs. See in particular: Gilchrist, S. (****): *“Jesus and Women”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-JesusAndWomen.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (****): *“Power and Sex in Christian Traditions”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-PowerAndSex.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (****): *“East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (****): *“The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and the Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf> . For a critique of present Government approaches see: Gilchrist, S. (2023): *“How to Trash the Economy, Transgender Identities and Human Rights”* <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/255P-HowToTrash.pdf> .

² Living In Love and Faith Website <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith>

Also, Gilchrist, S. (2024): *“Transgender Misdiagnoses; EHRC and Government Advice”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-MisdiagnosesAndAdvice.pdf>.

³ For my own critique of the *“Living in Love and Faith”* Process, see: Presentation 6 *“Living in Love and Faith”* in: series Gilchrist, S. (2022): *“Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions”* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>.

At the present time these disputes particularly apply to transgender people. The latest United Kingdom Government advice on how to treat transgender children is currently open for consultation⁴. Although this is not the main focus of the article, that raises particular concerns and these need to be addressed. (See sections 5:0, 5:1, 7:1 and 7:2). I also take the view that identities arise through the allegiances, behaviours, and interactions that have previously been encountered. I make a distinction between gender and sexual identities. Sexual identities arise through the relationships of love and attraction which have a sexual focus, but gender identities arise through social relationships in everyday life. And some may have a biological base. I use the term transgender to include all people whose gender identity does not conform to the sex that biology prescribes. I only use the term transsexual (reluctantly) for those people whose gender identity is opposite to the sex that biology would expect⁵. In any case most transsexuals in my experience do not think about transition primarily as having the final goals of sex, biology, or gender. These are journeys across the gender divide which take them home to themselves.

These major disputes and disagreements about the legitimacy of LGBTI identities span across secular societies, religious traditions, and between different sections of the feminist movements. Celtic Christianity took its inspiration from the Desert Fathers and the Ancient Church of the East, which, like the Irish Celtic cultures, had its roots in a relatively much more egalitarian Persian and Zoroastrian world. In this study a comparison is made between how Christianity developed in these comparatively egalitarian societies, and how it developed within the much more patriarchal and strongly gender and sexually unequal Roman Empire, also within Judean culture, where it had its roots⁶.

2:0 Religious and Cultural Differences during the First Millennium

Judaism took its cue on sexual relationships from the story of David and Jonathan in the Bible, where the condemnations involved the abuses of power and of domination, together with the abuses of sex. Many modern-day Christian theologies deny even the suggestion that there could be any expressions of romantic love in these relationships. Yet the Old Testament is full of stories in which strong, intimate, and loving relationships are expressed, where male same-sex intercourse is the only prohibited act. In this article I argue that what today is considered to be the traditional teaching of the Church on these matters of gender, sex, marriage, and sexual relationships is essentially based on the work of Thomas Aquinas, in which the issues of power in all sexual and institutional relationships were largely disregarded. This meant that, any departure from the expected heterosexual social and sexual norms became automatically condemned as sexual depravities and as socially disordered acts. Because of this, the condemnations of sexual abuse, which had previously been based on the abuses of power, domination, and the abuses of sex, were turned into the condemnations, outside marriage, and without exception, of all sexually motivated acts. Later in this account I examine how this transformation took place⁷.

These are the reasons why I argue that this paradigm shift, and a cultural change was enforced not long after the end of the first millennium: In place of condemnations that had been based on the abuses of power and the abuses of sex, the effect has been to transfer the condemnations to the symptom, which is the sexual act. Aquinas also modelled his teaching on Aristotle and the Greek Philosophers; but Jesus was a Jew who lived in a Jewish society. While the Greek philosophers argued that separation and the absence of passion would

⁴ Government Consultation on the treatment of transgender children in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gender-questioning-children-draft-schools-and-colleges-guidance> This consultation closes on the 12th March 2024 Please respond.

⁵ The terms “transgender”, “transmen” and “transwomen” should instead be used. I use the term “transsexual” only because others, including certain religious and gender-critical feminist groups, continue to use it. And to make the distinctions that are needed in this account. It also fails to distinguish gender from sex.

⁶ These differences are considered in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): “The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf> is also available.

⁷ See also: Gilchrist, S. (2013a): “An Unfinished Reformation”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2011b): “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2013b): “Reform and the Christian Church”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/008B-ReformChristianChurchArticle.pdf>

best stimulate the purity of thought, Jewish tradition relied on an opposite didactic approach. Here close relationships were encouraged in order to stimulate the depths of debate and the processes of thought. Judaism adopted a “pairs” culture which lasted from the time of the Exile up to the time of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. Where such intimate relationships between pairs of rabbis or students were encouraged. Again, taking the cue from the relationship between David and Jonathan, male same-sex intercourse was the only prohibited act. Notably the rabbis in the first century cast the condemnations in Leviticus principally in terms of abuses of power and for a “lack of respect”. Similar intense relationships were subsequently found both in Judaism and Christianity up to and a little beyond the end of the first millennium. Although Aquinas had defined marriage as the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, the Church did not regard marriage as a sacrament which required its approval before the Council of Trent in 1563. Formerly, the word had been used in different ways. This implies that, even though the Church ascribed very high values to marriage, until then the Church did not concern itself as to how it was defined.

Although these issues were (and are) primarily concerned with gender and sexually variant people, they affect every man and woman because they enforce a gender complementarity which is applied to all sexual and social relationships. This has been adopted for centuries by the Roman Church. It argues that all men and women should have equal esteem but, the same time it also confines all activities to the stereotypical biologically regulated modes of behaviour which conform to the authority, status, and to the social requirements expected by the relevant society. On the other hand, egalitarian approaches include those who in virtue depart from them. Although the Virgin Mary was extremely highly venerated both in the Ancient Church of the East and in the Roman Church, the Church in Rome adapted to Roman society. And the nature of that veneration affirmed the gender complementarity required by the Roman Church⁸. In the Roman Church, redemption for women was through childbirth and women had to do penance for the sins of Eve during their earthly lives. In the Church of the East women were considered to be redeemed from the time what “Mary said yes” to bearing the Christ child, and no further redemption was required at any time during their earthly lives. No corresponding adaptation, or at least a much smaller adaptation, was required in the Ancient Church of the East. These differences in the understanding of the role of the Virgin Mary was a feature that led to the Nestorian controversy, which came to a head around 451⁹.

The arguments that gender complementarity promotes equality may be true in theory, but not in practice. By the end of the second Century women were not allowed to preach, teach, baptise, or perform any “manly” function in the Roman Church. One need only look at the diatribes against femininity and women as temptresses from the fourth century onwards by theologians in the Roman Church. As a consequence, women have been effectively discriminated against under this guise of gender complementarity for centuries by the Christian Churches. To this should be added the denunciations of all sexual activity and condemnations of human bodies as vile bodies because of the doctrine of the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden¹⁰. It is sobering to realise that a case, which was only brought before the Supreme Court of Canada in 1927 and later decided by the Judicial Council of Britain's Privy Council in 1929: Canada's highest court at the time, finally legally recognized women as “persons” in their own right.

A further consequence of this paradigm shift relates to issues of sexual abuse where the disregard of the abuses of power as an element in sexual abuse has had the effect of transferring the guilt of the abuser to the victim. Even to the present day, this still has a devastating effect. This disregard has also allowed the authorities to shift an abuser from one parish to another without any real regard for the trauma the victims have faced. Although the Protestant Reformers in the 14th Century censured Aquinas for his attitudes to power, they failed to address the consequences his teaching has had in relation to the abuses of sex. And that has had the effect of re-doubling these attacks. Sadly, the consequences of this are still present today.

⁸ The role and position of the Virgin Mary is examined in more detail in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf>

⁹ The Nestorian Controversy is examined in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf> Also gives further information.

¹⁰ For a study of this, see: Thatcher, Adrian (2024): “*The Body in Christian Teaching, Faith and Practice*” SCM Press ISBN: 9780334063605

That I believe is also evident in the current failures in many branches of the Christian Churches to put adequate safeguarding arrangements in place, whatever intentions are expressed¹¹.

The history of sexual abuse within Christianity and the Clergy is not a pleasant one. But these issues raise a much broader question. And that is what are the reasons why Christian teaching changed from the egalitarian and inclusive approach of Jesus, as it appears in the Gospel Message, where all men and women, including all gender and sexually variant people who together seek to conform to the highest standards of the Gospel message, and live in ways which are true to their own identities are fully accepted in their own right... has become transformed into the opposing approach of gender complementarity, where all women and all people whose behaviour and actions departed from the male and female stereotypes demanded by any particular society have come to be regarded as engaging in sexually depraved behaviour and intrinsically disordered acts.

Today we look a Christianity almost through the prism of Roman Society and how it sought to survive in this Roman World. To fully answer these questions, we also need to examine how Christianity developed in cultures outside the influences of that despotically patriarchal society, where none other than male citizens had legal power in their own right. This is why it is important to recognise that when Christianity first expanded out of Judaism it spread both East and West. It moved on the one hand into a strongly patriarchal Roman society, where these severe distinctions were made between the status of men and women and the roles they could occupy, and on the other hand into a much more gender equal and egalitarian Persian and Zoroastrian society, where men and women were treated much more uniformly in society, and where both sexes could hold positions of status and occupy many of the same roles in everyday life: Although it remained strongly stratified in terms of social class.

When St Thomas and his followers took Christianity to the East, they had to establish without precedent the ground rules for Christianity in this much more gender equal society. When St Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, he did not try to impose the Roman tradition. Instead, he adapted this to suit the Brehon Law, which was the legal code for perhaps an even more egalitarian and equal society. This regulated, but did not prohibit male same-sex intercourse, and those provisions remained. In the Bible and in the New Testament we find that St Peter and St Paul did not agree precisely about how the Christian tradition should be integrated into the Roman World. Attempting to impose the degree of social egalitarianism which St Thomas and his followers could immediately achieve in the East, and also St Patrick in Ireland, would similarly have been a social disaster in for any fledgling movement in First Century Roman society.

2:1 Power and Sex

In the Bible, the story of David and Jonathan is the story of a romantic relationship which broke the limits of the time. In some modern translations of the Bible the reason for the breakup is expressed in terms of distress (David wept profusely). The King James version says: "*David exceeded*". The main question that has to be asked: is this about abuses of power or abuses of sex? In another book of the Bible (Leviticus.) male same-sex intercourse is strongly condemned, and that condemnation includes consensual sex. It is not surprising that the penetrator would be condemned in the case of rape, but in the case of consensual same-sex intercourse in these grossly unequal Old Testament societies, it is the penetrated partner who is condemned: for that person has willingly ceded power to the authority to the penetrator, and thus destroyed his citizenship rights¹².

Through the abuses of power in that way alone, David would have also destroyed Jonathan's kingship rights. The relationship between David and Jonathan is clearly portrayed as one of romantic love. However, if all same-sex intercourse as prohibited, the next question to ask is how did the love between two males continue

¹¹ For discussions on Aquinas, see Gilchrist, S. (2013a): "*An Unfinished Reformation*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> : Gilchrist, S. (2011b): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

¹² For a discussion of the relationships between power and sex: See: Gilchrist, S: (2023): "*Power and Sex in Christian Traditions*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-PowerAndSex.pdf>: See also: Gilchrist, S. (2022): "*Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions*" (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

to be expressed? The Old Testament is full of stories of strong romantic love between two males. where male same-sex intercourse is the only prohibited act. And in the entire Bible, male same-sex intercourse remains the only specifically prohibited act. This prohibition is contained in the book of Leviticus. Here the passages are carefully constructed to make it clear that the condemnation is confined to the physical act. Also, under Jewish Oral Law it was necessary for the act to be witnessed by another person who was obliged to warn the participants. Only if the participants continued after the warning was given could the Law (which to the best of our knowledge, it never was) could be put into effect. It is also well written up in Jewish literature the penalty could not be applied if a boy of less than nine years and one day is involved. This is horrendous unless the condemnation is understood to condemn the enforcing of power for purposes of domination, which may also be expressed through the abuses of sex. It additionally means that condemnations of the abuses of power must be considered separately from the abuses of sex. Fast-forward to first century Jewish culture. Sexual abuse including pederasty was abhorred in Jewish society, but it is notable that the condemnation of male same-sex intercourse in Leviticus at that time was primarily cast in terms of abuses of power and the “*lack of respect*”. The rabbis interpreted these passages strongly in terms of abuses of power and did not concentrate their condemnations on the abuses of sex. It should be noted that the penalty could only be applied if there was public identification or expression of the act.

2:2 Attitudes to Same-Sex Relationships

Scholarship and learning in Jewish culture also took place on a didactic basis, where pairs of rabbis, students or scholars debated the meaning of the texts. Intimacy was encouraged since this was considered to increase the depth and quality of the arguments. These first century partner partnerships, known as “*Chavruta Partnership*”, could be so strong that the two participants could be referred to as a single item (*A Chavruta*). Some were considered to be as strong as those in a heterosexual marriage. The present-day approach of the Church of England to civil partnerships comes into mind in relation to these acts. However, these arguments could not be used to endorse male same-sex marriages. Jewish literature does not say a great deal about this, but the idea of a male same-sex marriage was anathema: It was equated to that of a man marrying an animal, which says much about the lowly status of women in these societies.

That also raises the question as to how these patterns were carried forward into the Christian tradition. In early Byzantine Christianity, services of “*Alepheopoesis*” or “*Brother making*” were held which cemented such relationships, but male same-sex intercourse remained a firmly prohibited act. The liturgies which exist for these services show that they were similar to those for marriage: but omitted the final “*Crowning*” act. In the 9th Century, Charlemagne the Holy Roman emperor, spurred on by a religious revival which was led by Irish monks repeatedly published early Church decrees which condemned same-sex abuses, but not same-sex acts. Christianity during the first millennium was littered with saints and others who were in strong and intimate but celibate same sex relationships. Aelred in the 12th Century encouraged his monks to passionately express their love for each other, but equally strongly condemned male same-sex intercourse. The same passionate relationships Between Rashi and Rabbi Jonathan are found in the Jewish tradition about the same time¹³. If we exclude the issue of male same-sex intercourse, both Judaism and Christianity during the first millennium continued to follow the first century understandings which was common to Greek and other societies where decisions between moral and immoral behaviour were decided between the noble pursuit of love, and the carnal abuse of sex. This was always applied to male same-sex relationships¹⁴. In Judaism all male-same sex

¹³ Greenberg, Steven; (2004): “*Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*”. The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3. See also: Gilchrist, S. (2016f): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

¹⁴ Plato, drawing on the work of Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, imagined the analogy to be that of a chariot driven by two horses. One is the noble white horse of love, order, and reason; the other, the ugly black horse of disorder, impulse, and social and carnal abuses, including the carnal acts of sex. This applied to same-sex relationships and acts. Although Plato initially endorsed Greek practices in relation to sexual behaviour, he moved increasingly to a doctrine of “Platonic” thought, which avoided all emotional involvement to stimulate the purity of logic within his arguments. The Stoics were especially known for teaching that “virtue is the only good” for human beings, and that external things, such as health, wealth, and pleasure, are not good or bad in themselves but have a value as “material for virtue to act upon”. The Stoics also held that certain destructive emotions arose from errors of judgment, and they believed people should aim to maintain a lifestyle that is “in accordance with nature”. Aristotle was more liberal than the Stoics. He added both agency and motives to his definitions of virtue. However, there is no reason to believe that he departed significantly from Greek social practices of separating the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex. He noted that male-same sex intercourse was favoured among the Celts, especially within the warrior classes, without condemning it, as it also was in certain sections of Greek Society. Relationships of love between two

intercourse was strongly condemned, but that was the only act. Women, as we have seen had no power in these societies and did not count. Corresponding relationships are found in Old Testament texts.

2:3 Priestly Abuse

A crisis of priestly sexual abuse was reported on by St Peter Damian in the 11th Century. Many, like David, also “exceeded”, in their acts. Pope Leo who received the report, did little about it. The Church was also being increasingly being condemned for the profligate exercise of pomp, wealth, and power adopted by its hierarchy. The doctrine of “*Papal Infallibility*”, which states that the Pope, acting as supreme teacher and under certain conditions, cannot err when he teaches in matters of faith or morals, became increasingly important. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), in his work the “*Dictatus papae*”, gave infallibility an extremely exalted position in the papacy, while Innocent III (1198-1216) using this, claimed to exercise ultimate authority not just in the spiritual, but also in the temporal sphere. These exercises of power among others led to the anti-clerical Cathar Revolt. Although the Cathar theology, which came from the East, was regarded as highly irregular, the Cathars espoused a gender equality and egalitarianism that is comparable to similar societies of the present day. St Bernard of Clairvaux, who preached strongly against the Cathars, nevertheless admired their lifestyles. At the same time Bernald was in a strong and intimate, although presumably celibate, relationship with St Malachy, the Bishop of Armagh in Ireland. From the accounts that are available, this was a loving and committed same-sex relationship, where male same-sex intercourse again was the only prohibited act. Enter St Thomas Aquinas who sought to address many of these issues, and to liberalise what the Church considered acceptable sexual activity within marriage and condemn all sexual behaviour outside it¹⁵. Aquinas modelled his teaching on Aristotle and the Greek Philosophers, but Jesus was a Jew who lived in a Jewish society, and as has earlier been noted, the approaches could hardly be more different¹⁶.

men were more valued than those where just same-sex intercourse was involved. Nevertheless, he seems to indicate that this could be accepted as part of a journey to love, and he does not appear to have opposed the practice of pederasty in Greek culture. The Stoics thought that the best measure of an individual's philosophy was not about what a person said, but how a person behaved: and how well they conformed to the rules of the “natural order” which nature provided. The Stoic approach ruled that the sexual acts are neither good nor bad in themselves but contain “material of virtue to work upon”: And there is no reason to believe that Aristotle dissented. This, to a degree corresponds with the “Natural Law” as interpreted by the Roman Church. However, it does not automatically deny the first century attitudes to sex in heterosexual and male same-sex sexual relationships, notably when these were considered to separate the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex: The teaching of Paul and of Jesus, in the doctrine of the New Covenant was “foolishness to the Greeks”. It was also contrary to Platonic thought: because it describes how the intervention of a supreme and caring God can act for salvation against the harsh determinism of Stoicism and also against the legalistic condemnations of the Jewish Law. Where, in place of the strict legal interpretations of this Law that was traditional to Judaism, the judgments of Jesus in the New Covenant are now to be made on love, virtue, and intention of the acts: This additionally endorses an egalitarian approach to such sexual relationships, where people who seek to live in ways which are true to their own identities, which conform to the highest standards of the Gospel message, who engage in loving and committed heterosexual and same-sex relationships, where there are no abuses of power and sex, are fully accepted without any other qualification or restriction, in the Love of Christ. It also displays a moral duality which would be appropriate in present day society. However, that moral duality was destroyed by Aquinas who, in his attempts to combat the gross abuses of power and sex within the medieval Church, condemned all sexual acts outside heterosexual marriage without exception, as progenitors of lust, sexual depravity, and as socially disordered acts: While he at the same time he permitted their expression as measures of love within married life. The attitudes to male same-sex intercourse varied greatly. In Judaism there was an absolute prohibition, not least because of horrors the Jews experienced during the Exile, and because it was a relatively powerless society. In Rome it was permitted, provided the penetrated partner was not a citizen. In the much more equal Celtic Irish world: Which, like Rome had never been conquered it was accepted, but it was also regulated to protect social relationships and family life. It should also be noted that this freedom of expression was not rejected by St Patrick when he succeeded in bringing Christianity in Ireland. And male same-sex intercourse was not criminalized in Ireland until the 16th century. It may not be too much of a coincidence to note that around this time, the Roman Church in the Council of Trent enforced its control over married life. Aquinas argued that the divinely ordained teaching of the Church must always prevail over these Stoic principles of natural law when conflicts are found: Thus, in place of adopting a Stoic or Aristotelian approach which asks about where we might find virtue in these same-sex and unmarried relationships, that is now denied. It is also probably easy to see why Aquinas was attracted to Aristotle. There is little in relation to erotic love in his teaching. Although he considered women inferior to men and not suited for public office, his relationship of love between his wife, and later his concubine could be recommended. While Aristotle made the distinction between acceptable behaviour on the grounds of virtue, Aquinas turned this into the condemnation of the sexual acts. So that all possibilities of engaging in any virtuous sexual or gender variant relationships outside a Church recognised heterosexual marriage between a man and a woman for life is denied. And it means that the decisions about how “*Natural Law*” must be interpreted, and where the boundary between morality and immorality must also be set, are now determined by what the Church decides.

¹⁵ See section 2:1:6 *Luther Aristotle and Aquinas* also section 3:7:1 *Aquinas*. in Gilchrist, S. (2013a): “*An Unfinished Reformation*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf> : See also 9:0 *Natural Law and the Christian Church* in Gilchrist, S. (2011b): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf> And all other references to Aquinas in these texts.

¹⁶ Gilchrist, S. (2011b): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

For Aristotle and the Greek philosophers any expression of sexual emotion was to be suppressed because it was considered to impede logical argument and purity of thought, whereas Judaism relied on these intimacies of close relationships to stimulate it. Instead of making the distinction between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex, for Aquinas, only marriage legitimised sexual behaviour. All activity outside it, was invariably considered to be the progenitor of lust, and denial of virtue, leading to a falling from grace and inherently depraved and disordered acts. This created the paradigm shift in Christian teaching, and it is encountered in many parts of the Christian Church today. It exonerates the authorities from the abuses of power and makes the focus of the condemnation without exception, the sexual act. This, and the similar transformations transfers blame from the perpetrators to the victims¹⁷. I believe this continues to plague the Christian Churches today.

¹⁷ That raised further difficulties for Paul, in his attempts to justify Christianity and this Christian doctrine of Grace within the Jewish context and in the philosophically sophisticated Greek and Roman worlds. And a key question to be asked is about whether Salvation and Justification comes through faith in Christianity or through engagement in good works. The Stoics thought that the best measure of an individual's philosophy was not about what a person said, but how a person behaved and how they conformed to the rules of the "natural order" which nature provided. However, in contradiction to this, Paul is quite clear in stating that redemption is by faith alone: But that faith must be expressed through his own efforts to do good works. And through the efforts of others to engage in their own good works. Paul also argued that those who do the same good works and follow the same ethics as those which are present in the Gospel Message are redeemed by the actions of Jesus, when they never had any opportunity to know about him. However, the situation is less clear for those who do know about Jesus, who also do the same good works, but who in all conscience cannot believe in his divinity. That appears to be condemned in Paul's teaching. However, it has to be remembered that in a competing world, Paul needed to distinguish the uniqueness of Christianity from other faiths. In the many cases where there is a condition given for salvation in the New Testament, faith or belief is stated to be the one and only condition. On that basis, many presume that without this faith, salvation and redemption must also be denied. That also gave rise to Gnostic traditions where to achieve salvation the belief in the "Secret sayings of Jesus" was all that was required. But that is not the only thing to consider. The question of how easily the perceptions of reality can be made to conform to an ideology must also be addressed. Setting aside for the moment, the questions about the authenticity of the Gospel of Thomas, there are two stories or sayings in it which might add further light to this dilemma. In saying 96, "Jesus says: *"The kingdom of the Father is like a woman. She took a little bit of yeast. She hid it in dough and made it into huge loaves of bread. Whoever has ears should hear"*. Corresponding Texts are in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20-21. In Saying 97, Jesus says: *"The kingdom of the Father is like a woman who is carrying a jar filled with flour. While she was walking on the way, very distant from home, the handle of the jar broke, and the flour leaked out on the path. But she did not know it; she had not noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down on the floor and found it empty."* This saying is not in the Canonical Gospels. Including saying 96 in the Canonical Gospels would be important for evangelism, as it would have been for Paul. However, the same reason could also be given for leaving saying 97 out. While Saying 96 says the Kingdom will grow if it is leavened, saying 97 states it will die in you if it is ignored. When taken together it is not a belief in the theology that matters, it is the continuing commitment to the leavening, or fulfilment of the Gospel message that is required. Therefore, salvation is not just about making a statement that "You are saved", because you believe, that is not the most important element, the important element is the continuing commitment to the teaching of Jesus and to the Gospel message. The answer to this is implicit in the teaching of Paul and the Apostles, but it is made explicit in the Gospel of Thomas. And that allows us to return to the question which has troubled Christianity for centuries about whether it is faith or good works which sow the seeds of salvation. Thomas shows that it is neither: It is about the fruits of the commitment every person gives to the Gospel Message. And it is not just a one-time gift, it is about how sincerely, earnestly, and effectively we express it within the limits of our own abilities, and for the rest of our lives. Also, that problems are noticed and acted upon instead of being denied. Accepting that this second saying in the Gospel of Thomas is genuine, additionally means that any statement has no truth and good works are of no value if they simply conform to an ideology which takes no account of how people live their lives. Christianity has been scarred for millennia by people who are genuinely and earnestly pursuing perceptions of realities which have been based on such ideologies. That has allowed Christian and religious groups to support slavery, apartheid, Nazism, activities of Donald Trump, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, and others at various times. By doing this they empty a jar which was full inside. And this applies particularly in societies which have already been shaped by the same ideologies. Doctrines which concentrate most strongly on preaching the importance of personal salvation, and which focus most strongly on religious ideologies, run the greater risk: Because, even with the best intentions, their reliance on such ideologies, means that the good works which many people earnestly and genuinely pursue can cause the greater harm. The highest damage is done when the only valid truth is believed to be contained in the one ideology that is adopted, and when all other approaches; together with the motives of those who agree with them are ridiculed and condemned as the products of evil and sinful ideas or acts. That has been my experience in working for reconciliation in a society which is divided by tribal and religious violence. It is these same degrees of intransigence which are currently leading towards schism in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. This dispute is now being manifested through the disagreements with GAFCON, and it is occurring on a worldwide basis. The same denial has also disrupted the Church of England's "Living and Love in Faith Programme", where the brief that was given demanded that there should be no change in the traditional teaching of the Church as "the Church of England has received it". This is now affecting the current follow-on processes. It is not just encountered in religious contexts. Gender-critical feminist groups also face a contradiction. If the depth and legitimacy of transgender and transsexual identities are to be accepted, then the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is discredited. If the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is instead accepted, then the depth and integrity of transgender identities must be denied. That contradiction tells us that these conflicts are not primarily about the condemnation of transgender people: They are about the need to protect a gender-critical ideology. And it is the continuing enforcement of a gender-critical ideology, in contradiction of the advances in science and knowledge which has taken place since the 1960's, which is now discrediting transgender people's lives. In the religious context this is applied to all gender and sexually variant people. Changes are underway. The attempts of Pope Benedict to reconcile the Church teaching on the Song of Solomon to that of Aquinas and the Greek Philosophers, (See: "Deus Caritas Est" of Pope Benedict XVI, on Christian Love) should be contrasted with the open and inclusive approach which Pope Francis now adopts. See section 6:2 "Agape and Love" of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): "Issues on the

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2:4 What did Jesus do?

A question to ask is: *“How did Jesus handle this?”* When First Century Judaism condemned these activities because of abuses of power, abuses of sex, lack of respect: and not simply because of a sexual act. That is best seen in the story of the Centurion and his slave. We are told that the Centurion loved his slave, but we are also told equally firmly that the Centurion loved the Jewish nation. So, it is reasonable to assume that abuses of power, abuses of sex, and lack of respect need not be considered in this relationship. Centurions were not allowed the consort with local people and slaves were expected to provide all the sexual comforts that were necessary. The role of the male concubinus was commonly accepted in Roman society: and that included same-sex intercourse. When Jesus healed the slave, he did not make any reference to this possibility: And even if he did have private knowledge that no intercourse took place, he did not tell anybody about it. Instead of any condemnation he said that he had *“found no greater love than this. even in Israel”*. As a result of this openness, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that when there is true equality and love between two partners, there should be no automatic condemnation of any same-sex relationship or sexual act. That would seem to accord with the teaching of Jesus in the *“New Covenant”* where instead of decisions being made on the letter of the Law they should be based on love, virtue, and intention of the act¹⁸.

Eunuchs played important roles in ancient societies. Some could be given great power because they could not create dynasties to challenge the current incumbents. Others were given high esteem because self-castration was considered the supreme sacrifice of sexual distraction, and sensation, in the pursuit of religious devotion. Some, such as the self-castrated male priests of the Goddess Cults could offer themselves for men to practice on to gain fertility and the goodwill of the Goddess Cults without reproductive consequences. Yet others just took advantage of this sexual freedom. Judaism gave eunuchs a very high status in society provided they remained faithful to the Jewish Law. But that passage in Isaiah 56:3-5 in the Old Testament only applied to those who were castrated by others. However, in Matthew 19:12, Jesus extended the same welcome to all eunuchs who kept the Jewish Law, regardless of whether they had castrated themselves or not. This caused considerable difficulties for the early Church. There was little doubt about the authenticity and meaning of this passage, and the commands Jesus gave in it are very direct. That understanding is very different from the interpretations put on this passage today, and which appears in many Bible translations, when these raw arguments are totally ignored. And it is interpreted entirely as endorsing only commitment by choice, abstention, with no possibility of physical acts. By these actions, Jesus had changed the letter of the law in this Old Testament teaching to provide all people, including transgender people who respond to his message in the *“New Covenant”*, regardless of the presence or absence of any surgical action or of social transition, with the same inclusive welcome, with no guilt or condemnation, in the love of Christ.

The consequent emasculation of this teaching has denied how counter-cultural it was. Attitudes to eunuchs and the self-castrated cults of the Goddess Cults were always ambivalent. For some, it was seen as an act of extreme self-sacrifice and sensation in pursuit of religious devotion. That gave them a particular power and status. Many could adopt roles as shamans, who would perform valuable healing and interceding acts, but they could be perceived as threats as well. These positive and negative elements of status are still seen in other cultures, such as with the hijras in India today. Nevertheless, Roman society only protected its citizens. The role of the male concubinus was accepted. Through it, male citizens could test, express, or check their virility without having to face any social and reproductive consequences: As they equally could with the self-castrated priests of the Goddess Cults. These freedoms were also expressed in the orgies of the usually high-ranking supporters of the Goddess Cults; in which the priests themselves were conspicuously absent. These practices were anathema to Jewish culture. One only has to look at the writings of Philo of Alexandria, an older contemporary of Jesus; of Augustine some centuries later, and Paul's attack on the temple and the cult of Diana in Ephesus, to see how strongly this was felt. Thus, it is hardly surprising that this teaching of Jesus

Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>)
Translation drift is also a major concern. See also section 6:3 of this document *“Leviticus and Translation Drift”* and: Gilchrist, S. (2015e): *“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> . Here, a more appropriate translation may be that one should not put warrior gear on a woman instead. At the present time there is a retrenchment into false certainty and simple ideology. And this is a danger which must urgently be addressed.

¹⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2016e): *“Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

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caused a great deal of difficulty for the Church. Jesus may well have recognised this when he added “*Let the one who is able to receive this receive it*” to the end of this passage.¹⁹

The same concerns were encountered in the disagreements about whether Gentiles must be circumcised in line with the requirements of the Jewish Law. It was agreed that they need not. In his letters Paul expressed this viewpoint in his argument that circumcision in the spirit transcends every physical act. This is again highlighted in the Apocryphal Gospel of Thomas. This inclusion is also present in the teaching of Jesus, both in relation his teaching on eunuchs and in the story of the Centurion and the slave. It fits in with the relationship between Jesus and the “*beloved disciple*” as described in the Gospel of John, and it matches the first century understanding on sexual relationships, not just in Judaism but in much of the Middle East, where the moral distinctions were made between the approval of the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex. Notably we apply that same moral duality in our social behaviours and in our gender equal and inclusive societies of the present day... And now we apply it to all men and women alike, not just to male same-sex acts. There are no other statements of condemnation or approval of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or transsexual relationships in these Gospel teachings. As the Church itself admits, the present-day teaching in these matters is derived come entirely from its own interpretation of the views of the Apostles; most notably those of Peter and Paul, the Old Testament statements, and the traditions of the Roman Church. However, those of us who now seek to restore this moral duality to our religious beliefs are condemned as revisionists and apostatised by those who continue to support without question, the traditional teaching of the Church²⁰.

2:5 Thomas, Peter, and Paul

From the outset Christianity had to adapt itself to different cultures, and even among the Apostles there was disagreement about this could be done. The most obvious one was between Peter and Paul, which early patristic literature and the New Testament attests. Although Peter fully and enthusiastically embraced the Gospel message, he still endorsed a gender complementarity which divided the social roles that men and women could occupy in society. The way that Peter uses of the example of Sarah’s submission to Abraham to justify gender complementarity by expressing it in terms of the weaknesses of women, and his relative disregard of external influences, implies that this should be a permanent teaching of the Church. Peter’s difficulty in accepting women in positions of authority is also known from other early literature. This approach additionally fits in with the social norms of Roman and Judean societies, and it is still the teaching of the present day Roman Catholic Church.

However, Paul was much more radical: His statement: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus*”, his personal treatment of women, and his treatment of the runaway slave represents his willingness to break these boundaries. Thomas also had greater problems since the application of these traditional values would not work in a more egalitarian society. His forced departure to India around AD 62 suggests that no agreement was reached. The Apocryphal Gospel of Thomas has challenged many scholars²¹. The teaching in Thomas is also cabalistic in nature and that makes it more difficult to understand²². How the Gospel relates to “Q”, a presumed long-lost document containing the sayings of Jesus which is understood to have been a source of many of the sayings

¹⁹ For information on Goddess Cults Gender and Sexuality Issues, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013g): “*Gender, Sexuality and the Christian Church*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/015B-GenderSexualityChurch.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2011b): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

²⁰ See Cornwall, Suzannah. (2022): “*Constructive Theology and Gender Variance*”: Cambridge University Press. December 2022. Online ISBN: 9781108866828 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108866828>

²¹ See also section 4:0: *Provenance and Dating of the Gospel of Thomas* in Gilchrist, S. (****): “*The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and the Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf>

²² In common with other first century Rabbis, Jesus taught in a cabalistic manner. This means that his teaching is presented in such a way that it can be understood within a particular culture but is less able to be understood by those outside it. The Gospel of Thomas also describes itself as a “*Gnostic Gospel*” because it contains the “*Secret sayings of Jesus*”. However, unlike later Christian Gnostic Gospels which claim that salvation is obtained by possession and belief in these secret sayings and other fantasy elements alone, the Gospel of Thomas excludes fantasy and demands responsibility for the actions that are taken. See for example the treatment of Sayings 96 and 97, which has been discussed earlier in this account. Therefore, according to this definition, the Gospel of Thomas is indeed a Gnostic Gospel. However, the Gnosticism that is practiced is indicative of that of the First Century Jewish Rabbis and not the later Christian versions. And this is a group to whom Jesus belonged.

contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, should also be addressed. However, the Gospel of Thomas makes more sense if the Gospel is read in the light of these disagreements. Here, Peter is demoted to the status of a “wise messenger”, women are given a more prominent role and have a greater understanding, The term in one of its sayings: “to make Mary male” would not have been taken literally at the time. It meant that as well as men, women also have souls, and that Mary, like all women should be given the same rights and equalities of all men in society. In short, this reads as a Gospel for a much more egalitarian society and a much more egalitarian Church²³.

Even though Peter and Paul had met in Jerusalem to try to develop a common strategy, the dispute between them in Antioch shortly afterwards does not suggest that they had truly achieved a common approach. In our present day we try to read all of these through the challenges of history, re-interpretation, and Church tradition. There is the additional challenge which arises with the Epistles of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus. Although they are attributed to Paul, were almost certainly not written by him. Instead, they appear to dismiss or try to smooth over the disagreements between Peter and Paul; and give Paul’s authority to the gender complementarity that came to be embraced by the Roman Church.

When Christianity expanded into the East, it was not subjected to the same pressures. The Eastern Church, which at one time was much larger and widespread than the combined Roman Church was largely wiped out from the 14th century onwards, only a small remnant remains and much of its literature was destroyed on behalf of the Roman Church. However, like St Thomas who is understood to have taken Christianity to the East, St Patrick took Christianity to Ireland. And the links between Celtic Christianity and the Ancient Church of the East are much stronger than one might expect. Celtic Christianity took inspiration from the Desert Fathers in Egypt and Northern Africa. But the foundations of the monasticism and lifestyles of the Desert Fathers belonged to this Ancient Church of the East. Irish missionaries then re-evangelised much of Northern Europe, so Celtic Christianity does not just belong to Ireland but a representation of how Christianity developed outside the Roman world.

2:6 Adaptations

Christianity in Rome would have floundered if these traditions were pursued without compromise. But Paul was a fixer, and he admitted this himself. To the Jews he acted as a Jew, to the Romans, he acted as a Roman. Paul wrote his letters as offers of practical advice, not of Christian dogma, and the constraints he imposed on the public perception of Christians and Christianity allowed it to survive in a hostile world. And for Paul the early Churches should be beacons of light and full inclusivity shining out into this hostile world.

Sadly, today the reverse is often the case. In place of challenging the secular scapegoating of gender and sexually variant people, many Christian traditions, national Churches, and other religious groups in many countries are generating and colluding with it. This includes the criminalisation and condemnation of all gender and sexually variant behaviour, where severe legal penalties, and in some countries the death penalty, continue to be applied in large parts of the world. In 1298 the distinguished East Syriac scholar Abdisho bar Brika wrote in his “*Book of the Pearl*” that the East Syriac Christians had “*never changed their faith and preserved it as they had received it from the apostles, and are called Nestorians unjustly, especially since Nestorius was not their patriarch and did not understand their language*”. The Roman Church claimed that the Church of the East was heretical because it used the teachings of Nestorius, but this Church also claims direct descent from Apostolic traditions. The demise of the Ancient Church of the East means that we do not have direct access to its theology and traditions. For a Christianity that expresses the full inclusivity of the teaching of Jesus we should look instead to the Celtic Church²⁴.

²³ These are considered in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf> See also: Presentation 9 “*What has Christianity Lost?*” in Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions*” (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

²⁴ These are considered in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> . A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): “*The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church*”:

There was bound to be a clash when these two cultures collided. Mainland Britain was one place where they most came into contact. At the Synod of Whitby, held between 663 and 664, ostensibly to agree on certain practices such as the date of Easter, the Synod established the Roman Christianity as the norm in Northumbria and effectively from then on in Britain as a whole. However, much more than the Christian dating of Easter was affected by these British changes. Michael Mitton writes: *"We find, then, in the Celtic Church an impressive acceptance of the feminine. It is desperately sad to recognise how this was lost after the Synod of Whitby. Had we been allowed to pursue the natural faith that the Spirit of God first breathed upon this land, which contained a far more just attitude to women than was experienced elsewhere, then our shameful history of repression of women may not have developed...we would also have had a far healthier attitude to sexuality generally, affirming the masculine and feminine within ourselves and within our communities"*. Instead of making women prisoners of male benevolence, privileges, and power under the doctrines and teaching of centuries since practiced by the Western Church we should learn from Celtic and Eastern Christianity to return the ownership of Christianity equally to all men and women and to all gender and sexually variant people who live their lives true to their own identities and in lives true to the Gospel message, in the way that Jesus expects.

2:7 Current Interpretations

How we interpret that today is also of crucial importance. Currently the Christian Churches are being torn apart by schisms between those who adopt an egalitarian approach to Christianity and secular society, and those who continue to maintain a gender complementarian approach. The first includes all women and all gender and sexually variant people who seek to fulfil the Gospel message in ways that are true to their own identities. The second approach of gender complementarity instead acts to exclude and condemn them. This schism is further added to by disagreements in the medical profession where many practitioners and others who are not closely involved in these issues continue to apply traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories and do not take full account of more recent work which show that these conditions are about the search for identities, not drives of sex. Today a worldwide consensus among the Professional Medical Institutions and World Authorities regard gender and sexually variant conditions as personality variations within the normal range of development. This additionally means that the gender and sexual allegiances and the identities belonging to gender and sexually variant people are as strongly held as they are for those whose allegiances and identities follow the patterns expected from biological sex. This also requires that an egalitarian approach is adopted where the full range of expression is endorsed.

That identification is opposed by gender-critical feminist groups and by those who follow the traditional teaching of the Christian Churches, both of whom identify all gender and sexually variant behaviours as sexually motivated personality disruptions, paraphilias or perversions, which are departures from a biologically or divinely ordained path of development. This also demands that a gender complementarity is enforced where the morally acceptable and correct gender and sexual behaviours, allegiances, and the identities which arise from them, must always be congruent with biological sex. These diagnoses and methods of management contradict. When the motives and methods of management of personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, it is hardly surprising that strong and toxic disputes occur.

A major issue arises with the authority attributed to what today is regarded as the traditional teaching of the Christian Church, in regard to homosexuality and by implication, transsexuality. That is perhaps best expressed in Article 2357 of the Roman Catholic Church. This states that: *"Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience sexual attraction to others of the same sex. Although homosexuality has taken many forms, its psychological source remains largely unexplained. Catholic Tradition (based on biblical texts) has always taught that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered" (Congregation for Doctrine of Faith). They are against the natural law, are closed to the gift of life, and do not proceed from a*

<https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf> examines both the provenance of this Gospel, and how it relates to the currently accepted texts. Also: Gilchrist, S. (2022): *"Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions"* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

Gilchrist, S. (2024): *"What Celtic Christianity and the Ancient Church of The East Can Tell Us About Christian Attitudes to Women and LGBTI Relationships"*. 040B

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genuine sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved". By its own admission, this teaching does not draw its authority directly from the teaching of Jesus. Nor are there any direct or implied condemnations of homosexual or transgender behaviours within the Gospel message. Instead, this traditional teaching relies entirely on the historic interpretations which the Roman Church has itself applied to the New and Old Testament texts²⁵. The centuries of criminalisation and condemnation of all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour has meant that access to the experiential evidence which would challenge this teaching has been denied. As minority groups in grossly gender unequal societies, even those gender and sexually variant people who subscribe to the highest moral standards have been made scapegoats for the social evils and misfortunes that have occurred. These transformations in teaching have brought the Christian Church to collude with the secular demands of society rather than to challenge them. Not only has this collusion reinforced the secular prejudices of these discriminatory societies; it gave, and it still gives religious legitimacy to them: one only needs to look today at the behaviour of Daesh and Boko Haram to see how extreme this can become. The persecution and slaughter of gender and sexually variant people, not just in Christianity but in Islam, Judaism and all other religions, states and cultures which have drawn their teachings from it has been enormous. In many African countries extreme penalties against homosexual behaviour are still being advocated or applied²⁶.

3:0 Transgender Journeys, Fears and Attacks

There are many reasons why all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour has until recently been considered to be sexually motivated personality perversions, paraphilias, or disruptions from biologically or divinely ordained paths of development. Even though both religious and feminist groups approach the same issue from very different directions, gender-critical feminists and adherents of these traditional Christian beliefs criticise gender and sexually variant behaviours for the same reasons: Both require answers to the same question: *"Are lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual conditions created by searching for identity or through underlying drives of sex?"*. Although many gender-critical groups today accept the viewpoints of the World Authorities and Medical Institutions by identifying lesbian and gay conditions as personality variations which involve the search for identity, they still continue to define transgender conditions as sexually motivated personality perversions, paraphilias, or disruptions of (male) homosexuality, which are driven by sublimated desires of sex²⁷. This means that transgender conditions are still considered to be enforced by the same types of motives as sexual abusers, even though lesbian and gay people are not. Many gender-critical groups in the United Kingdom justify their support for transgender people by arguing that these sexual motives are turned inwards towards themselves, but many other groups do not. This continued alleged commonality of motives with sexual abusers has been used for centuries to justify the condemnations of transgender people and lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, most notably by various religious groups in many parts of the world. Yet the advances in neurology, clinical experience, experiential evidence, and the lived experiences of transgender people which has been gained over the last sixty years in those countries and cultures which accept or have access to these have shown that, like lesbian and gay conditions, transgender conditions are likewise driven by compulsive searches for identity, not drives of sex²⁸.

For as long as all gender and sexually variant behaviour was criminalised no change was possible. Today, the consequences of that have already been seen in the revolution in social attitudes to lesbian and gay people, in those countries where that experiential evidence has now become accepted and available. That involves a transformation in attitudes which now understands that these conditions are driven by the search for identity, not by desires of sex: From attitudes which had severely criminalised all such behaviour on the grounds of

²⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2016f): *"Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

²⁶ Gilchrist, S. (2017j): *"Religious and Secular Scapegoating of Transgender People: and its impact on the Christian Church"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/238P-SecularScapegoating.pdf>

²⁷ These theories usually are described as autogynephilic theories. See section B:7:1, *Autogynephilia* in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): *"Responsibility in Transgender Disputes"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf> and section 8:0 in Gilchrist, S. (2020f): *"Managing Transgender Conditions Correctly: A Commentary on the Bell v Tavistock Case"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/249P-JudgmentResponse.pdf>

²⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2013c): *"A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/207P-ReassessmentPsychologyExtended.pdf>

sexual perversion and harmful acts, into ones which now celebrate these as identities, with the acceptance and legalisation of same-sex marriages. This includes the recognition of the roles and the depths of love and commitment within these same-sex relationships and acts. Even though gender-critical groups accept these changes in relation to lesbian and gay behaviour, they persist in their denial of these advances in understanding and science in relation to transgender people by continuing to identify transgender behaviour as sexually motivated perversions or disruptions to a biologically decided path of development. This enforces a gender complementarity which demands that gendered behaviour, gender allegiances, and thus the gender identity which arises from these, must always be indissolubly linked to biological sex. For these reasons, it is transgender people who at the present time are coming under the strongest attack.

History can make this an understandable approach. The centuries of male dominance, physical strength, suppression, abuse, and violence by men against women provide very strong justification for the fears of male aggression that all women today face. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that the impacts of the horrendous histories and current incidences of male violence, abuse, and discrimination against women, together with the similarly unequal criminal statistics: where many more men than women are imprisoned for such violence, must never be diminished, or disregarded. That these attacks have been so severe, institutionally enforced, biologically and religiously justified, and have been such a permanent feature of society, means that the idea that any man could be a true ally of women in the battle for women's rights, remains difficult or impossible for many women to accept. Nevertheless, by presenting as women in society, male-to-female transsexuals are subjected to these same degrees of discrimination, and to many of the same attacks.

Male-to-female transsexuals can be compared to immigrants or emigrants who cross this gender divide. And the abuse of any invitation on this journey is as harmful as its denial. The major concern is therefore about whether this is a legitimate journey for male-to-female transsexuals to make, whether any legitimate invitation should be offered, whether they can be true allies in any feminist cause, or if male-to-female transsexuals must be considered to attack women's identities, exert power over women, and destroy their sex-based rights. For some, this journey may be seen to be an attack on the binary notions of gender and sex, but for transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, it is a coming home instead. All of these considerations suggest that the focus of these arguments is less to do with transgender people and more about disputes within the feminist movements, where one group refuses to accept that any man or any male-to-female transsexual could ever truly be a feminist because of the social upbringing that person has encountered, while the other group includes those who are happy to accept supportive men and also male-to-female transsexuals as true allies in the feminist cause. Many gender-critical feminist groups in the United Kingdom do strongly assert that they welcome transgender people; and declare that they must have full legal rights. However, that also means they must accept that only their own diagnosis of transgender conditions as paraphilias or personality disruptions is legitimate. No other can be correct.

3:1 Motives

It is hardly surprising that male-to-female transsexuals react with anger, when the motives and methods of management for personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, and the wrong diagnosis is imposed. That anger increases, when their proud histories of involvement in the feminist movements, acting as totally committed allies of women in the fight for women's rights, campaigning for complete equality for women, seeking protection for all women against male violence, countering discrimination, and campaigning for the complete implementation of all gender-based rights, are instead placed alongside those of male aggressors and sexual abusers, thereby raising the opposite fears of predation, grooming and abuse. With the allegations of seeking power over women, and their claimed attacks on women's identities and attacking their sex-based rights. Nevertheless, in the present febrile atmosphere created by the present high level of attacks against women and the genuine and urgent need for groups like the "me too" movement, it is difficult for many women to accept that transgender people, particularly male-to-female transsexuals can be genuine in their arguments. So, instead of looking for agreement, inclusion and understanding on both sides, these conflicts have become battles over the legitimacy of transgender identities and their journeys, their acceptance or rejection, their exclusion or inclusion, their motives, and quarrels over women's rights.

That demarcation in the acceptance and the motives of transgender people is seen in the disputes over the degrees of access male-to-female transsexuals should have to toilets and other spaces and services normally used by women. The 2010 United Kingdom Equality Act presently states that such exclusions can be provided: but that this must be on an objectively justified basis. Because of this requirement for justification, privacies can still be protected, and all transgender people including male-to-female transsexuals, with justified exclusions, have had the appropriate level of access by law to these spaces for the last thirteen years. Despite this freedom to self-identify and the laws in many other countries which also allow this ability, there is no evidence of any increase in the already rare abuse of such entitlements, even in any of the years since this legislation in the United Kingdom, in the 2010 Equality Act, was introduced.

2:2 What is a Woman?

This might at first seem a strange question to ask, but much of the angst in these disputes lies in the way that the word “*woman*” is defined. All of the feminist pioneers including Judith Butler and Simone De Beauvoir, defined the word “*woman*” in terms of the performance of gender. This is used to demand total equality in the way men and women socially relate to each other in society²⁹. It also separates motives of gender from motives of sex. With this definition, the need to provide separate protections and exclusions for men and women based on physical biology or reproductive sex is neither attacked, nor is it diminished in any way, when male-to-female transsexuals are placed inside the category of “*women*”, in their social relationships and in their fight for women’s rights. This egalitarianism and inclusion are why a great many ardent feminists are happy to accept male-to-female transsexuals as the women they say they are. Who see them to be as safe and responsible as all women are to each other. And where both sides are equally happy to make the distinction between natal women and trans women wherever it is needed for the purposes of biological or reproductive sex: Because both groups define the terms men and women in the same way, both encounter the same interactions in society, and both groups see each other as true allies in the fight for women’s rights³⁰.

Along with the feminist pioneers the great majority of people in the United Kingdom also distinguish men from women through their appearance, behaviour and how they interact with others in everyday life. This also means that the term “*woman*” is used by most people in different contexts in different ways. When the gender-critical groups only accept the biological definition of the word “*woman*” and deny all others, they exclude transgender people, and assert the argument that gendered behaviour, gender allegiances, together with the gender identity which arises from these must always be indissolubly linked to biological sex. Doctrines of exclusion and gender complementarity are thereby enforced. These embrace the mantra that men cannot become women, and vice versa. This further means that the way in which both the feminist pioneers and transgender people have historically used and defined the word “*woman*”, is also denied. More significantly it implies that male-to-female transsexuals share the same types of motives as those of sexual abusers. Instead of the search for identity which transgender people and others expect. In place of just being a matter of semantics and definitions, this dispute about how the word “*woman*” is used has become a method of attack. Today, anyone who identifies male-to-female transsexuals as women can be understood by others to be attacking women’s identities and sex-based rights.

3:3 Inconsistencies and Ideologies

Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies in both arguments. By separating men from women entirely through the performance of gender, the independent role of any underlying sense of belonging, described as the core gender identity, with its role in providing the long-term continuities and stability of personality and identity, is either not recognised or is ignored. On the other hand, dividing men from women entirely through sexual

²⁹ One need only look at the statement “*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.*” in Simone de Beauvoir’s book “*The second sex*” *Vintage Classics; New Ed edition (7 Aug. 1997) ISBN-10 : 9780099744214 ISBN-13 : 978-0099744214* or Judith Butler’s inclusion of transgender people in her writings, where she distinguishes men and women from each other not by biological sex, but through the “*performance of gender*”.

³⁰ Gilchrist, S. (2021a): “*Gender Identity, Feminism, and Transgender People*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/250P-GenderIdentityAndTrans.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2020f): “*Managing Transgender Conditions Correctly: A Commentary on the Bell v Tavistock Case*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/249P-JudgmentResponse.pdf>

biology and allowing no other: links all approved gender behaviour indissolubly to biological sex. These criteria are mutually exclusive. And in both of these there is no recognition of any middle way.

There is therefore a contradiction in the logic of any argument put forward by gender-critical groups who claim to support the feminist viewpoint that men and women are defined by the performance of gender and who argue at the same time that gender identity is merely a nebulous social construct. This demands that gender identity, including the allegiances and behaviours which create it, must be a choice or desire for everybody. And as a consequence of this egalitarianism, all of the boundaries can be freely crossed. This means that the legitimacies of heterosexual, lesbian, gay, transgender, and transsexual identities should all be given equal value, and none be denied. However, that conclusion is immediately contradicted by the arguments of the same groups, who then attempt to link gendered allegiances, gendered behaviour, and therefore, the gender identity which derives from these, indissolubly to biological sex. Imposing this doctrine of gender complementarity means none of these boundaries can be crossed. Arguing exclusively for one or the other creates binary definitions and excessive instabilities or rigidities in society. Thus: neither on their own can be correct. In section 4:5 of this account I show how strong and stable gender identities are created which need not always be congruent with biological sex.

Gender-critical groups argue that transgender and transsexual people can express their identities in any way they like, provided they never describe themselves as women. But that takes them to a different place: And it also it misses the point. When these gender-critical groups continue to describe male-to-female transsexuals as “men”, when they also place their motives alongside those of sexual abusers, (even if sublimated), and when they associate them with those who seek power over women, it is hardly surprising that a great deal of anger is encountered: Not just because it contradicts the identification these conditions as personality variations by the World Authorities and Professional Institutions. But also, because this association of gender complementarity with a gender-critical ideology denies the egalitarian views of the feminist pioneers and many other of today’s feminist groups. It misdiagnoses transgender conditions and tries to enforce a lifestyle on them which they cannot identify with. It additionally pursues, both in concept and in practice, the same type of exclusive approach which closely corresponds to the doctrines of gender complementarity that have been employed for centuries by the Roman Church.

3:4 Ideologies and Agendas

In the previous section I have argued that neither a totally egalitarian approach, nor an approach of gender complementarity on their own, are completely correct. And although strong and stable core gender identities are created, these need not always follow biological sex. A further deception arises when the claim is made by gender-critical groups that transgender people follow a “gender ideology”, which declares that transgender people believe they can “choose, change or deny biological sex”. Male-to-female transsexuals often identify themselves alongside “women” or “girls” because that is the way they interact with others in society. And this often happens from a very early age. However, today the legitimacy of terms like “sex-change” surgery are totally denied. No amount of surgery or drugs will ever turn a male into a female. Instead, terms like “gender reassignment” surgery or “gender confirmation” surgery are invariably employed. Thus, when surgery or drugs are sought, it is only to make the journey more complete: The reality of biological sex is never disputed and the need for separate protections based on biology are never denied. What gender-critical groups claim is a “gender ideology” is instead, a fictional “gender-critical ideology”, where gender identity is presumed to be a collectively created social construct determined entirely by association with the gender role: Which contradicts their arguments that gender identity, and the behaviour and allegiances which create it are indissolubly linked to biological sex, where the massive neural and cognitive changes during early development are ignored, and where the existence, role or reality of the core gender identity (described in section 4:4) is likewise denied.

When Penny Mordaunt then the Women and Equalities Minister in the UK Conservative Government of that time, launched the consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act in 2018 by declaring *that “Trans Women are Women. That is the starting point of the consultation”*, she was reflecting the views of the feminist pioneers, in which men and women are distinguished from each other through the ways in which they integrate into society. When Kathleen Stock in 2018 argued that *“Changing the concept of “woman” will cause unintended harms”*, she was not just denying the views of the feminist pioneers. By adopting the exclusive definition of a woman as *“an adult human female”* and by allowing no other, she was additionally denying the

legitimacy of transgender identities, and the journeys that transgender people make. She was also restricting the appropriateness of the social behaviour of all women to same expectations of biological sex.

No matter how strongly compelling these very legitimate and genuinely felt concerns may be, they must never justify any departure from attempts to take a fully objective and impartial approach. But no attempt to do this is made. In place of any serious consideration of the opposing clinical, medical and experiential evidence, gender-critical groups and religious groups, including the present United Kingdom Government through its support for the gender-critical movements, dismiss the views of the Professional Medical Institutions and World Authorities as the work of transgender activists, claim their expertise is not based on credible science, and attack the integrity of those groups and people who support their views. Instead, attempts are made to prove that transgender people are the creators of their own misfortunes, and that the male-to-female transsexuals are at least as likely to engage in violence against women as any male. The validity of these conclusions is challenged in this account.

When the present Prime Minister Richi Sunak made the jibe “*I know what a woman is*” during Prime Minister’s Questions on the 4th February 2024, he was re-iterating the claim made by gender-critical feminist groups, that “*women*” must exclusively be defined as “*adult human females*” and denying all others. This was at the time, when he understood the mother of, Brianna Ghey was in the gallery, just after the two teenagers had been sentenced for murdering her. On the 7th February 2024, Rex Benidict, a non-binary transgender teenager was beaten to death in Owasso High School in Owasso, Oklahoma, where Nex was a student, by three teenage schoolgirls in a horribly similar case³¹. This action by the United Kingdom Government does not just deny the reality and the legitimacy of the identities of Brianna and all transgender people. By confining the definition of “*Women*” to biology alone and by arguing that all acceptable gendered behaviour of women (and men) must conform to some social stereotype demanded by biology, diminishes all women. And it does not display any evidence of an even-handed or objective approach. It is precisely this exclusion and separation from the normal framework of society, which may have encouraged the murderers of Brianna Ghey to engage in their actions: And this is why the advocacy of these exclusions in the present Government advice on how children should be treated must cause the greatest concern. It is equally reprehensible for the present Prime Minister Richi Sunak to either apologise or withdraw the comment he made in the House of Commons which supported this Government’s gender-critical policies, particularly when he understood the mother of Brianna was present in the Public Gallery. It is these failures alone should demand an urgent review of all of the current EHRC advice, including children, and the present Government approach.

3:5 Feminist Disagreements

With such strongly divergent views and opinions being expressed it is essential that an impartial and objective approach is taken. That does not happen. In a 2021 article in the Guardian Newspaper Judith Butler, a major authority and pioneer in the feminist movements expressed her views on these gender-critical approaches: She said: *“It is not easy to fully reconstruct the arguments used by the anti-gender ideology movement because they do not hold themselves to standards of consistency or coherence. They assemble and launch incendiary claims to defeat what they see as “gender ideology” or “gender studies” by any rhetorical means necessary. For instance, they object to “gender” because it putatively denies biological sex or because it undermines the natural or divine character of the heteronormative family”*: *“The anti-gender movement is not a conservative position with a clear set of principles. No, as a fascist trend, it mobilizes a range of rhetorical strategies from across the political spectrum to maximize the fear of infiltration and destruction that comes from a diverse set of economic and social forces. It does not strive for consistency, for its incoherence is part of its power”*³².

That statement should be compared with others of Kathleen Stock, one of the most prominent figures in the United Kingdom gender-critical movement. In the 2021 United Kingdom New Year Honours list, ostensibly for

³¹ Fagnant, Nick (2024): “Nex Benedict and All Trans*figured Children of God, Pray for Us!” *New Ways Ministry Blog* , February 25, 2024 <https://www.newwaysministry.org/2024/02/25/nex-benedict-and-all-transfigured-children-of-god-pray-for-us/>

³² Butler, Judith, (2021): “Why is the idea of ‘gender’ provoking backlash the world over?” *the Guardian* 23 October 2021. See Discussion of Butler in Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*No Blacks, No Irish, No Homosexuals, No Transgender People*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/252P-NoBlacks.pdf>

services to higher education. Kathleen Stock was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. On receiving it she said: *"I want to use this opportunity to draw further attention to suppression of critical thought about gender identity ideology and trans activism in UK universities"*. She continued: *"Most UK universities are Stonewall Diversity Champions. Translation... effectively they are now trans-activist institutions"*. Stock argued that Stonewall *"doesn't belong in UK universities (or schools, or gov departments, or local authorities, or judiciary, or police forces): Once a great organisation, they're now a threat to freedom, of speech/ public understanding... Get them out"*. Stonewall endorses the approaches of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, who treat transgender condition as personality variations, not as personality disruptions, as gender-critical groups allege. However, Kathleen Stock should not be taken as the sole spokesperson of the gender-critical movement. These viewpoints are mirrored by other gender-critical groups who, in place of creating reasoned arguments to counter the views of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, collectively dismiss the understanding of the professional organisations with their public statements that they are not based on credible science, that they are the work of transgender activists, that they along with others, conspire to deny data and seek to silence the views that their opponents present³³.

When there are such fundamental disagreements about the origin, nature, motives, and methods of management of transgender conditions, it is essential for all viewpoints to be objectively and impartially considered. Instead of examining the origins of transgender conditions, these groups attempt to justify their arguments by trying to use science to prove that male-to-female transsexuals cause at least as great if not greater threat of violence to women as all males³⁴. In place of vilification by others, they assert that transgender people are the generators of their own misfortunes. And this is also claimed to be the cause of the trauma that occurs. Similar arguments are currently being put forward by Roman Catholic Bishops in the United States, and by other elements in the Christian Church³⁵. I have conducted an extended study of these claims, a summary of which appears later in this document.

There is an irony in these arguments. Both Judith Butler and Kathleen Stock are high profile feminists. Neither of them now, nor in the past have been considered true allies of transgender people, although Butler has always argued for inclusion. Thus, the principal driving forces in these disputes are the disagreements between different parts of the feminist movements. In place of transgender people being the primary focus of these battles, it may be better to treat them as the victims instead. There is an even greater irony because gender-critical groups make extensive use of Butler's work to justify their own approaches, yet in their own arguments they contradict their own logic and Butler's emphasis on egalitarianism, by enforcing a gender complementarity that links gendered allegiances and behaviours, with the resulting identities indissolubly to biological sex. This is correspondingly likely to be a strong reason for Butler's current and forceful condemnations of the gender-critical approach. It is additionally this same refusal to separate gender from sex which leads gender-critical groups to try to impose a false *"gender ideology"* on transgender people which alleges that these people believe they can choose, change, or deny biological sex.

All women have very real and justified fears of being victims of male violence, discrimination, and abuse. That is why I criticise any transgender groups who abuse that invitation as strongly, and in the same way that I criticise gender-critical groups. But that does not justify any false representation of all transgender people; or of male-to-female transsexuals in particular, with the aim of magnifying these fears in order to justify a religious or gender-critical approach. I have compared male-to-female transsexuals to immigrants or emigrants who cross the gender divide. The abuse of any invitation on this journey is as harmful as it's denial, and when both sides emphasise their rights over their responsibilities to each other, a toxic brew is formed. It is therefore essential that full impartial and comprehensive studies are necessary to remove abuses through the pursuit or creation of false fears, or incorrect theologies and ideologies: But more than that is needed. It must include the ability to listen and to hear: And to accept the ability to change if necessary, in order to build an environment of mutual trust, understanding, inclusion and respect.

³³ For a discussion of Stock's work; See section 12:0: *Transgender Attacks* in Gilchrist, S. (2021a): *"Gender Identity, Feminism, and Transgender People"*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/250P-GenderIdentityAndTrans.pdf>

³⁴ For more details of this, see the presentation series: Gilchrist, S. (2022): *"Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions"* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>. These are fully annotated presentations where full references and cross-references to the original sources are given.

³⁵ See Part 7: *"Attacks"* in Gilchrist, S. (2022): *"Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions"* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

3:6 Government Actions and Human Rights.

When there are such profound disagreements, it should be expected that both Governments and Human Rights Organisations should give complete consideration of every opposing view. This does not happen. The present United Kingdom government is now proposing to amend the 2010 Equality Act in order to enforce a complete ban on male-to-female transsexuals entering any spaces or services normally reserved for women. This is entirely on biological sex and without any need for objective justification. It is regardless of the appearance of transgender people, the possession of a gender recognition certificate, the length of time since they transitioned, and the innocence or appropriateness of their behaviour. That also sets a boundary of identity instead of action, and it should drive a coat and horses through any equality legislation. Its implementation would also allow transgender people to be excluded and to be effectively discriminated against for any chosen reason, whether that be religion or sex. This also breaks the precept that people must be regarded as innocent before they are proved guilty. And it is an argument that could only be justified if every departure from a presumed behavioural stereotype which is indissolubly linked to biological sex, is automatically considered to be a sexually motivated perversion or a disruptive act.

In order to justify this action, the by the UK Government asked the United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to give its advice. However, that advice had previously been made publicly available in earlier guidance which it had provided. The terms are the same as those cited in the previous paragraph. This supportive response of the current EHRC to this request for advice from the present Government authorises the automatic exclusion of transgender people from all spaces normally used by either men or women... solely on the grounds of biological sex. It is made clear that this permission would also allow exclusion by popular vote by any organisation for any reason, whether it is religion or sex. Even though the EHRC has stated that actions must be taken responsibly, and it recommends that alternative facilities are provided, the claim by the EHRC that it cannot define for itself what the word “*transgender*” means, is a further measure of an attempt to define it as a perversion or disruption. Thereby denying transgender people the protection of the 2010 Equality Act. Only intersex people are excluded from this binary exclusion, and it is stated by the EHRC that this is only on the grounds of biological sex. This demand to conform to a binary stereotype does not just affect transgender people. It affects all men and women alike. At present this advice can be challenged by the courts. Amending the 2010 Equality Act to enable such a blanket inclusion would remove the ability to challenge it and give this current advice legal effect³⁶.

In December 2023 it was revealed that the UK’s foremost LGBT charity Stonewall has successfully persuaded the UN-partnered Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) to launch a special review into the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission. At risk is its current “A” status accreditation, retraction of which would entail a loss of voting rights at the UN Human Rights Council and other associated punishments. This challenge is made on the grounds that EHRC stands accused of insufficient critical distance from the Conservative Party, with the result that it has allegedly become “*unfair*” to transgender people. However, I would allege that an equally serious or greater charge that should be laid against the EHRC is that it bases its conclusions entirely on one side of a hotly disputed conflict, and that it fails to take an objective view by summarily denying, dismissing, or discrediting another. The same criticism applies regardless of whether the approach of the Word Authorities and the Professional Institutions or that of the gender-critical groups is correct.

Transgender issues may seem to be matters of minor consequence in the face of present global issues: But these are not matters of magnitude, they are matters of principle, morality, compassion, objectivity, and justice. The current attempts by the United Kingdom Government to deport illegal immigrants to Rwanda, and

³⁶ See Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*Transgender Disputes, Conversion Therapy and Government actions*” (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/254p-PresTransDisputesAndGovActions.pdf> Also Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*No Blacks, No Irish, No Homosexuals, No Transgender People*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/252P-NoBlacks.pdf> . And: Gilchrist, S. (2023): “*How to Trash the Economy, Transgender Identities and Human Rights*” <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/255P-HowToTrash.pdf>

to deprive them of all future rights to claim refugee status, by withdrawing, if necessary, from all or part of the European Convention on Human Rights, challenges all of these provisions. In addition, by passing a law which prevents any challenge by the United Kingdom Supreme Court, which declares that Rwanda is “Safe” country, despite the previous disagreement of that same Supreme Court, destroys the independence of the courts and removes the protections against abuses by parliament. These must be matters of serious and constitutional concern. Such a withdrawal would leave the only protections against manipulation and abuse in the hands of domestic bodies.

When the present evidence suggests that the current United Kingdom Government is prepared to interfere with the independence of the United Kingdom EHRC to justify its present approach to transgender matters, together with the declaration by the UK Government of its intention to pass legislation to deny access to any redress via the courts on these relatively minor transgender matters, must greatly increase these concerns. The recent decision by the Scottish Court of Session to block implementation of the Gender Reform Act recently passed by the Scottish Parliament may be correct in legal terms, but it now means that transgender people in Scotland will continue to be subjected to the same levels of exclusion and discrimination, with the consequent abuses and attacks. Any approach by any Government which pursues only one side in any dispute and seeks to discredit or deny any other, and who is prepared to declare something is “Safe” by passing legislation which denies access to the facts and prevents any legal redress by removing access to the courts, destroys all our human rights.

3:7 Broader Implications

These transgender disputes are ostensibly not about one side seeking to abuse the other. Nobody should assume that anyone on any side in these quarrels is deliberately pursuing evil or malevolent acts. They should instead be treated as being about two groups of people who genuinely and passionately believe that they are acting in the best interests of transgender people, but who come to different conclusions about the nature and origin of these conditions. These difficulties, as I have underlined, are accentuated by disputes over religious dogma and by the failure of many practitioners in sociology, psychiatry, and psychology to take full account of the advances in the neural understandings of early development which have taken place in more recent years. However, the major concerns arise when any side tries to manipulate or deny the full range of knowledge and experience to justify its own ideological approach. I fully accept that gender-critical feminist groups can and do sincerely believe that they are acting in the best interests of transgender people and wish to make them welcome. But for long as they continue to define transgender conditions as sexually motivated perversions, paraphilias or disruptions, they defy not just the advances in science and understanding, but also the increases in experiential, clinical and medical evidence, which have occurred during the last sixty years. By this action, these groups turn the clock back to a time when not just transgender people, but all gender and sexually variant people were considered to be potential paedophiles and abusers, who then were subjected to very severe legal, social, and religious penalties. And that is a situation which still continues in many countries today.

Even though these concerns may be dismissed by some as minor issues to many within the United Kingdom at the present time, where transgender people on the whole are relatively well accepted, and where discrimination is in the hands of minority groups. However, they are also the minor beginnings of self-generating conflicts which can too easily erupt into major concerns. Currently transgender people are coming under increasingly vitriolic and sustained attacks by coalitions of radical feminists, right wing politicians, conservative religious factions, and neo fascist groups, as Butler herself describes. These conflicts are not just about some minor United Kingdom matters, they are about principles and how these are applied. in Britain, Russia, Africa or elsewhere. Many gender-critical people and groups in the United Kingdom seek to accommodate transgender people. But others do not, and these proponents now find they are receiving support from United Kingdom neo-fascist groups³⁷. Whatever their intentions and regardless of the correctness of their arguments, any pressure or religious group on any side who resorts to ridicule, attacks the

³⁷ Foster, Russell, David; and Kirke, Xander: (2023): “Straighten Up and Fly Right’: Radical right attempts to appeal to the British LGBTQ+ community”: *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2023, Vol. 25(2) 277 –294: DOI: 10.1177/13691481211069346. Sees: also: rs21 (2023): “Mobilising against the convergence of the far right and transphobia” *Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century* 2 March 2023: <https://www.rs21.org.uk/2023/03/02/mobilising-against-the-convergence-of-the-far-right-and-transphobia/>

integrity of their opponents, attempts to make selective use of experiential evidence, and seeks to enforce partisan interpretations of science and law to justify its ideologies does not serve itself or anyone well in the actions it takes.

In my own separate work with others for reconciliation in societies divided by tribal and religious violence I have realised how easy it is to persuade ordinary uninvolved people to innocently engage in active acts of discrimination through the creation of a collective moral rectitude which is based on the fears that have been created... Which then escalates because of the misinformation arising from the fears that were previously formed. And would be horrified by what has occurred. Conflicts are rarely begun by one side seeking to dominate the other, more usually it is the fears of domination or destruction by each side of the other which drives them instead. No theory or hypothesis can have any validity before its predictions are tested by experiential evidence and independent research. No matter how strong the criticisms of any approach may be, the manipulations of guilt, objectivity and impartiality should never become involved. Having trust in the accuracy of that experiential evidence is crucial in any dispute. When that trust breaks down, it is necessary to find ways to rebuild a common sense of justice, compassion, responsibility, and mutual respect.

These arguments lead to the conclusion that these disputes over the legitimacy of transgender identities arise through the disagreement over their origins, employing the correct methods of management, and because of the fears of the attacks perceived on both sides. Each of the two sides in these disputes can create perfectly logical arguments to justify the approaches that they are taking, but these depend on their assumptions about the origin of these conditions. And this means that we must also look carefully at the cause. For these reasons, a detailed examination of the nature and origins of transgender conditions is now given in this account. However, more extended descriptions are available elsewhere³⁸. There are two areas that should be specifically addressed. The first of these is about the nature and origin of these conditions, the second is about the ways in which neural imaging techniques have been used. I address these in this order in this document. The latest Government advice on the treatment of transgender children is also open for consultation until the 12th. March 2024 and you are strongly encouraged to respond³⁹.

4:0 Science, Medicine, and Psychology

4:1 Origins.

At the heart of these disputes is the disagreement between the World Authorities and Professional Institutions who consider gender identities arise as personality variations which develop very early in life, which lie at the core of the personality that is created: Which contradict the arguments of the gender-critical groups who consider them to be merely collectively created social constructs, where departures from the norm are considered to be personality disruptions instead. When the methods of management for personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that what one side considers to be an approach of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably considered to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other it is not surprising that these strong and toxic disputes occur. The timescales of the two processes also differ greatly, and that must have a profound effect in deciding how children should be treated. Gender-critical and transgender approaches largely agree on the about how identification with the gender role takes place. Therefore, the major disagreement occurs about the role and influence if any, of the core gender identity (described in section 4:4): This term describes the inner and deep-seated sense of belonging that separates the self from the other before the gendered expectations of society can have an effect.

³⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2013d): "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2019b): "The Development of Transgender Behaviour and Identities in Early Life": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-BehaviourSelfIdentity.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2017k): "What Science and History Says about the Traditional Teaching on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/239P-WhatScienceAndHistorySays.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2016h): "Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-PaperPersonality.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2016d): "A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-InfluencesPersonality.pdf>

³⁹ Government consultation on transgender children. This consultation is open to the 12th. March 2024. Please respond. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gender-questioning-children-draft-schools-and-colleges-guidance>

4:2 Cognition and Early Development

Open almost any general textbook or research tome on sociology, psychology or psychiatry and you will find that learning and development is considered to be enabled through some form of social learning or psychodynamic theory, or equivalent. All of these theories presume that learning and development advances through the increasing powers of cognition as the brain develops. Thus, it is because of the action of these powers of cognition that further development is understood to take place. However, these powers of cognition do not begin to exert coherent effects before the age of about three years. This delay has led many practitioners in psychology and psychiatry to presume that all earlier periods are recognised as times of seething emotions where little constructive occurs. They also provide blank canvases upon which future development is based. It is difficult to go deeper than this, since these theories rely on a sufficient level of cognitive abilities to have developed, thus the limitations arise within the theories themselves. Gender-critical groups who argue that gender identities are merely social constructs are bound exactly the same constraints. This disregard for any earlier processes is eloquently expressed by the prominent feminist neuroscientist, Gina Rippon who dismisses the possibility any earlier changes of significance as “*Whack-a-mole*” myths. In her book on “*The myth of the female brain*” she defines these as false statements which are repeated so often, they come to be believed. She also tries to argue that the increasing cognitive powers of reasoning, expectation, perception, intuition, and understanding, are the major forces which drive development forward. And that the profiles and learning patterns encountered change little from birth. Therefore, learning and development must be re-active or responsive in nature because it is considered to depend entirely on the external stimuli that are provided⁴⁰.

The views that these re-active processes of social learning and cognitive processes drive development forward have been challenged from the 1960’s onwards by the work of Gallesse, Dawkins, Girard, and others, who showed that instead of being re-active processes, the core or foundational elements of personality and identity are created through strong, innate, and pro-active forces which dominate development from birth. The early domination of these forces is then moderated by the massive advances and developments in neural structures, increasing cognitive abilities, neural processes and interconnections which take place during the first three to four years of life. This implies that, in place of the cognitive processes acting as the driving forces, the role of cognition must instead be seen as one of creating order out of disorder by keeping these innate forces increasingly in check. That reverses the currently accepted understanding. It is also argued that the very late maturation of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain in humans compared to other species allows the maximum potentials of ability, individuality, and personality to be obtained. The timing of this is also crucial. Too short a delay in the maturation of the pre-frontal cortex makes us increasingly clones of each other. When the delay is too long, disorder occurs. This is why I argue that a balance is achieved whereby the lifetime tensions between the innate proactive forces which drive development forward, acting against the feedback and restraining forces of cognitive control, provide the motives and stimuli whereby the highest achievements are reached. For all of these reasons, it may be expected that a proportion of people having gender and sexually variant identities will also be created without requiring an external cause. And by using this understanding, it becomes possible to identify a systematic path of development from birth into adult life⁴¹.

Even though Freud only claimed to consider homosexuality, which involves sexual attractions and their expressions of love and emotional relationships, he also discussed how homosexual people relate socially to others in society. It is through these social, instead of sexual relationships, that gender allegiances and identities come to be expressed. Freud could only use sexual motives to explain the driving forces which he needed to explain his psychodynamic theories, and that was because no other explanation was available to him. Nevertheless, he identified homosexuality as inversions and therefore as personality variations, where development is considered to proceed undisrupted from the outset. That is, instead of perversions: where

⁴⁰ For a discussion of Rippon’s work see section B:5: *Feminism and Male to Female Transsexuals*, and section C:4: *Different Routes, and elsewhere*. Both are in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): “*Responsibility in Transgender Disputes*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

⁴¹ See: 5:0: Viewpoints of the Professional Institutions and elsewhere in; Gilchrist, S. (2021a): “*Gender Identity, Feminism, and Transgender People*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/250P-GenderIdentityAndTrans.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*Transgender Disputes, Conversion Therapy and Government actions*” (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/254p-PresTransDisputesAndGovActions.pdf> Also, Section D Campaigns in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): “*Responsibility in Transgender Disputes*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

sexually motivated disruptions take place. Freud also used the Oedipus complex to identify the separation of the self from the other, but that also presumes the driving force are those of cognition and that it uses motives of sex. The most significant difference between the analysis presented here and that of Freud, is the change in the understanding of nature of the driving forces behind these conditions: So, in many ways, Freud was almost right. It can be argued the Freud's identification of sexual motives as the driving forces for his theories is itself a subset of these innate and pro-active driving forces identified by Girard, Gallese, Dawkins and others: And where the underlying search is instead for a coherent sense of identity, in place of the drives of sex.

4:3 Failures

Even today, little of this work still seems to be considered in present day practice, where the unchanged traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories continue to hold sway. I consider that it is the failure to consider these advances in neurology which allow gender-critical groups to diagnose transgender conditions as sexually motivated personality paraphilias and disruptions. I also argue that this is the primary cause of the present disputes. Although a worldwide consensus of the World Authorities and Professional Medical Institutions and the accepted practice in Gender Identity Clinics now define these as personality variations, that diagnosis is only derived from the medical, clinical, and experiential evidence which is now available. As Dr Hilary Cass notes in her recent reports on the use of puberty blockers to treat transgender children⁴², a great deal of confusion, disagreement and argument takes place because the nature and origin of transgender conditions are not considered to be well understood. Even though Cass takes full account of other factors and the later neural transformations that occur during puberty, I believe that her own apparent failure to take note of the massive changes and transformations in cognitive and neural capabilities during the first years of life, compromise her report. It is my own encounter with these concerns which has led me to conduct a separate examination, which uses transgender conditions as a case study to examine how the foundational or core elements of personality and identity for everyone to develop. Some of that study is summarised in this account.

Because gender identities arise through allegiances and behaviours that have already been created, this must involve consideration of how behavioural differences are formed in early life. Neural and evolutionary studies on behaviour and aggression patterns during early childhood and adulthood show that while on average typical male and female aggression and behavioural patterns differ greatly, with males more likely to express this in physical violence, considerable overlap still occurs. The neural maturation rates between male and female infants on average are also found to differ, and the precursors for these patterns are shown to be present at least from the moment of birth. There are also indications of pre-natal influences. And hormonal, or endocrinal influences can play an equally important role. Nevertheless, it remains true that gender identities cannot form before birth because these identities are the products of the allegiances which first have to be created. The studies on neural development from the 1960's onwards have shown that learning and development during the early years is propelled through the actions of these strong, pro-active, and innate neural forces involving mirror neurons, possessive imitation, empathy, and the like. Here, the major question that has to be asked, is not about how development proceeds, but how it can be kept in check. In addition to the action of these pro-active forces, their self-reinforcing elements mean that once development starts in a particular direction, it can be difficult to stop. These forces also concern the search for identity, not the drives of sex.

During this early period, massive advances and changes in neural capabilities and cognitive abilities are also taking place. Timescales and the order of development are also important. Although the innate neural forces dominate from birth, children do not try to conform to the expectations of the gender roles ascribed to them until around the age of three years. Before this, around a median age of two years, a rapid major increase in neural capabilities and cognitive abilities takes place. Later, a neural consolidation occurs. By studying the consequences of these changes, I show that all of these physiological, neurological, endocrinal, and psychological aspects of brain development act pro-actively together in early life to form a finely tuned system in which the maximum amount of individuality, possessiveness, intelligence, and inquisitiveness, together with

⁴² Cass, Hilary. (2022): *The Cass Review. Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people: Interim report* February 2022 <https://cass.independent-review.uk/>

the minimum degrees of energy expenditure are generated. For these reasons, typical or atypical gender and sexual identities can develop. And this is why for most people, but not for all, these identities will be congruent with biological sex.

4:4 Core Gender Identity and Gender Role Identity

This development pattern confirms that gender identity has two components. The first is the core gender identity: It can be described as an inwardly focussed sense of belonging which separates the self from the other: It is formed before the social expectations of gender can be understood. The second is the gender role identity which develops in response to the expectations that society creates. Thus, the gender role identity acts as an overlay on the often-hidden core gender identity, which was the first to be created. This division is in line with the generally accepted modern understandings of gender identity, which divides it into the same two components. Either will usually, but need not always be congruent with each other, or with biological sex. This further means that transgender conditions must be treated as personality variations which arise from incongruences in the core gender identity, while disturbances to the gender role identity must instead be treated as perversions or disruptions to a path of development which has previously been formed.

4:5 Neurology

The second area of concern relates to neural imaging. This technique involves using methods such as blood flow measurement, MRI scanning etc, to determine the parts of the brain that are most active in response to different stimuli. Most gender studies concentrate on the brain area known as the pre-frontal cortex, because this is the part of the brain that is most responsible for managing reason, perception, understanding, planning, and intuition. But there are other areas involved. While the pre-frontal cortex involves active neural processing, the *default neural network* stores those cognitive and other behaviours and processes which we do without actively thinking about them, and here answers to questions about “*What makes me, me?*” may be found. We argue that gender identity arises because of allegiances and behaviours that have already been encountered: thus, these identities are consequential effects. And they may have been created by a combination of endocrinal processes, and massive neural transformations which take place through the first three years of life. These it is argued create a core gender identity which becomes effectively unchangeable or is much more difficult to change in later life. We have seen that the development of personality and identity is a strongly pro-active process driven by innate neural forces which dominate from birth, where once develops in a particular direction, it becomes difficult to stop, so these early influences could act as triggering processes and nothing more is required. However, that does not fully answer the question of why “*Who am I?*” should dominate our conscious minds. One very recent advance is the discovery of an independent “*I*” neural network which may give answers to some of the questions that arise.

One particular brain area is called the amygdala, whose primary focus is concerned with the management of fears and emotions. This includes anxiety disorders, addictions, compulsions, and complex neuropsychiatric disorders such as autism. In humans the amygdala formed early in gestation, so that is already well developed, and it is functioning from birth. The female amygdala also reaches its peak age about one year and a half earlier than the male amygdala. Testosterone increases amygdala activity in a person who is approaching a socially threatening situation and decreases the activity when such a situation is avoided. The greater spike in testosterone at the moment of birth in male babies, compared to in female babies, could also be significant in determining the direction in which gender identities develop. Although I do not focus so much on endocrinal, or hormonal effects in this account, they are extremely important and must never be ignored: And they may trigger the direction in which development proceeds⁴³. In contrast to these earlier influences, the pre-frontal cortex in humans matures at a much slower rate than the equivalent organising processes which have taken place in other human brain areas, also when compared with other species. This maturation

⁴³ For a discussion on hormones see Gilchrist, S. (2016a): “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: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/sourcesA/index.htm> Also: Gilchrist, S. (2015g): “*A Different Journey*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/212P-DifferentJourney.pdf>

of the pre-frontal cortex is expressed in the rapid development of cognitive abilities around the median age of two years. So, while natural variations may mean that this core gender identity need not always follow that which is expected by biology, there will still be a preferential effect. A very important role for the amygdala is one of protecting the individual from harm, and evolution demands that the necessary protections through fear must arise before the consequences of any adaptation or experience can be properly understood.

Modularity of mind is the notion that, at least in part, a mind may be composed of innate neural structures or mental modules which have distinct, established, and evolutionarily developed functions. Historically, questions regarding the *functional architecture* of the mind have been divided into two different theories of the nature of the faculties. The first can be characterized as a horizontal view because it refers to cognitive mental processes as if they are interactions between faculties such as memory, imagination, judgement, and perception. The second can be characterized as a vertical and behaviourist view because it claims that these earlier lower-level mental faculties, or *modules* which may be considered as inherently built in functional elements which, for survival these have to be active from birth. These modules are considered to be contained within specific neural domains that are genetically determined, are associated with distinct neurological structures, and are computationally autonomous. According to Fodor, a *module* falls somewhere between the behaviourist and cognitivist views of lower-level processes⁴⁴. Nevertheless, there are major disputes about what the nature of each *module* may be. In this study I examine how the pre-frontal cortex and the amygdala interact with each other. This early maturation of the amygdala compared with the delayed maturation of the pre-frontal cortex means that its earlier low-level processes must be also pre-cognitive in nature. All of this suggests that it is not just a variation in aggression profiles but other innate processes, present in many animals, such as having the instant ability to walk, learn to feed, and the immediate ability to find one's own mother, which suggest that both gender identification and the ability to separate the self from the other, are all developments which are active from the moment of birth. Gender identities cannot form before birth because they depend on interaction with others, but the traits may already be present. Some support for this is encountered with intersex children whose intersex condition is due to physical deformity alone. For many years the practice has been to assign these children to the gender which surgery can cosmetically make more appropriate, often immediately after birth. However, the distress that this has created even when the children were never told about this assignment, means that the recommendation now is to delay any surgery to the time when children can decide for themselves⁴⁵.

However some more recent work carried out at Stanford University may throw more light on these situations.. A Stanford Medicine study using some 1500 individuals and AI techniques identifies distinct brain organization patterns in women and men. This new artificial intelligence model was more than 90% successful at determining whether scans of brain activity came from a woman or a man⁴⁶. The investigators stated that model's success suggests that detectable sex differences do exist in the brain, but that these haven't been picked up reliably before. The fact that the model worked so well in different datasets, including brain scans from multiple sites in the U.S. and Europe, are claimed to make the findings especially convincing, as it reduces the many confusions which have plagued previous studies of this kind⁴⁷. They found the model was most often looking to the default mode network, striatum, and the limbic network to make the decision.

⁴⁴ These ideas were formalised by Jerry Fodor in 1983. See: Fodor, Jerry A. (1983). *Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. ISBN 0-262-56025-9

⁴⁵ Dessens, A.B. Froukje, M.E., Slijper, F.M.E. Stenvert, L.S. and Drop S.L.S. (2005) 'Gender dysphoria and gender change in chromosomal females with congenital adrenal hyperplasia', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34(4): 389–397; Diamond, A. (2002) 'Prefrontal Cortex Development and Development of Cognitive Function', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences: 11976–11982*, Diamond, M. and Sigmundson H.K. (1997) 'Sex reassignment at birth. Long term review and clinical implications', *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 151: 298-304. Diamond, M. and Watson, L.A. (2004). 'Androgen insensitivity syndrome and Klinefelter's Syndrome', in Diamond, M. and Yates, A. (eds.) *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America (Sex and Gender)*, Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 13(3): 623–640.; Kipnis, K. and Diamond, M. (1998) 'Pediatric ethics and the surgical assignment of sex', *Journal of Clinical Ethics*, 9(4): 398-410. Ochoa, B. (1998) 'Trauma of the External Genitalia in Children: Amputation of the Penis and Emasculation', *Journal of Neurology* 160(3-11): 1116-1119. Reiner, W.G. (2004) 'Psychosexual development in genetic males assigned female: the cloacal exstrophy experience', in Diamond, M. and Yates, A. (eds.) *Child and Adolescent Clinics of North America (Sex and Gender)*, Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 13(3): 657–674 .

⁴⁶ Stanford Medicine (2024): Stanford Medicine study identifies distinct brain organization patterns in women and men". *Stanford Medicine* 20th. February 2024: <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2024/02/men-women-brain-organization-patterns.html#:~:text=When%20the%20researchers%20tested%20the,been%20picked%20up%20reliably%20before.>

⁴⁷ For more detailed discussions see section B of Gilchrist, S. (2020b): "Responsibility in Transgender Disputes": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

Although these studies may give answers to the “*What makes me, me?*” question, the question of “*Who am I?*” must still be examined.

And that takes us to other recent work carried out in Stanford University. In addition to the default neural network, a further paper claims to have identified an independent “*I*” network in the brain⁴⁸. The paper unveils the key role of a small structure or brain area which is sandwiched between the brain’s two hemispheres. While answers to questions of “*What makes me, me?*” are claimed to dwell in the well-studied network of neurons in the default mode network, there’s no official name yet for the “*I*” network, and it has not been similarly studied. Although they are separate, the two brain areas constantly interact with each other. While stimulation of the default mode network does not cause any change to the sense of selfhood that a person possesses, considerable disruption arises to this sense of selfhood arises when this “*I*” area is stimulated instead. The effect is described in the following way: “*Your sense of physical or bodily self represents your organism in the immediate here and now, with a particular point of view that is yours alone, your first-person perspective on the world around you. Nobody shares it,*” Parvizi said. “*You may not be conscious of your point of view. But you will be if I disrupt the network that generates it. Your place in the world around you will suddenly seem unreal*”⁴⁹. Much more work on this is required including confirmation as to whether this area is active before birth or if it only becomes active after birth. It is also much too early to say if any of these modules contain generically determined behavioural traits which leads directly to gender identification, and that need not depend on the presence of XX or XY chromosomes. It should also be expected that this would only set the direction of travel, and it is the massive neural advances and changes during the first three years which result in stable core gender and other identities to be created. Thus, other influences may well be involved. However, the early development of these behavioural traits and the experiences with intersex children does suggest there may be some genetically and hormonally associated contribution. And it also supports the presence of distinct neural modular structures in the brain which are computationally independent, in the way that Fordor describes.

However, in opposition to this behaviouralist approach, cognitivists see lower-level processes as continuous with higher-level processes, and where no equivalent modular structures exist. This means that the impact of the many neural transformations which take place during the earlier pre-cognitive period must also be discounted or denied. That denial in turn takes us closer Rippon’s work and to the gender-critical approach. For these reasons, I argue that it is the behaviouralist approach as presented by Fordor and others, with their predictions of low-level innate modules, which have domain specificity, are computationally autonomous, may also be genetically determined, and are associated with distinct neurological structures, play a more significant role in determining how the brain develops, and how the early development of personality and identity proceeds. It follows then from these arguments that the core gender identity would be congruent with the sense of “*I*” that is created. Also, that it need not depend on behavioural effects. And it may also explain why conversion therapy is so harmful since it attacks this sense of “*I*” that is created, and that leaves a vacuum inside.

Work by Girard, Dawkins and others also argues that these early stages of development are characterized by the initial creation of fleeting strands of disorganised thought which coalesce into more substantive units as development proceeds. This also means that early development is a fragmented process. And research and experience demonstrate that that this is not a steady progression. A rapid outburst of interactions and interconnections takes place, but only after a sufficient density (or a quorum) is reached. A further feature of early development is the existence of the various peak periods of very rapid neural development which are unique to early life. These peak periods occur in different areas of the brain at different times. During them, those capabilities which are most used develop very rapidly, while those that are less well used become permanently diminished or lost. This has a lifetime effect. The peak period which interests us most is the one which is encountered in the pre-frontal cortex. Before it, the pre-frontal cortex had been relatively inactive, but

⁴⁸ Lyu, Dian; Stieger, James Robert; Xin, Cindy; Ma, Eileen; Lusk, Zoe; Aparicio, Mariel; Kalkach, Werbaneth; Katherine: Perry, Claire; Megan: Deisseroth, Karl; Buch, Vivek; Parvizi, Josef: (2023): “Causal evidence for the processing of bodily self in the anterior precuneus” *Neuron* Volume 111, issue 16, p2502-2512.e4, august 16, 2023 published:june 08, 2023 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2023.05.013>

⁴⁹ Goldman, Bruce (2023) “Where Is ‘I’ the Physical Sense Of Self Has Been Localized” *Stanford Medicine Innovation & Technology* Issue 3 / 2023 <https://stanmed.stanford.edu/tiny-brain-structure-role-sense-of-self#:~:text=%E2%80%9CMe%E2%80%9D%20dwells%20in%20a%20well,for%20the%20%E2%80%9C!%E2%80%9D%20network.>

during and after this period its activity rapidly increases. Distant areas of the brain of the brain become interconnected and explosions in cognitive and language abilities occur. The term *“the brain lights up”* has been used to describe what happens. Where independent modules as Fordor argues had previously existed, they may now coalesce. This is also the time when close links between the rapid development of language capabilities and the emergence of an awareness of core elements of personality and identity, including gender identity, have been noted. Throughout this period those neural pathways which are most used advance greatly, however those that are less used become permanently diminished or lost. This has the effect of tuning the brain to the environment, and the explosion in language capabilities is also likely to give the creation of cognitive abilities a very strong boost. Most of the research on these peak periods concentrates on how neural motor functions and capabilities are formed. However, identities and personalities, including gender identities, develop through the behaviours and allegiances that have previously been created, so these are consequential effects.

Prior to these periods of early development, the number or density of synapses or neural connections in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain rapidly increases, from a small number at birth, to reach a peak value by around the age of three years. This number then dies back until by adult life to only about half of that peak value remains. This ebb-and-flow forms a normal part of brain development, and this can be matched to transformations in learning capabilities and cognitive growth. The brain also reduces its energy consumption by eliminating connections that are seldom or never used, (the term synaptic pruning is used), and in this way it tunes itself to its environment. But the development of the innate sense of belonging, represented by the core gender identity, pre-dates the later rapid advances in the development of the pre-frontal cortex. A stable frame of reference provided by the core gender identity would give the stability which allows continuities of core or underlying elements of personality and identity to be created. The stability of the core gender identity combined with the very high flexibilities, capabilities and adaptabilities built into the pre-frontal cortex can then continue to give the brain great freedom to adapt itself to many different requirements throughout life. Thus, the stabilising influence of the amygdala and other lower-level brain areas may be expected to have a much more pronounced, and a potentially lifetime effect.

All of the activities associated with the amygdala and the default neural network can be related to personality variations, the protection of the individual, and to the coherence of selfhood that is created. This means that transgender conditions should be treated and managed in the same way as all other personality variations because, in all of these, the same processes are involved. The standard way for managing personality variations is to encourage acceptance of the reality and impact of the variation, then to develop strategies which find ways to accommodate its demands. It means that to eliminate distress and achieve harmony and where necessary, methods of management akin to compulsions should be used. Unlike those compulsions which lead to oblivion or malfunction, the compulsions of gender seek greater contributions to society and add to the fulfilment of life. This also makes them more difficult to manage, since a goal of fulfilment instead of oblivion must always be sought. Because of this, there should be nothing magical or different about the way that transgender conditions are treated or managed, provided the diagnosis is correct. However, the validity of any theory depends on testing and experiential evidence that is available. The outcomes of this analysis match the understanding of the Word Authorities and Professional Institutions who consider personality variant conditions to be *“naturally expected variations of the human condition, intrinsic to the personality created, arising very early in life, and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life”*⁵⁰.

Neural imaging studies which involve the pre-frontal cortex may be perfectly adequate for examining how the gender role identity develops. However, I argue that it is the primary role of the amygdala, default neural networks, “I” networks and the role of Fordor’s modules, which must be considered to understand how the core gender identity is formed. This provision of a stable base enables continuities of personality and identity to be created. And the stability of that base allows for the widest possible range of gender and other roles to be expressed. Work with transgender children carried out by Money, Stoller, and others from the 1960’s has shown that this core gender identity has become immutably established at the latest by the age of three years,

⁵⁰ See Gilchrist, S. (2020b): *“Responsibility in Transgender Disputes”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

although many ascribe a much earlier date⁵¹. Along with other core elements of personality and identity it is accepted that this underlying sense of belonging becomes difficult or impossible to change unless some physical brain injury or dementia intervenes.

A link between higher levels of autism and transgender people has been noted. Both relate to higher functioning individuals and to the coherence of selfhood that is created. This implies that both should be considered as parallel effects. Far from merely being a set of feelings the core gender identity lies at the foundation of the sense of selfhood which every one of us creates. So, attacking it or disabusing it, attacks one of the foundation stones upon which the senses of selfhood and the self-esteem for all of us are based. These experiences also give strong reasons which explain why methods appropriate to the management of personality variations should be used. And where necessary, it also means that methods akin to managing compulsions should be employed. This is the only approach which is now accepted to be correct by virtually all of the World Authorities and the Professional Medical Institutions who are involved in this field. It is also made clear that these techniques are required to manage the distress, not to deny the variation. The outcome of this may lead to transition or it may not: What it can and should do, is to ensure that any decision that is made is correct.

Because early development is a fragmented process, everyone finds their own end points on their journeys of gender discovery, and these may well not conform to any binary role. In the case of autism for example the savant symptom is well known. Although virtually every handbook on sexuality and psychiatry confirms the understanding that gender and sexual identities are both formed together as a single complex at a very early date, they both go their different ways. Thus, as great a range of sexual identities is found in the transgender communities as that which exists in the population at large. Our conscious understanding of gender identity depends greatly on our involvement with the gender role. So that, unless some incongruence occurs, the separate role, existence, and impact of the core gender identity is usually hidden from conscious view. The timescales and orders of precedence are just as important. The core elements of personality and identity coalesce from disorganised thoughts around a median age of two years, but children do not strongly conform to the stereotypes of gendered behaviour around the age of three years. However, children do not develop a sufficient independence of mind (called *theory of mind*) to sufficiently understand what has happened to them until around the age of four years. This lack of awareness leads some to believe the incongruences they become conscious of from that year onwards have been present from birth. Transgender people may sometimes describe this as being “*born into the wrong body*”, but that is a description of these experiences, it has nothing to do with the biology of sex. For the general population on the other hand the hidden nature of these processes makes it seem natural to believe that gender identity should always be congruent with biological sex. It also means that among these outsiders the nature and intensity of transgender conflicts may not be easily understood. And it is the manipulation of these contrasting views that give rise to the fears that are created and much of the venom in these disputes.

Rippon only mentions transgender people in passing in her book and advises them to be careful about what they ask for, but her analysis highlights the contradictions and disagreements that exist. She describes the present arguments in terms of a “*hunt the differences*” agenda and argues that transgender people should not need to change their bodies to conform to any gender role. Like other investigators, such as Swaab, Joel, et al, Rippon recognises that the human brain contains a distributed mosaic of male and female oriented features. within which considerable overlaps in these characteristics occur. And that is confirmed in the later work by Stanford University. But this does not remove the incompatibilities or contradictions that are encountered through this gender-critical denial of the impact of the core gender identity, and by disregarding the massive changes in neural capabilities and cognitive abilities which take place from birth. and during the first three years, in order to preserve a gender-critical approach.⁵²

There is no real issue over the contribution of the gender role. Gender and sexually variant people can and do conform to as wide a range of social roles as everyone in society. The issue is over the scaffolding, including

⁵¹ See section 7:0 *Social Construction of Gender* and section 8:0: *Gender Dysphoria* in Gilchrist, S. (2013d): “*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

⁵² See Section D, including section D:2 *Gender Attacks* in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): “*Responsibility in Transgender Disputes*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

the actions of the amygdala and of other more primitive brain areas, which puts the neural structures that guide how cognition develops in place. Also, how we respond to “*fright and flight modes*”, and how we create the foundational or core elements of our personalities and identities, which include these gender and sexual identities. It is the hidden nature of all these processes which have allowed the feminist pioneers in the past to ascribe the development of gender identity entirely to the gender role. It is the failure of much of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology to take account of the advances in understanding which Girard, Gallese, Dawkins, Money, Stoller and others have now exposed. Today, it allows Gina Rippon and gender-critical feminist groups to dismiss the impact of these earlier changes and effects.

Transgender people form a small and often hidden presence in the community. For many people their understanding of transgender conditions depends on fears that may be created, and these are based on what other people say. It is also these dismissals which enable gender-critical groups to create their own definition of gender identity as a collectively created social construct which is confined entirely to the gender role. Furthermore, when Gina Rippon additionally dismisses these earlier influences as false “*Whack-a-mole*” myths which are repeated so often that they come to be believed, all of these groups misdiagnose transgender conditions. And it is the exploitation of these fears which leads to the trauma, disputes, and false allegations in the way that Butler describes.

Using the work of Dawkins, Girard, Gallese and others, I have argued earlier in this in this account that the core or foundational elements of personality and identity are created through responding to the strong, innate, and pro-active forces which dominate development from birth. Therefore, the role of cognition must be seen as one of creating order out of disorder by keeping these innate forces increasingly in check. That reverses the understanding of the traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories where cognition itself is understood to provide the primary force: And this means that the innate nature and the impact of these innate neural forces is ignored. I consider that for as long as psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and neurologists continue to identify cognition as the primary force and consider only the capabilities of the pre-frontal cortex which drive development forward, they will be looking in the wrong place to define, not just how transgender conditions, but how all personality variations and identities, including gender and sexually variant conditions, are formed. It should not go without notice that when sexually variant conditions are considered, similar arguments can be applied. It is also interesting to speculate about the nature of consciousness as a compilation of how all of these elements interact.

4:6 Consequences and Social Interactions

There are other issues to consider. The current understandings show that although on average there are significant differences in male and female behavioural patterns, with men more prone to engage in physical violence, considerable overlap occurs. The large body of research and experiential evidence on early development which is now available shows that allegiances to these behavioural patterns create strong and stable core gender identities, which usually but do not always follow biological sex. This allegiance allows all women, including male-to-female transsexuals: acting as women with women, to pursue the same feminist arguments with the same vigour, from a stronger base. Equally for any female-to-male transsexuals: acting as men with men, to pursue any equivalent male arguments from a similarly stronger base. Because the core gender identity can be described as an inner sense of belonging without behavioural implications, it further means that gender-critical ideology, whichever way it is interpreted, must be the less effective approach. It follows from this that gender identity instead of biology which should be used as the marker to guide the legislation and the behaviours which decide how people can socially interact.

4:7 Implications

The failure to resolve these differences is particularly damaging for transgender people. It means that the diagnosis of personality variations, adopted by the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, which are inwardly focussed and compulsive searches for identity involving the rejection of what is wrong, and which do not threaten others, is set against the views of opposing feminists who, along with many religious groups, instead identify transgender conditions as sexually driven but sublimated personality disruptions, involving motives and feelings of behaviour and desire. These demand interaction with others: which means that fears of predation, coercion, grooming, and recruitment can be formed. In place of the egalitarianism espoused by

Gilchrist, S. (2024): “*What Celtic Christianity and the Ancient Church of The East Can Tell Us About Christian Attitudes to Women and LGBTI Relationships*”. 040B

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the feminist pioneers and others, we have seen that it also enforces a gender complementarity that refuses to separate gender from sex.

Rippon, and all of those gender-critical groups, who deny the impact of all earlier influences and associate the creation of gender identity entirely with the gender role, argue that transgender people should be free to identify with any role they like without needing to change their bodies. But that does nothing to explain the driving forces behind them: And when all earlier influences are dismissed as “*Whack-a-mole*” myths which are false assertions that are so often repeated they come to be believed, then the only conclusion that can be reached are that the driving forces behind transgender conditions are motives of sex. The research work by Girard, Gallese, Dawkins and others which challenged this assumption of sexual motives has been available since the nineteen sixties, but it has not been taken up by many in the psychiatric, psychology and sociology professions. It has often been dismissed as an idiosyncratic approach. This disregard may not be of great significance in many situations, but it is of crucial significance as far as transgender and gender and sexually variant people are concerned. When the methods of management for personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that what one side considers to be an approach of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably considered to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other: it essential to get the diagnoses correct.

4:8 Autogynephilic Transsexuality⁵³

There are many who apply these condemnations of sexual motives without exception to all gender and sexually variant people. That is a position which has been occupied for centuries in many religious traditions. However, gender-critical groups accept the advances in science and the transformation in attitudes which now recognise lesbian and gay relationships as valid expressions of identity. Yet they deny the same advances and recognitions to transgender people by continuing to define these conditions as perversions, paraphilias or disruptions of (male) homosexuality, which are driven by sublimated motives of sex. However, the theory which is used only considers male-to-female transsexuals. It ignores female-to-male transsexuals, and no equivalent paraphilia or disruption for these people has been identified. It also fails to deal with non-binary roles, and it does not provide adequate explanations for the wide range of transgender conditions that exist. It does not match the lived experiences of transgender people. It continues to rely entirely of Freudian theories, and it takes no account of the advances that have since taken place. It was considered outdated at the time it was put forward, and the one clinic that promoted it was later shut down. There is a great deal of anger among transgender people over an incorrect diagnosis being imposed upon them with the aim of preserving a gender-critical approach: instead of protecting transgender people’s lives.

5:0 Management

Contrary to much popular opinion, the emotions which drive most male-to-female transsexuals is not that they want to be women, it is instead an unconquerable instinct that they ought to be women (and vice versa): so, the goal is to be themselves. Far too often the experiences of transgender people are ones of fighting or trying to suppress these compulsions with all their might until attrition and exhaustion destroys the demand to conform, and mental or other breakdown occurs. From then onwards, gender transition and surgery may be obsessively sought. For many, these experiences will be present from earliest memories. For others they may erupt into conscious awareness when some change occurs. And these pressures may increase with increasing age, as hopes for the future give way to the realities of the past. Up to that time many try desperately to conform to the roles expected of them, and outwardly many succeed very well. Yet others

⁵³ Autogynephilia was defined by an American psychologist, Dr Ray Blanchard, as “a male’s propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female”. (Auto = self, gyne = woman, philia = love). According to Blanchard and Lawrence “The increasing prevalence of male-to-female (Male to female) transsexualism in Western countries is largely due to the growing number of Male to female transsexuals who have a history of sexual arousal with cross-dressing or cross-gender fantasy. Ray Blanchard proposed that these transsexuals have a paraphilia he called autogynephilia, which is the propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought or image of oneself as female. Autogynephilia defines a transsexual typology and provides a theory of transsexual motivation, in that Blanchard proposed that male to female transsexuals are either sexually attracted exclusively to men (homosexual) or are sexually attracted primarily to the thought or image of themselves as female (autogynephilic), and that autogynephilic transsexuals seek sex reassignment to actualize their autogynephilic desires”. Lawrence, A. A. (2007): “Autogynephilic transsexualism conceptualized as an expression of romantic love”; *Perspect Biol Med.* Autumn 2007;50(4):506-20. doi: 10.1353/pbm.2007.0050.4

reject the gender they are assigned to from earliest years. Transgender people are searching for a secure sense of identity. They are not pursuing sexual desires. Once transition is achieved, gender is no longer an issue. Many then merge invisibly into society in the role they identify with; and lead ordinary everyday lives.

It is recognised that attempting to fight these conflicts does not succeed and methods appropriate to the management of personality variations and compulsions must be applied. This requires the creation of inclusion, self-esteem, and self-affirmation together with the self-acceptance that is needed to successfully manage these demands. This mirrors the standard approach used for personality variations, and it is the only approach now accepted by the World Authorities and Professional Medical Institutions. It has the aim of enabling gender and social transition to take place in an orderly way when it is right to do so. And equally as important: to find ways of avoiding transition and managing the demands when for other reasons, it is not. Enabling these proper acceptances and understanding provides far greater opportunities to find appropriate ways of managing these conditions, in place of fighting battles which one cannot, or is not allowed to comprehend. Without these methods of acceptance and inclusion, those abilities are destroyed. Employing the techniques required for the management of sexually motivated personality disruptions, such as suppression, distaste, diversion, and rejection, which can involve the creation of guilt, often in a religious context, do not succeed. They never did succeed, even when the earlier extreme techniques such as electro-convulsion therapies, chemical and other aversion treatments, which were even more strongly intended to create revulsion or rejection were used. Not only do these approaches misdiagnose the conditions as expressions of sexual desire; they destroy the self-acceptance and self-esteem that is needed to manage their demands⁵⁴.

This means that creating self-acceptance and self-esteem should not be regarded as a one-way ticket to transition. Giving children the opportunity to explore their gender has been an accepted practice for many years. Social transition should not be impeded but it is not a neutral act and the social consequences of this must be accounted for before it comes into effect. Many transsexuals do not want to transition; and do everything in their power to conform to the gender and social roles expected of them. More recently there has been a large increase in the number of younger people coming forward who are questioning their gender identity, often during puberty, and concerns have arisen over treatment that has been provided. I argue that careful and correct counselling is required, but that is made more difficult when there are continuing disputes within the medical profession about the origin and nature of transgender conditions. Facilities have also been overwhelmed: That has led to gaps in recording, disagreements, and failures in administration, but I also suggest that a failure to take account of the bipolar nature of transgender conflicts may be a principal reason for these difficulties: Particularly since remissions do occur. Attempts have been made for years to treat transgender conditions and all gender and sexually variant conditions as perversions or disruptions, in the way that gender-critical groups still advise. It is now accepted by professional institutions that none of these have had any success. I also conclude that a great deal of harm continues to be caused whenever these techniques continue to be applied. Conversion therapy, which takes a similar approach, is universally condemned as harmful and potentially disastrous by the Professional Medical Institutions and World Authorities. The application of this by others often happens only after transgender people have been attempting to apply it to themselves for many years.

All these attempts to treat transgender identities and all other gender and sexually variant conditions as though they are perversions, and as the results of reward driven desires or lifestyle choices fail because there is no previous sense of gender identity to restore. That leaves a vacuum inside. Because there is a bipolar element to these conflicts and because these conditions are driven by rejection rather than desire, some relief can be gained for a time by creating a sense of euphoria which transcends their demands This is the approach taken by some religious groups who claim that a "Cure" has been found, but that only lasts for as long as the euphoria can be sustained. After this is lost it is not something that willpower can regain, for attempts to fight these conflicts simply reinforce the demand. The problem with many such groups is that anyone who does not conform to their rules of behaviour may be ejected from membership. It is also extremely destructive since their attempts to fight or suppress the conflict drives people deeper into distress. These people may be told that God still loves them but to be practicing or non-practicing is not the real issue.

⁵⁴ Gilchrist, S. (2017): "Cherishing Transgender Children": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/241P-CherishingTransgenderChildrenLeaflet.pdf>

These acts of rejection become a personal attack of the self-identity of that individual and not of their practice. Whatever opportunity there might once have been to re-join the Church or group, or to keep personal control of their conflict, is either diminished or destroyed. The hurt, guilt and self-loathing caused by this can be enormous. That is why making the correct medical diagnosis is so important, it also why it demands an urgent re-assessment of the teaching that the Church provides, particularly since, for many, this has become an issue of salvation for the Church⁵⁵.

5:1 Transgender Children

An additional major area of contention is found in the disagreements about the ways in which transgender children should be treated. Here too, the differences in timescales are important, when the World Authorities and Professional Institutions regard transgender conditions as personality variations where the inner sense of belonging which represents the core gender identity has become immutably established very early in life. This is in contradiction to gender-critical groups who ignore the core gender identity, regard transgender conditions as personality disruptions, and argue that gender identity is only the product of associations with the gender role: Which means that these groups do not consider any component of gender identity to have become consistently established until a much later date: And that may not be until puberty has passed. This is why attempting to treat transgender conditions as personality disruptions when the diagnosis should be that of personality variations is potentially disastrous. Because the time when transgender children and their parents most need help to manage these conditions occurs from early childhood, not later in life.

Even though Cass in her recent reports on the use of puberty blockers takes full account of other factors including the later neural transformations that occur during puberty, I believe that her apparent failure to take note of the massive changes and transformations in cognitive and neural capabilities during the first years of life compromise her report, and that this leads to conclusions which are too cautious and incorrect. In addition, the correct administration of any drug depends crucially on making the right diagnosis, and upon balancing the potential harm that is created against the benefits it brings. Puberty blockers have been administered to delay the onset of puberty so that people who are struggling with their sense of identity have more time and can keep a calmness of mind to decide what the correct path may be. This offer may be appropriate when these conditions are regarded by the Professional Institutions as personality variations and compulsions, which search for an identity. But where they are instead seen by others as perversions, paraphilias, and desires, their administration may be seen as a one-way path to transition. These disagreements create a great deal of tension in these disputes.

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⁵⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2017d): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2017f): "Condemning Sexual Abuse and Welcoming Gender and Sexually Variant People into the Christian Church": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/237P-ChangesInChurch.pdf>

the potential harm that is created against the benefits it brings. Puberty blockers have been administered to delay the onset of puberty so that people who are struggling with their sense of identity have more time and can keep a calmness of mind to decide what the correct path may be. This offer may be appropriate when these conditions are regarded by the Professional Institutions as personality variations and compulsions, which search for an identity. But where they are instead seen by others as perversions, paraphilias, and desires, their administration may be seen as a one-way path to transition. These disagreements create a great deal of tension in these disputes.

5:2 Personal Experiences

It may be useful to compare my own experiences with those of Debbie Hayton, who I have known as a friend, and I still consider to be one. We have also we have worked together on transgender matters for many years. Debbie is publishing a book: *“Transsexual Apostate: My Journey Back to Reality”*⁵⁶, It is also summarised in the Daily Mail article *“Even though I have had a sex-change operation I’m not and never will be a woman”*⁵⁷ (I have not yet seen this book, which is not due to be released until the 8th. February), but I know Debbie well as a person and I do not question her sincerity. Debbie has also argued that *“Transgender women are men”*. Like gender-critical groups, she uses autogynephilic theories: and she defines women as *“Adult human females”* to the exclusion of all others. However, the issue of concern is not just about definitions. It is what the word *“woman”* is taken to mean and how it has become as a weapon instead. The most distressing thing to me in the history Debbie presents, is that she was able to proceed to surgical transformation in the mistaken belief that *“Sex-change surgery will somehow make her a woman”*. It does not: It is the social interactions and the performing of gender which are important, and this is the definition of men and women which the feminist pioneers used. To my mind, Debbie’s story is a sad story of the consequences of failure and misconception, but my story has failure too. I for one am happy with the slogan *“Transgender women are women”* because it represents the way in which I find I naturally integrate into society. Also, because that is the way in which the feminist pioneers used it. I would not hesitate to express my reasons for this on a need-to-know basis (as I am doing now): but only when it is genuinely needed. I do not believe in total concealment unless victimisation by others demands it. Unfortunately for many, that is required. In any case most transsexuals in my experience do not think about transition primarily as having the final goals of sex, biology, or gender. These are journeys across the gender divide which take them home to themselves.

Like Debbie I sought professional help for similar difficulties, though this was 35 years ago, rather than 12. I was offered hormones three times. And each time I refused because I felt the right thing to do was to try to sort out these difficulties without their help. I have not sought either surgical or hormonal intervention ever since. That decision has led me to adopt an approach of inclusion instead of rejection for the creation of a coherent sense of self-identity⁵⁸. I also use my experience to help others and promote a better understanding of transgender conditions wherever I can. It has additionally led me to endorse the views of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions. Also, to use methods of management associated with compulsions instead of desires. And to adopt the understanding of the feminist pioneers and many other feminists who define gender identity including the terms *“men”* and *“women”*, through the performance of gender and by how men and women interact with each other and society...not by biology alone. With this in mind, it should not be surprising that I have not totally socially transitioned, but that is because I seek a truce between my wish to fulfil my relationships love and commitments in the life I have built in a battle against very deep-seated feelings inside. Only the future can tell if I were to seek surgery, and transition full time. My attitude to surgery is that should only be a means of completing the journey or tidying up the bits left behind. However, what very often happens is that people have fought against these feelings for so long, that surgery becomes the first

⁵⁶ Hayton, Debbie (2024): *“Transsexual Apostate: My Journey Back to Reality”* Forum (8 Feb. 2024) ISBN-10: 1800753098 ISBN-13 978-1800753099

⁵⁷ Hayton, Debbie: (2024); *“Even though I have had a sex-change operation, I’m not and never will be a woman”* *Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13013999>. See also: Dayton, Debbie (2024): *“Transsexual Apostate – Serialisation and Exclusive Interview”* <https://debbiehayton.com/2024/01/31/transsexual-apostate-serialisation-and-exclusive-interview/#more-5803>

⁵⁸ See for example Gilchrist, S. (2013e): *“Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/205P-ManagementTechniquesInGenderDysphoria.pdf> Gilchrist, S. (2020f): *“Managing Transgender Conditions Correctly: A Commentary on the Bell v Tavistock Case”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/249P-JudgmentResponse.pdf>

answer that is sought, and too easily this becomes a topic for discussion, in the hope of relieving the tension itself.

Much of my own writing attempts to address these issues⁵⁹. In *“Transgender People and Women’s Concerns”*⁶⁰, I compare my own viewpoint with the one that Debbie adopts. In another article I cast my consideration of reform of the Gender Recognition Act in *“Divisions: Self-Declaration and Gender Variant People”*⁶¹ in the form of an imagined conversation between Debbie, myself and one other. I do believe that Debbie does seek full inclusion of transgender people into society. Her story, and her relationship with her wife is used as an example of inclusion in the Church of England Living in Love and Faith Programme, and Debbie and I have worked together in our attempts to achieve this for years. I respect Debbie’s attempts to get transgender people accepted within the gender-critical feminist movements, I support her call for compassion and the need to move away from the mudslinging and arguments, I have no reason to doubt her sincerity and I do not disagree with all her views. In common with gender-critical feminist groups she misdiagnoses transgender conditions by using the theory of autogynephilic transsexuality (see section 4:8) which identifies transgender conditions as sexually motivated perversions, paraphilias or disruptions to a biologically or divinely ordained path of development. But in any argument and discussion there has to be an openness to hearing the views of all sides

However, when Debbie and other gender-critical groups use the slogan *“Transgender women are men”* and refuse to define women as anything other than *“adult human females”*, that journey can never begin. And this takes all transgender people to a different place. When it also maximises the separation of these people from the social fabric of society, it provides the framework for the historic exclusions, condemnations, persecutions, scapegoating, criminalisation, and the imposition of blame upon all gender and sexually variant people, simply based on difference, which have blighted religions, cultures, and countries for years. That need not be an issue in a truly egalitarian society, but this demands that full inclusion and respect for different viewpoints is sought. Unfortunately, in line with much of the material that Debbie and other members of the gender-critical movements have published, she dismisses the approaches of the Professional Institutions and World Authorities by likening the people and organisations who support their conclusions to transgender mobs, imputes their motives, and describes them as people who are pursuing political agendas instead of responsible science⁶². Quite clearly exclusions on an individual objectively justified basis are necessary. But I find that almost every article on Debbie’s website seeks to maximise the exclusion of transgender people from the normal fabric of society not just where it is obviously needed, but in everyday life⁶³. Although she argues earnestly for full acceptance, I do not find any serious consideration of any other approach in her work, and this is a major concern when the methods of management of personality variations and personality disruptions, including the definitions of gender identity, so strongly diverge⁶⁴.

It is also easy to produce sincerely written but totally opposing articles and conclusions which depend on the definition of gender you are starting from, as Debbie’s website, her publications, and the work of Kathleen Sock and others show⁶⁵. I do not question Debbie’s intentions, but sadly I find that her attempts to belittle, discredit, and denigrate the views and motives of transgender people and others who disagree with her opens the door to the scapegoating, the condemnation and the imposition of a gender complementarity adopted by religious traditions and by gender-critical groups. Although transgender people are now relatively well accepted in the United Kingdom. it is these which have destroyed and still destroy the lives, not just of transgender people, but the lives of numerous gender and sexually variant people in many countries. And in

⁵⁹ See for example: Gilchrist, Susan. (2015): *“A Path of My Own”*: Person Centred Care and Support: NHS Transgender and Non-binary Symposium 30 June 2015 <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuF0630q-TransgenderNBSymposiumSlidesSil-30jun15.pdf> . For the Symposium Report see: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuF0630s-FINALSymposiumReport.pdf>

⁶⁰ Gilchrist, S. (2018b): *“Transgender People and Women’s Concerns”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-TransgenderSocialIssues.pdf>

⁶¹ Gilchrist, S. (2019a): *“Divisions: Self-Declaration and Gender Variant People”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-DivisionsSelfDeclaration.pdf>

⁶² Debbie writes frequently for the Spectator <https://www.spectator.co.uk/writer/debbie-hayton/>

⁶³ Debbie Hayton: Transgender Teacher and Journalist <https://debbiehayton.com/>

⁶⁴ See for example: Hayton, Debbie (2020): *“Gender identity is bollocks”* *Spectator, Australia*: 4 April 2020: <https://www.spectator.com.au/2020/04/genderidentity-is-bollocks/> [accessed June 2020] and her other articles.

⁶⁵ Website for Debbie Hayton <https://debbiehayton.com/>

my view it is her one-sided adoption of this gender-critical approach which makes Debbie be seen as a Transgender Apostate, as she herself describes, in many people's eyes.

While I can only give a personal opinion, and not a prescription, I have identified the existence of a high degree of bipolarity, together with the possibilities of remission in these transgender conflicts. It seems to me that those transgender children who have consistently shown an alienation to the gender identification assigned to them from early childhood should be able to proceed, with puberty blockers being offered to them without unnecessary impediment, when they are judged to be required. If that is correctly done, a high correlation between the administration of puberty blockers and onward transition would be expected. However, in those cases where these conditions only become apparent during puberty, much more caution, with careful and correct counselling is needed⁶⁶. And essentially, the high degree of bipolarity in these conflicts must be considered. I believe that this may still allow for the earlier administration of puberty blockers but also require a longer delay in offering cross-sex hormones, until it is as certain as is possible that the decided course is correct.

6:0 Overview

6:1 Gender Recognition Act

A major area of contention at the present time are the proposals to reform the 2004 United Kingdom Gender Recognition Act. This would allow transsexual people to legally redefine their gender identity by changing the registered sex on their birth certificates without requiring a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria and lowering the minimum age from which this can take place without reducing in any way the protections against abuse that are presently in force. Although I fully support these reforms and I agree that the need for a medical diagnosis should not be necessary, I urge that more medical caution is needed. However, this should only be to confirm the long-term stability of a decision to transition, and no arbitrary minimum timescale should be applied. That tallies with my own experiences. I have found that remission can occur and that the treatment which was offered in the past may not always have been correct. Today we do not demand that lesbian or gay couples must undergo an intrusive medical examination of their motives by an anonymous expert panel before they are legally allowed to marry: On the contrary, they are not required to undertake any medical examination and to impose that today would cause an outrage. More importantly, it would attack the trust and the self-acceptance that is needed not just for the couple to manage their relationships, but how they manage their own lives. I agree with the approaches of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions. I do not agree with the viewpoints of the gender-critical groups, who allege that an opposing diagnosis must be made. I argue that the failure in the medical profession to agree on the nature and origin of transgender conditions causes many of these difficulties, and I discuss these issues of reform in detail elsewhere. However, these are disputes and issues which lie within the province of medical concern, and no legislation should arbitrarily be used to enforce or exclude any particular approach.

6:2 Journeys

In this examination I have compared the journeys that transgender people; and male-to-female transsexuals in particular make as emigrants or immigrants who move across the boundaries of a notionally binary gender divide. The success of that move depends on the welcome of those who would receive them at the end of their journey. The long history of sexual abuse, domination, and discrimination by men over women makes that welcome more difficult for some women to accept. But this is not and should not be about domination. It is about where male-to-female transsexuals fit in. For some feminists that is never a legitimate journey, for other feminists the need to make that journey is recognised, but it can never be a journey to be recognised as women, it can only be a journey towards some separate or foreign country or place. For yet others, who I

⁶⁶ See section D:6: *Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria* in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): "Responsibility in Transgender Disputes": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

perceive to be the large majority of feminists, a complete welcome is given, and male-to-female transsexuals, are fully accepted as the women they say they are: Always bearing in mind that these journeys are about how men and women relate to each other in society and that separate protections, where justified and needed on the grounds of biological or reproductive sex remain fully in place.

Religious elements remain very important, and the question to be asked again is *“How did Jesus handle this?”* And that matters whether you believe in Christianity or not. The story of the Centurion and slave in the Bible is the description of how two people made that journey of love and affection across this gender divide, where permission to express that love and affection in any physical act is never denied. The story about eunuchs is also a story of people who make the equivalent journey across the gender divide, where the only qualification is that people live according to the ideals of the Gospel message, and the permission for those who make that journey to engage in any physical act to make this journey more complete is never denied. That same inclusion is expressed both by Paul and Thomas in their attitudes to the requirement for circumcision. Both argued that circumcision in the spirit transcends every physical act.

Some also argue that Paul imposed a complete embargo on accepting the legitimacy of these journeys. What today we understand as homosexuality would not have been understood in first century Middle Eastern societies. Then the boundary which was used was one which separated the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex: And that was applied to male same-sex acts. Paul's coded references to the passages in Leviticus makes it clear that his condemnation of same-sex intercourse applied both to the abuses of power as well as the abuses of sex. So, Paul's condemnation, and the absolute Jewish condemnation contained in Leviticus, and in the Jewish Law, was not intended for the purpose of condemning the act: it was about condemning the abuses of power and the abuses of sex. Jesus also considers this in his teaching in the New Covenant, where in place of the strict condemnations of Jewish Law, all judgements should be made on virtue and love and intention of the acts. Some modern translations of the bible describe Paul's prohibition as that of homosexuality, and so create a totally false impression of the meaning of these bible texts⁶⁷.

However, the acceptance of this teaching becomes more difficult to accept in societies where gender complementarity or gender discrimination continues to be enforced: for any departure from the gendered expectations of those societies continues to be considered as disruptive or disordered acts. It also seems that this difficulty may have been anticipated by Jesus when he added the qualification *“Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”* to his teaching on eunuchs in the Gospel of Matthew. In our gender equal societies of today we have largely returned to the first century distinction that would have been understood by Jesus and Paul. This separates the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex. Instead, we now apply this equally to all men and women alike: And there is no toleration of the abuses of power and the abuses of sex. This is a mission which belongs to a listening Church whose commitment is to spread this full welcome and the vision of inclusion that Jesus gives to each of us now, and to all others, in the Love of Christ.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”* Romans 1:26-27 That misuse occurs in other translations. For example, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 it says: *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”* The first is clearly a condemnation of lust. In many translations of Corinthians, the section on homosexuality simply does not appear. If any, many words are used to describe it, and Paul himself invents a word to describe it which is best translated as *“abusers of themselves with mankind”*. The word *“homosexuality”* first appeared in pamphlet published Karl Maria Kertbeny in Germany in 1869. That definition would not have been understood in the first century world. What Paul would have known and understood are the first century distinctions made between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex. Also, the Jewish condemnations which were concerned with the abuses of power, virtue, and the abuses of sex. Aquinas' disregard of the abuses of power and his adaptation of *“Natural Law”* have turned these into the condemnations, without exception of the acts. Translation drift has also created barriers to many of these understandings. See sections 6:2 and 6:3 of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): *“Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>: Also: Gilchrist, S. (2015e): *“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> Where a more appropriate translation may be that one should not put warrior gear on a woman instead.

⁶⁸ Gilchrist, S. (2017d): *“A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf>

7:0 Impartiality: Government and EHRC Advice

Strictly the analysis I have just presented should not be needed, since the social, clinical, and medical experiences gained, research, and articles published over the last sixty years have clearly shown that these conditions should be managed as personality variations. Also, the methods of managing personality variations and personality disruptions differ so greatly, it should be easy to tell them apart. However, the total denial of access to the experiential evidence, because of the condemnation and criminalisation of all gender and sexually variant behaviour over much of the last millennium, has meant that no such studies could then be made. Today, that is additionally compounded by disagreements within the medical profession, and a paradigm shift in Christian teaching which now determines that all gender and sexually variant behaviour regardless of purpose is condemned as intrinsically disordered and in pursuit of inappropriate sex.

At the present time, this uncertainty is being further accentuated by the actions of the United Kingdom Government who dismiss the views of the Professional Medical Institutions and World authorities as the work of transgender activists, who claim it is not based on credible science, and who attack the integrity of those groups and people who support these views. This is replaced by the pursuit of a gender-critical ideology adopted by a feminist faction, which itself is only one part of the feminist movement: And that raises questions about the objectivity and impartiality of any analysis which is used to justify this position, and to accuracy of the cited research which is used to support just the one approach.

7:1 Government Guidance on Transgender Children

On the 16th. July 2020 the Library of the United Kingdom Parliament published a revised House of Commons Briefing Paper on *“Gender Recognition and The Rights of Transgender People”*. Five days later, on the 21st. July 2020, Liz Truss, then Minister for Women and Equalities stood up in the United Kingdom Parliament and gave her absolute assurance that transgender rights will be protected. In the revised paper, the research in the original paper which had reported more favourably on the use of puberty blocking hormones was removed, and a statement that little is known about their long-term effect was inserted. All reference to the protection of children against transphobic bullying in schools, which had been present in the previous version of the paper was also removed, with no notice being given⁶⁹. A relatively more recent statement by the then Attorney General, Suella Braverman declared that it is lawful for schools to misgender, deadname, ban from some sports, reject from enrolment based on their transgender status, and to refuse any or all other forms of gender affirmation to transgender children. In addition, she stated that to recognise their identities as transgender, would qualify as *“indoctrinating children”*. None of this does anything to redress bullying in schools. The more recent and long-awaited Government guidance on the treatment of transgender children in schools repeats and strengthens many of these assertions. Specific recommendations are that *“boys should be kept out of women’s sports”, “a boy should never be allowed to go into a girls toilet, or vice versa”*. Teachers are permitted to misgender transgender children without penalty. It additionally states that, *“schools and colleges should only agree to a change of pronouns if they are confident that the benefit to the individual child outweighs the impact on the school community. It is expected that there will be very few occasions in which a school or college will be able to agree to a change of pronouns.* It further suggests that it will almost never be appropriate to use pronouns in accordance with a child’s wishes, and that there should be no assumption of allowing any flexibility on school uniform. The current advice also refuses to use the word *“transgender”*. I agree that parents should be informed about any child’s concerns, and that every effort should be made to do so, but to make this an absolute requirement makes it impossible for the school to organise confidential counselling or to respect a child’s privacy whenever this is required. The underlying purpose of this guidance is revealed in the Government briefing paper on this issue, published on the 19th. December 2023 which states *“This guidance is intended to give teachers and school leaders greater confidence when dealing with an issue that has been hijacked by activists misrepresenting the law”*. That statement destroys the impartiality of any approach.

It is understood that the present United Kingdom Government Minister for Women and Equalities, Kemi Badenoch wanted to go further and introduce an outright ban; but she could not do so because this would

⁶⁹ Gilchrist, S. (2020): *“A Comparison Of Changes To The House Of Commons Briefing Paper On “Gender Recognition And The Rights Of Transgender People” Made On The 16th July 2020”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuM0720a-BriefingComparisonDocument.pdf>

break International Human Rights treaties. When Stonewall criticised this new advice as “*Not being fit for purpose*”, Badenoch, lambasted Stonewall by saying it was giving very “*Bad advice*”. When this so-called “*Bad advice*” is the same as that which is now almost universally endorsed by the World Authorities and Professional Institutions. And when the views of these institutions are dismissed by Badenoch as merely the work of “*Transgender activists*”. That verdict also comes despite a freedom of information request, which has revealed that Badenoch “*had failed to meet a single LGBTQ+ group during her time as Equalities Minister, despite telling MPs that she had “engaged extensively” with such organisations*”⁷⁰. When all these matters are considered, the attitude of this Government must be a serious concern. It is a matter of sad co-incidence, that on the day following release of this new advice, on the 20th. December, after an 18-day trial at Manchester Crown Court, a 16-year-old boy from Leigh and a 16-year-old girl from Warrington, were found guilty of murder of Brianna Ghey a 16-year-old transgender schoolmate in the most horrific circumstances. Brianna was described as an “*It*” in their correspondence, and no remorse was shown for any of these acts. The new Government guidance does say that alternative, but separate facilities should be provided for transgender pupils, but also makes it clear that these must never undermine the single-sex facilities that are provided. Far from seeking inclusion and integration this new advice encourages or promotes the separation, bullying, and rejection of transgender children, and it presents them as potential threats to other peoples’ lives.

7:2 Bullying and Protection

This demand for rejection is increased by the attempts, now supported by the present United Kingdom Government, to enforce a diagnosis of perversions or disruptions on transgender people: When these attempts ridicule or deny the legitimacy of all contrary approaches, including the consensus view the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, they can be used to turn the understanding of transgender people from being victims of discrimination and persecution into their condemnations as bullies instead. However, it is hardly surprising that transgender people and particularly their supporters react with anger when gender-critical groups disparage all other approaches and try to enforce the wrong diagnoses and false allegations, which place motives on them which parallel those of sexual abusers; incorrectly claim that they seek power and domination over women, threaten women’s identities, and which do not match the realities of transgender people’s lives. Today these conflicts are marked by the assertion of rights over responsibilities, by the refusal of each side to listen to, or attempt to understand the views of the other, and to build mountains on their own fears and concerns. And this applies to both sides. That I argue is why the experiences of bullying arise. Suzanne Moore makes the assertion that she was being bullied by 338 of her colleagues for her adoption of a gender-critical approach⁷¹. Debbie Hayton claims that her rejection from the mainstream of the transgender community is because similar bullying has occurred⁷². This is, even though they may believe that they are protecting women’s identities and transgender people’s lives. A similar allegation is also made in the recently issued United Kingdom Government advice on the treatment of transgender children, where it states *This guidance is intended to give teachers and school leaders greater confidence when dealing with an issue that has been hijacked by activists misrepresenting the law*. A call is made that “*more research is needed*”, but this means that the clinical, medical, and experiential evidence gained over the last sixty years must also be denied. Extended reviews of the peer-reviewed literature and the many papers on this topic universally conclude that transgender people are the victims of this bullying: None allege that they are bullies instead.

The new advice does state that there should be no bullying of transgender people, but apart from this exhortation, it does nothing in any way to restore the protections against it which were previously included in the documents withdrawn from the House of Commons Library in July 2020. This tenor of this current advice should also be compared with the current moves by the present United Kingdom government, supported by the United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission, to amend the 2010 Equality Act. This would have the intention of enforcing or legalising a complete ban on all male-to-female transsexuals entering any spaces or services normally reserved for women, entirely on biological sex. It is made clear that it would exclude transgender people without the need for any objective justification, regardless of their appearance,

⁷⁰ Reported on page 9 of the “I” newspaper, February 2004.

⁷¹ Moore, Suzanne: (2020): “Why I had to leave The Guardian If you were bullied by 338 colleagues, what would you do?” *Unherd*: <https://unherd.com/2020/11/why-i-had-to-leave-the-guardian/>

⁷² Hayton, Debbie (2024): “*Transsexual Apostate: My Journey Back to Reality*” Forum (8 Feb. 2024) ISBN-10: 1800753098 ISBN-13 978-1800753099

the possession of a gender recognition certificate, the length of time since they transitioned, or the innocence or appropriateness of their behaviour. If these criteria were to be applied in any other areas, for example on the grounds of ethnicity, race, colour, or religious belief, it should be seen to drive a coach and horses through any equalities or human rights legislation. But by defining transgender conditions as sexually motivated perversions or disruptions of (male) homosexuality, and by refusing to use the word “*transgender*” in any of its documentation, the EHRC claims to remove all transgender conditions from the protections of the current 2010 Equality Act. At the recent Conservative Party conference, it was also announced that the Government intends to change the National Health Service Constitution so that the same restrictions and provisions would be enforced within that organisation. Currently the new advice on transgender children is open for consultation. Schools, parents, and other educational groups are invited to contribute, but those organisations actively involved in transgender matters are not. The consultation closes on 12th March 2024, and it is important that responses should be provided⁷³.

7:3 Research and Evidence Base

These challenges mean that the claimed evidence base used by gender-critical groups must also be questioned. A recent report by Cambridge University, commissioned by Stonewall on attitudes to schoolchildren is violently attacked by UK gender-critical groups, who focus their criticisms on condemning the methodologies involved. And on just one other paper. While it is possible for methodologies to be suspect in individual cases, that is hardly likely to be true when identical conclusions are reached in the numerous separate and independent studies that have been carried out on adults and on children throughout the world. Other attempts to use a limited number of selected peer reviewed research papers to prove male-to-female transsexuals are generators of their own misfortunes and are at least likely, if not more likely, to engage in violence against women, are strongly denounced by lead authors of the papers that are used. Collecting data on small numbers of prisoners who claim to be transgender, and then applying this to the general population without adjustment, does not meet the requirements of any reliable statistical analysis. It has been pointed out by various authors that these figures can be increased by the known actions of other prisoners who claim to be transsexual to gain access or advantage. Other peer reviewed literature shows that an increase may also occur in the general population because the social victimisation and the limited opportunities for employment of this group can force people into less desirable occupations. Many reports, statements, and evidence, including some key documents, produced by the United Kingdom Professional Medical and Clinical Institutions acting in unison are never referred to: And there is no evidence that these have ever been considered.⁷⁴

One major meta-study covering a systematic review of all the peer-reviewed articles assessing the effect of gender transition on transgender well-being found that 97 percent of the investigations showed that stresses due to gender dysphoria are relieved. Not one of these studies concluded that gender transition causes any overall harm. However, most of these studies show that overall trauma after transition does not always decrease, although trauma caused directly by the gender conflict almost universally does. That strongly suggests that it is not transgender people who create their own misfortunes: it is instead created because of the vilification and persecution by others, which may be expected to increase or continue after transition takes place. It is true that some notorious instances of abuse by people who are mainly prisoners, and who claim to be transsexual, are encountered. Although these cases are rare, they are highlighted and taken to represent the whole transgender population.

Contrary to these allegations, the evidence from the professional medical studies identifies much lower rates of abuse. There is also no body of court records or peer-reviewed papers which could permit justification for simply extending the same allegations to the general population. From the information available, the reverse instead is indicated⁷⁵. The threatened increase in abuse, which was predicted by gender-critical groups in

⁷³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gender-questioning-children-draft-schools-and-colleges-guidance>

⁷⁴ See: Part 8: *Current Disagreements* in Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions*” (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf> Also in Gilchrist, S. (2023): “*How to Trash the Economy, Transgender Identities and Human Rights*” <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/255P-HowToTrash.pdf>

⁷⁵ For a full discussion, see section D4 onwards in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): “*Responsibility in Transgender Disputes*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

those countries which have already made it easier for transgender people to get legal recognition of their identities, does not occur. And this does not suggest that any such connection can be made. Something similar occurs when the proportion of those people who have regretted transition are discussed. As I have argued remissions can occur. However, the reasons for these and the incidences of relapse are never considered. Gender-critical groups allege that these figures of regret are very high, but gender identity clinics and others state low values⁷⁶. Where mistakes have been made these should be properly highlighted, and remedial action must be taken, but the incidence of violence, victimisation, and abuse against transgender people, notably in prison, greatly exceeds those instances for whom the reverse may be the case.

7:4 Discrimination

Even though transgender people are generally well accepted by many in United Kingdom society, it remains commonly recognised that they are still one of the most vilified groups. That is seen in the already high and now increasing incidences of hate crimes against transgender people in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Currently the United Kingdom Home Office attributes at least part of this increase to the virulence of the present disputes and it only takes a minority to victimise another minority group. This conclusion is further supported by many independent reports, conducted across international boundaries and countries, which consistently show similarly high rates of discrimination and attacks. None of this discrimination is cited in any way as matters of concern in the present UK EHRC advice, and no recommendations for its prevention are provided. On the contrary, people are permitted to exclude transgender people from facilities by popular vote. In place of vilification by others, the present EHRC advice implies that transgender people are the generators of their own misfortunes: And this is claimed to be the cause of the trauma that occurs. It further tries to claim that gender, but not sexually, variant identities are perversions or disruptions of sexuality instead of expressions of identity. That requires these conditions to be diagnosed as personality disruptions, so that the role of the core gender identity, and the relevance of the clinical, medical, scientific, and experiential evidence gained over the last sixty years must be discredited, dismissed, or denied.

Instead of taking heed of these inconsistencies, gender-critical groups and the present UK Government continue to identify the opposition to their arguments as the work of transgender activists, ignore the statements of the professional institutions, and condemn them as the products of conspiracy theories and transgender activists. The unconstrained attacks that Katherine Scott, who is probably the best-known academic in the United Kingdom for promoting gender-critical theories, makes on Stonewall, in concert with the attacks of others, and by using social media, do not just condemn Stonewall, they also attack the understandings of these professional institutions and world authorities, because Stonewall associates itself with the same views. Over 600 professionals and academics in an open letter have condemned Stock's actions and the theories she pursues. Similar attacks on transgender people are mounted by the Roman Catholic Bishops Council in the United States⁷⁷, and by others elsewhere. Attempts by Paul McHugh in the United States of America to impose the same views on religious grounds have likewise been condemned by many of his peers.⁷⁸

7:5 Policy Changes and Human Rights

At current Government level it would be hoped that an objective and impartial view of this medical, scientific, and experiential evidence, and of the current research would be taken, but this appears not to be the case. The disbanding of Government sponsored LGBT advisory groups, initially under Liz Truss, when she was the government minister responsible for Women and Equalities, the refusal to meet with, to consider the views, or heed the warnings of the House of Commons Select Committee on Women and Equalities, which has commissioned many reports, reviews, and scientific investigations into the methods of management, treatments, and the legislation needed for transgender people. Other instances include the quiet withdrawal of

⁷⁶ Transition regret. See section D:7: *Transition Regret*, and section D:8: *Transition Counselling and Advice*, in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): "Responsibility in Transgender Disputes": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

⁷⁷ See Part 7: "Attacks" in Gilchrist, S. (2022): "Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions" (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

⁷⁸ See Section D:8: *Transition Counselling and Advice* in Gilchrist, S. (2020b): "Responsibility in Transgender Disputes": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/248P-Responsibility.pdf>

documents in the House of Commons Library and their replacement with others supportive of a more gender-critical approach. Also, the re-editing or issue of supplementary documents in ways which are intended to question the veracity of previous research. These actions all suggest the destruction or discrediting of an already existing evidence base, rather than any requirement for new research. Much of this experience and evidence had already been collected and collated by the United Kingdom House of Commons Women and Equalities Parliamentary Select Committee. This committee has strongly supported the approaches of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, including the proposals to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition act to make it easier for transgender people to gain legal recognition of the gender identity. Which would also remove the intrusive and the now considered medically inappropriate diagnosis of these conditions. This movement for reform had strong Government support from the previous Conservative administration under Teresa May. And, up to 2019, the same reforms were additionally endorsed by the United Kingdom Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Since then, a complete reversal has taken place. The near universal outcry when the Government stated its intention to exclude any ban on conversion therapy for transgender people in a bill originally intended to prohibit this practice for all LGBT people on the grounds that *“more research is needed”*, is not only a refutation of this reversal; it is also a statement of the magnitude and reliability of the experiential evidence that already exists. It is true that more rigorous *“double blind”* research is required to show definitively how transgender conditions vary, but these are ethically difficult to conduct. Nevertheless, all of these arguments that *“more research is needed”*, fall flat when the vast amount of clinical, medical, and experiential evidence gained of the last 60 years, is ignored, dismissed, or denied by government policies and by gender-critical groups⁷⁹. In one of these documents, I compare my own approach, which relies on that of the Word Authorities and with Debbie Hayton, who I know, who adopts a gender-critical approach⁸⁰.

Transgender issues are largely hidden and frequently misunderstood because it is only transgender people and those who support them who need to separate the existence and impact of the core gender identity from that of the gender role. These advancements take place before conscious awareness appears, so for most people it is natural to assume that unless some perversion or disruption occurs, gender identity should always be congruent with biological sex. Stock's arguments, and those of these gender-critical groups are perfectly logical within the bubble or tribes of their own perception. That is provided an approach of gender complementarity is adopted. And that largely coincides with the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. Therefore, the dismissal of any other explanation, including the understandings of the Professional Medical Institutions, can rely on fears that are created without demanding an objective approach. This is described in Butler's paper, where she says of the gender-critical movement: *“it mobilizes a range of rhetorical strategies from across the political spectrum to maximize the fear of infiltration and destruction that comes from a diverse set of economic and social forces. It does not strive for consistency, for its incoherence is part of its power”*. The same processes are seen to be active in the United Kingdom in the *“War on woke campaign”* of the present United Kingdom Government, which attempts to discredit or disregard expert opinion in pursuit of populist viewpoints, whenever disagreement occurs. Gender-critical groups face a further contradiction. If the depth and legitimacy of transgender and transsexual identities are to be accepted, then the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is discredited. If the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is instead accepted, then the depth and integrity of transgender identities must be denied.

Perhaps Suzanne Moore, one of the prominent advocates for the gender-critical approach, reveals this when she said *“Why did I speak up? I have no hatred or fear of trans folk. As a feminist, I would argue that gender is*

⁷⁹ See: Part 8: *Current Disagreements* in Gilchrist, S. (2022): *“Christian Communities, Transgender People and Christian Traditions”* (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/037B-PresDoctrinesDisputesTransPeople.pdf>

⁸⁰ For my own take on conversion therapy see Gilchrist, S. (2019a): *“Divisions: Self-Declaration and Gender Variant People”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-DivisionsSelfDeclaration.pdf> and: Gilchrist, S. (2018d): *“Self-Declaration and Gender Diverse People”*: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-SelfDeclarationSubmission.pdf> (Submission for the consultation on the reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act) In the first of these articles I compare my own understanding with that of Debbie Hayton and one other, both of whom I know and with whom I have worked together in the past. Although I disagree with Debbie, and depreciate the way she presents her views, there is no other disagreement between us I am aware of. However, her adoption of a gender-critical approach and her dismissal of all others to me mind only emphasises the need for a truly impartial and objective approach. She is currently publishing her understandings in Hayton, Debbie (2024): *“Transsexual Apostate: My Journey Back to Reality”* Forum (8 Feb. 2024) ISBN-10: 1800753098 ISBN-13 978-1800753099

*socially constructed, and it can be reconstructed*⁸¹. If that is the case then: along with the feminist pioneers, gender identity should be a matter of choice for everybody. But this is not what is adopted by members of the gender-critical movement. Although these groups deny the separate existence of gender identity, they associate all of the behaviours and allegiance which create it entirely with biological sex. That gives rise to unfounded ideologies and allegations. These include the definition of a false “*gender ideology*” which states that transgender people alone believe that they can “*choose, change, or deny biological sex*”. It is also why the same groups insist on defining women as “*adult human females*”, and no other definition is allowed. It is why male-to-female transsexuals who identify themselves as women are claimed to be seeking power over women; are intent on destroying women’s identities and are attacking their sex-based rights. It is additionally why transgender people are alleged to be determined to remove all of the legal protections on the privacies and protections for reproductive or biological sex in supporting reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition act. There was no change proposed in the Act, none expected, and these must always be provided. It is also why allegations that reforming the gender recognition act will result in many males intend on invading women’s private spaces which, despite the evidence, continue to be made. It is why gender critical groups seek to impose methods of management which are believed to protect transgender people from their own delusions, and also to protect women and girls from potential transgender sexual attacks.

All of these concerns arise from presumptions that gender identity is purely as collectively created construct which is determined entirely through interactions with then gender role. This includes the denial of the processes which create the core gender identity and the huge changes in cognitive and neural development patterns which take place during the first three to four years of life. Other explanations are dismissed as not being based on credible science and dismissed as the work of transgender activists. The integrity of transgender people, and those who present them is denied. This attitude is seen in the present United Kingdom Government policies, in gender-critical feminist groups, and in the writings of various authors who take the gender-critical approach. It is true that much of this disagreement arises through the similar failure of many psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists to take account of these neural advances: However, the clinical, medical, and experiential evidence gathered over the last sixty years, together with the differences in behaviour. should be able to ensure that the correct protocols are adopted. And when the consequences of these early developments are accepted, instead of being rejected, the approach of the Professional Medical Institutions and the World authorities which consider transgender conditions to be: “*naturally expected variations of the human condition, intrinsic to the personality created, arising very early in life, and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life*”, falls into place⁸².

With such profound disagreements it is absolutely essential that the arguments of all sides are equitably considered but that does not happen. I hold a letter from Dominic Raab, then Secretary of State for Justice, Deputy Prime Minister, and Lord Chancellor in the UK Government assuring me that transgender rights will be protected. However, in the present Government policy and in gender-critical groups we hear the views and arguments of only one side. The effect of denying the advances in science, theology, neurology, psychology. clinical, medical, or experiential evidence which has taken place since the 1960’s, is to turn the clock back to a time when all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour without exception could be regarded as sexually motivated depravities, which are intrinsically disordered and deny the gift of life.

Even then, these largely religious condemnations always censured behaviour, never identity. The current EHRC advice which now approves exclusion of transgender people by popular vote, and on any other ground such as religion or sex, from resources and facilities, spaces, and services without any need for objective justification, regardless of their appearance, the possession of a gender recognition certificate, the length of time since they transitioned, or the innocence or appropriateness of their behaviour, goes further than this: instead of exclusion by behaviour, it excludes transgender people on the basis of identity. And if the present United Kingdom Government gives this advice legal effect through its plans to amend the 2010 Equality act, it will reinforce the concerns about its willingness to protect all our human rights.

⁸¹ Moore, Suzanne: (2020): “Why I had to leave The Guardian If you were bullied by 338 colleagues, what would you do?” Unherd: <https://unherd.com/2020/11/why-i-had-to-leave-the-guardian/>

⁸² See the presentation series; Gilchrist, S. (2022): “*Transgender Disputes, Conversion Therapy and Government actions*” (Presentation): <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/254p-PresTransDisputesAndGovActions.pdf> These are annotated presentations where full references to original sources are given.

7:6 Transgender People and Gender-Critical Feminism

Earlier in, section 3 of this account I have suggested that transgender people should be regarded as victims in what is primarily a feminist dispute. And much of the intensity of these conflicts may lie in the challenges to the legitimacy of gender-critical ideologies that transgender people present. The rights and safety of women must be an absolute and irreducible priority, but it is where transgender people fit in that is instead the primary focus of these disputes.

Few people ever need to give any serious thought about how any man, or a woman should be defined. Most people make the distinction on demeanour, appearance, how men and women relate to each other in society, or on biology, and simply use the one that is most appropriate at the time. And in instances where biology should be specifically defined the terms male and female are available to use. The primary aim of the feminist pioneers was always to ensure that men and women were equally treated in society, so their distinctions between men and women were based on how people socially related to each other. And any handicapping by biology was diminished. It is only necessary to look at how all of the feminist pioneers including Judith Butler and Simone De Beauvoir, defined the word “*woman*” in terms of the performance of gender to see how this was done, and when Suzanne Moore said “*Why did I speak up? I have no hatred or fear of trans folk. As a feminist, I would argue that gender is socially constructed, and it can be reconstructed*”⁸³ she was repeating the same thing. That is confirmed in the gender-critical definition which states that gender identity is purely a collectively related social construct that is determined entirely by association with the gender role. And this means that social identification for everyone, which includes use of the terms men and women, transgender etc are matters of choice. This is where a contradiction occurs. Although gender-critical groups continue to deny the separate existence of gender identity, they instead assign the behaviours and allegiances that would have established it indissolubly to biological sex. This creates boundaries which cannot be crossed, and the definition of a woman as an adult human female is now the only one that can legitimately be used. Thus, in place of the egalitarian principles adopted by the feminist pioneers an approach of gender complementarity is established.

However, neither definition on its own is satisfactory. On the one hand making gender identification merely a matter of choice leads to excessive instability. While on the other it leads to cloning instead. In section 4:6 of this account I have shown that, although strong and stable core gender identities are created for everyone in the same way they need not always follow biological sex. Since these only define a sense of belonging and not behaviour it follows that all women, including male-to-female transsexuals: acting as women with women, can equally pursue the same feminist arguments with the same vigour, from a stronger base. Equally any female-to-male transsexuals: acting as men with men, can equally pursue any equivalent male arguments from a similarly stronger base. Because the core gender identity can be described as an inner sense of belonging without behavioural implications, it further means that gender-critical ideology, whichever way it is interpreted, must be the less effective approach.

8:0 Where are we now?

8:1 Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender People

In the previous sections of this article, I have compared transgender people to immigrants or emigrants who journey across a gender divide, and the purpose of this section is to review some of the issues that have earlier been uncovered. What is seen as a departure for one is a homecoming for the other. When gender-critical groups argue that transgender people cannot make that journey because for everyone the boundaries of biology and gender are unbreachable, then they must do the same for lesbian and gay people. Lesbian and gay people cannot be exempt from this journey because both involve the same crossings. So, for both groups the legitimacies of both journeys must either be either accepted or denied. While the outcome for one is gender identity which is measured in terms of the social interactions with society, the outcome for the other is expressed in love and relationships in life. Thus, it follows in logic that lesbian and gay people should be

⁸³ Moore, Suzanne: (2020): “Why I had to leave The Guardian If you were bullied by 338 colleagues, what would you do?” Unherd: <https://unherd.com/2020/11/why-i-had-to-leave-the-guardian/>

considered the greater threat, and that is often the case in many religious and social traditions. We have seen that gender-critical groups try to get round this difficulty by using autogynephilic theories which present transgender conditions as sexually motivated perversions, paraphilias or disruptions of male homosexuality. On the one hand, this demands that for lesbian and gay people, the advances in understanding, social acceptance, and experiential evidence gained of the last sixty years must be accepted: But on the other hand, the same advances in understanding, social acceptance and experiential evidence for transgender people must instead be discredited or denied. That differentiation is simply not supported, either in this analysis, or within the current scientific consensus, both of which show that, though each may go their different ways, gender, and sexual identities for everyone form as a single complex very early in life.

Quite clearly and rightly all women have every reason to fear male attacks, abuse, coercion, and violence. It affects all women and girls every day of their lives. And a major element in this is the difficulty in distinguishing those males who are truly supportive from those, who may appear to be supportive, but are intent on abuse. There are many who believe that no male can be considered supportive because of biology, and that all males must be considered potential threats. There are arguments presented that nobody who has been brought up as a male could ever be trusted because of their social upbringing and the expectations of male domination and privilege they have received. There are those who argue that to allow male-to-female transsexuals to be accepted into the category of “women”, is as ridiculous as someone who makes the argument that any man can become cow; and expect to be treated as such simply by choice. Far from denying the existence of gender identity, and the allegiances which have created it, gender-critical groups link gender identity and these allegiances indissolubly to biological sex. And that denies the egalitarianism of the feminist pioneers who distinguished men from women through their performance of gender, how they interacted with each other in society, and not by biological sex. All of these arguments fit into the so-called “gender ideology” presented by gender-critical groups, who argue that transgender people believe “they can somehow choose, change, or deny biological sex”⁸⁴. In the United Kingdom we only have to go back about sixty years to how lesbian and gay people were being subjected to similar attacks.

There could be little possibility of change without the knowledge that is now available and for as long as all gender and sexually variant behaviour was severely, criminalised, suppressed, used as the targets for scapegoating, and where all behaviour was invariably understood as disordered acts of grave depravity pursuing inappropriate sex. A transformation in outlook has occurred in countries and cultures where the ability to express these identities has again become available. In many of these countries the legitimacy and strength of same sex marriages is now legally accepted, where lesbian, and gay relationships have come to be regarded as legitimate expressions of love and identity, and not as perversions of sex. Gender-critical groups define gender as a nebulous social construct which is created entirely by the desire to conform to the gender role. This contradicts the views of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions who argue that gender identity is a core element of the personality, which is being created, that it forms very early in life, that it is part of the process of separating the self from the other, its search is for identity, and that its formation precedes the social awareness which is needed to create any association with the gender role. These elements must be denied, to preserve the gender-critical approach. There is also a fundamental contradiction in gender-critical ideology. If the views of the World Authorities and the Professional Institutions are to be accepted then the legitimacy of the gender-critical approach is denied. And if the ideologies of the gender-critical approach are to be accepted then transgender conditions must be identified as sexually motivated perversions, paraphilias or disruptions from a biologically or divinely ordained path of development, and the depth and integrity of these identities is denied.

It follows that if gender-critical groups must succeed in denying the advances in science and understanding which have taken place in relation to all gender and sexually variant conditions over the last sixty years for transgender people... while continuing to accept them for lesbian and gay people, if they are to be able to justify their ideology. These denials can take many forms which have been described in this account, which Butler also describes in her article. However, Butler also states that: “*The anti-gender movement is not a conservative position with a clear set of principles. No, as a fascist trend, it mobilizes a range of rhetorical strategies from across the political spectrum to maximize the fear of infiltration and destruction that comes*

⁸⁴ See for example: Gilchrist, S. (2021a): “Gender Identity, Feminism, and Transgender People”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/250P-GenderIdentityAndTrans.pdf>

from a diverse set of economic and social forces. It does not strive for consistency, for its incoherence is part of its power⁸⁵. Here, Butler argues that much of the force of the present attacks involve the fears of the unknown that are created. Gender-critical groups argue that they welcome male-to- female transsexuals, provided they do not describe themselves as “women”. But that simply takes them to a different place. That separation is further enforced by using slogans such as “Transgender women are men” and by refusing to define women as anything more than their biological sex. Gender-critical groups justify their welcome for transgender people on the grounds that these sexual motives are sublimated and are turned inwards towards themselves. This means that their motives are still considered to be those of sexually motivated perversions, paraphilias or disruptions from a biologically or divinely ordained path, where women’s pronouns cannot legitimately be used. And it enforces a separation which provides a breeding ground for the attacks, abuses, and the sexual and religious scapegoating of transgender people by society. To see the effects, it is only necessary to look at the laws in many countries where the expression of any form of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender behaviour is made subject to very severe legal penalties, where in some cases, the death penalty is applied. Butler uses the word “fascist” in her description. That is a strong word, but there is evidence in many countries, and some in the United Kingdom that right-wing political groups, neo-fascist organisations and religious conservatives are coming together to ensure that these condemnations are applied.

However, it is not only the attitudes of gender-critical feminist groups that must be considered. There is also the continuing disregard of the advances in neurological science which from the 1990’s has shown that early development is dominated by the actions of innate neural forces, where the which are active from birth. The transformation in outlook this creates is still dismissed by many practitioners in psychiatry, psychology, and sociology through their continued use of traditional social learning and psychodynamic theories, where cognition alone is presumed to provide the driving force propelling development. And where the motives instead are desires of sex. them. Recognising the impact of these forces transforms the role of cognition from one which is understood to provide the primary driving force for development to one whose role is to create order out of disorder by keeping these innate neural forces increasingly in check. This dismissal, together with the pursuit of traditional dogmas by religious groups who refuse to consider even the possibility that there could be errors in their present teaching, are likely to major barriers to change. And be causes of the present confusions. However, the greatest barrier of all most likely arises because all of these developments take place before people can be consciously aware of them. This means it is natural for most people to assume that gender and sexual identities should always be congruent with biological sex. As a minority group, the nature of gender and sexually variant conditions may also be too easily misrepresented, and not be well understood.

It is not surprising that strong and toxic conflicts occur when the methods of management for personality variations and personality disruptions differ, to the extent that what one side considers to be an approach of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably considered to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other. With difference as great as these it essential to get the diagnoses correct. Today these conflicts are marked by the assertion of rights over responsibilities, and by the refusal of each side to listen and hear, or to give the opportunity to listen, to the other: and this applies on both sides. And this means that a rigorous and impartial examination of all of the conflicting arguments must be undertaken. That does not happen. Earlier in this document we have seen that the approaches of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions are dismissed as the work of transgender activists, are claimed not to be based on credible science and the motives of those presenting them are attacked. On the evidence I have presented, I have shown that selective use of science and research is used in attempts to prove that male-to-female transsexuals are generators of their own misfortunes and are at least likely, if not more likely, to engage in violence against women. The statements and other evidence produced by these professional organisations including the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), are discussed only to discredit them. Their evidence is never seriously examined, and their statements are never referred to, or are ignored. No research can have any validity if the hypothesis it seeks to prove is incorrect. The argument is made that “more research is needed”. But that fails to have any validity when, the views on the professional organisations are disregarded, documents are removed or edited to cast doubt on existing research, and

⁸⁵ Butler, Judith, (2021): “Why is the idea of ‘gender’ provoking backlash the world over?” *the Guardian* 23 October 2021. See Discussion of Butler in Gilchrist, S. (2022): “No Blacks, No Irish, No Homosexuals, No Transgender People”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/252P-NoBlacks.pdf>

expert advice is not consulted. I conclude that all these efforts are being made to discredit other approaches to claim proof of a gender-critical ideology. So, instead of attempting to discover a fair and balanced view which considers all opposing approaches, only one theory is adopted, and this supports the gender-critical viewpoint.

The denial of the research and the experiential evidence which has become available over the last sixty years, and the attacks on the integrity of those people who dare to present an opposing view, destroys any hope of an objective approach. These denials also take us back to a time when in line with Christian condemnations, all gender and sexually variant behaviour was being condemned, as intrinsically disordered acts of grave depravity which threaten others, and particularly children, in the pursuit of inappropriate sex. Also, to a time when Margaret Thatcher was launching her own attack on the legitimacy of lesbian and gay relationships, including the popular viewpoint that children should not be taught about transsexuality or homosexuality until some appropriate *“age of maturity”* is reached. That is potentially disastrous, because the time when all gender and sexually variant children and their parents most need help to manage these conditions occurs from early childhood, not later in life. Like the infamous *“Clause 28”* introduced by Margaret Thatcher to condemn *“pretend homosexual relationships”*, it attacks the very foundation stones upon which self-acceptance, self-esteem and self-identity are built.

Almost exactly the same attitudes presented today in the advice which the present United Kingdom Government, the EHRC, and gender-critical groups are now presenting in relation to transgender people: And that arises from the fundamental misdiagnosis of these conditions. In place of compulsive searches of identity it alleges that these conditions are driven by underlying sexual motives where fears of predation, grooming, and recruitment arise. And it implies that all transgender people, including children, should be treated as potential threats: Most notably by enforcing their automatic exclusion of many services and spaces normally used by women. And by seeking to introduce legislation to enforce such separations, purely on the grounds of biological sex. In place of promoting inclusion, the present advice promotes the opportunities for exclusion which can be justified on the basis of popular vote, and by identity alone. It states that the rights of transgender people must be fully protected and there must be no bullying: It further states that where possible alternative spaces or facilities should be provided: But it no longer gives any statement about if or how these requirements should or must always be enforced. In place of all previous and current understandings, repeated on a worldwide basis, and across international boundaries which, over centuries have made or recognise all gender and sexually variant people, to be one of the most victimised groups in society, it transfers the condemnations of guilt, which should belong to the abusers to the victims instead, and it presents transgender people as the bullies in the current disputes. The EHRC states that it cannot adequately define what the word *“transgender”* means and asks the Government to define it for them. However, it also uses the argument that transgender conditions are perversions or disruptions of a biologically or religiously ordained path of development. And therefore, these conditions, and *“gender identity”* should not be recognised as a *“protected characteristic”* under the 2010 United Kingdom Equality Act.

In a letter to the Guardian on the 20 Feb 2022, defending the EHRC, Baroness Falkner, the Chair of the EHRC, said: *“Where we have modified our position on self-ID for trans people or the Gender Recognition Act, we have done so because new evidence about the tension between trans and women’s rights is emerging”*. These are very sensitive issues in a conflict where I sense that any attempts by either side to accept that there is a genuine belief in the arguments the other believes in, are lost... Where on the one hand the diagnosis of personality variations, now universally adopted by the World Authorities and Professional Institutions, identifies the creation of transgender identities as inwardly focussed and compulsive searches for identity involving the rejection of what is wrong, and do not threaten others: Against the views of opposing gender-critical feminists who, along with many religious groups, instead identify transgender conditions as sexually driven but sublimated personality disruptions, involving motives and feelings of behaviour and desire. Since both the motives and methods of management profoundly differ... to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded as one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other. Therefore, it is or should be the absolute duty of the EHRC or any watchdog Human Rights body to take an objective view of all conflicting viewpoints, and to ensure that all of these are fully protected. Although the EHRC has taken strong action in individual cases, I argue that the failure is one of policy instead. In place of any consideration of the viewpoints of the World Authorities and Professional Institutions about how transgender people and male-to-female transsexuals in

particular should be included within the normal frameworks of society, the advice, which is now given, both for children and adults, ignores their conclusions and maximises the opportunities for exclusion to be enforced.

It is precisely this exclusion and separation from the normal framework of society, which may have encouraged the murderers of Brianna Ghey to engage in their actions: And it is the endorsement of this exclusion in the present Government advice on how children should be treated must cause the greatest concern. It is equally reprehensible for the present Prime Minister Richi Sunak to either apologise or withdraw the comment he made in the House of Commons which supported this Government's gender-critical policies, particularly when he understood the mother of Brianna was present in the Public Gallery. And it is these failures alone should demand an urgent review of the present Government approach.

Although these concerns in the United Kingdom today relate particularly to transgender adults and children, that is only because the experiences of how lesbian and gay people live their lives have already enabled these transformations to occur. Transgender groups cannot be exempt from this journey because both involve the same crossings. And, for both groups the legitimacies of both journeys must either be either accepted or denied. For as long as both sets of conditions are considered to be sexually motivated perversions or disruptions from a biologically or divinely ordained path of development, both groups will continue to be subjected to the same religious and secular scapegoating. And to the same, sometimes extreme, levels of abuse, persecution, criminalisation, and attacks... not just in the United Kingdom, but in many countries throughout the world.

But that is not the only issue. Currently the United Kingdom Government is pursuing strategies which may involve complete or partial withdrawal of the international and European Conventions on Human Rights in order to proceed with its policies. If that were to happen it would leave only domestic legislation to protect the human rights for all of us. When on the basis of this present evidence, the Government has already interfered with this domestic legislation enshrined in the EHRC to pursue its own policies on transgender matters, we must be aware of the extent to which the human rights of all of us are being destroyed: and take action to ensure that no such destruction takes place.

9:0 Avoidance and Denial

These are not disputes where any side should be assumed to have evil intent. They are best seen as arguments between two groups of people who earnestly seek the best interests of transgender people, but who come to two very different and opposing views about how transgender children and adults should be treated because of the diagnoses that are made. The attempts by gender-critical and religious groups to enforce an ideology which associates the motives of transgender people with those of sexual abusers, and with those who seek power over women, already creates fears about transgender people's intentions. The angry responses of transexual and transgender people to these challenges further, increases these fears. So that the perpetrators of these conflicts also become infected by the fears they create. These are conflicts which are largely driven by the fears and anger of both sides. However, the major concerns and the great harms arise when either or both sides decide to defy, manipulate, discredit motives of opponents, and to deny any form of impartial arguments, analysis, or discussion to preserve their own ideological approach. Any attempts to avoid, deny, delay to procrastinate or to defer in facing up to any conflict where the motives and methods of management of personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, is simply going to increase the intensity of the disputes.

When the motives and methods of management in these conflicts differ so greatly, no amount of tinkering round the edges or programmes which suggest that these disputes can simply be resolved by philosophical discussion is ever going to work. Yet that is what the Church of England has been trying to achieve in its Shared Conversations Programme and the Living in Love and Faith process. After many hours of intense and acrimonious debate, the Church of England's General Synod on the 15th. November 2023 narrowly approved a proposal by its bishops to allow clergy to bless same-sex relationships in experimental services, for a limited period, while at the same time affirming that there can be no possibility at any time of changing the traditional teaching of the Church. Since 2018, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has routinely barred same sex couples

from communicant membership of their Church. These are all examples of the current retrenchment into traditional teaching in defiance of the greater understandings that now exist. However, these disagreements are not surprising when the Apostles themselves failed to agree, or at least they agreed to differ on how the Gospel message should be brought to different cultures and societies. There could not, was not, and is not, one unified approach.

A major religious concern arises because we draw our arguments from one set of sources, namely the Roman Church. This is why I have looked more closely at the Ancient Church of the East, where the almost perpetual wars between the Roman and Persian Empires, has meant that Christianity in the Persian Empire initially developed largely independently of the Roman Church. It is also why I treat all women and all gender and sexually variant people together in these discussions, since both sets have suffered in similar ways from the effects of gender complementarity, male dominance, suppression, and attacks. However particular difficulties in this examination do arise because the Ancient Church of The East was largely wiped out in the fourteenth Century, and there has been systematic destruction of its literature from early times. In 1599 Synod of Diamper in Goa anathematized the head of the Eastern Churches of Chaldea and all Christians of India who did not submit to Rome. Ancient Churches were destroyed, libraries were burned, and clerics from Mesopotamia were intercepted, imprisoned, and executed. Other earlier instances include the destruction of the library in Alexandria at the hands of Theophilus, who was Patriarch of Alexandria from 385 to 412. For similar reasons, what we today know about the Cathars, and their theology must be largely based what the Roman Church describes. A further concern arises when not long after the end of the first millennium under Aquinas a paradigm shift took place, when the condemnation of all male same-sex intercourse because of the abuses of power and sex, became the unvarying condemnation of this sexual act.

Today, only two copies of the Gospel of Thomas survive. One is a highly fragmentary version in Greek, the other is an almost complete Coptic document from the Nag Hammadi Library in Egypt, which followed a Pachomian monasticism associated with the Ancient Church of the East. This copy probably only survived because it was hidden after an Easter letter penned by Athanasius, the archbishop of Alexandria, in 367 ordered the removal of all non-canonical books. Nevertheless, St Patrick is, and has been very highly regarded in Eastern Orthodox Christianity where he is considered to be equal to the Apostles. See for example, the Apolytikion in the Third Tone: "*O Holy Hierarch, equal of the Apostles, Saint Patrick, wonderworker and enlightener of Ireland: Intercede with the merciful God that He grant unto our souls, forgiveness of offences*". Although we do not have direct access to much of the teaching and theology of the Ancient Church of the East, the Irish Church took much of its inspiration and theological understandings from the Desert Fathers. Thus, we have a bridge through St Patrick, the Desert fathers, and potentially St Thomas, to this Ancient Church. Therefore, if we want to get a better view of how Christianity developed in much more egalitarian societies, we should look much more closely at the Irish Celtic Church⁸⁶.

Transgender people are imagined in this article as immigrants or emigrants who cross a gender divide: And the abuse of any invitation on this journey is as harmful as it's denial. The success of this journey depends on the degree of welcome that is given, and there is little evidence of much welcome in any of the present disputes. For some, this journey may be seen to be an incursion, and an attack on the binary notions of gender and sex, but for transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, it is seen as the coming home instead. For as long as gender and sexually variations are sexually motivated personality disruptions, that journey cannot be made. These quarrels are both disputes about transgender people and the legitimacy of transgender identities within the different feminist groups, and in parallel disputes between all gender and sexually variant people with the various Christian groups. One group tries to use science to justify its arguments. The other group tries to use theology to justify broadly the same goal. Arguments which continue often rely on the fears that are generated. And I consider that this pursuit of fear is a cause of much of the angst that is currently found. The two sets of conflicts interconnect. The acrimony encountered in the recent Church of England General Synod debate on the proposals to introduce limited blessings for same-sex

⁸⁶ These are considered in Gilchrist, S. (2019): "East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): "The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf>

partnerships is matched in intensity, in offensive attacks, and in the uncritical pursuit of ideologies by those that are encountered between transgender people, religious factions, and certain gender-critical groups.

None of this should deny the present-day recognition by many Churches of the need to change. The foreword to the LLF Resource book written by the Archbishops of Canterbury and (then) Archbishop of York stated: *"We have caused, and continue to cause, hurt and unnecessary suffering. For such acts, each of us, and the Church collectively, should be deeply ashamed and repentant. As archbishops, we are personally very sorry where we have contributed to this"*. The continuing expressions of pastoral care and the encouragement of the full inclusion of all gender and sexual variant people, however intensely and genuinely pursued, as on all the evidence it seems to be, is a further positive step. This includes, notably the recent actions of Pope Francis in relation to transgender people. The recent, if limited agreement, to permit experimental services of blessing for same-sex partnerships in the Church of England, and in the Roman Catholic Church. These are again welcome step, but what is too great for some is not enough for others, leading to accusations, condemnations, resignations, and feelings of frustration on both sides.

This urgency of this need for a radical re-think in present day teaching was illustrated in the response the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda gave to the combined visit of Pope Francis, The Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in their attempts to dissuade the Church of Uganda from supporting the draconian laws against gender and sexually variant people currently being introduced in that country. This effort was met with the reaction from Uganda that it is instead the Pope, Moderator and Archbishop were the apostates, because the Church of Uganda was simply upholding the unchangeable traditional teaching of the Church. An equivalent outcome has recently been encountered from Uganda in relation to the recent permissions to conduct blessings of same-sex partnerships in Church. The whole Living in Love and Faith Process conducted by the Church of England has been marred by refusals to communicate, constant repetition, resignations, the refusal of complexity, and the pretence that cruel and exploitative beliefs and practices in following this doctrine are consistent with God's will. As with gender-critical feminist groups, the advances in the scientific, experiential, clinical, medical, and theological understandings gained at least over the last sixty years continue to be denied in pursuit of the theologies and arguments each of these groups create.

However, these responses are not unique. They are echoed by GAFCON (Global Anglican Futures Conference) who represents about eighty percent of the Anglican Communion: and whose stated aim is that of *"guarding and proclaiming the unchanging truth in a changing world"*. Roman Catholic Bishops from many countries, including those in the United States are and have taken same approach. However wrong we see these approaches to be, however sincere and committed the Pope, Archbishop and Moderator may be to achieving these aims, their actions and remonstrations will have little or no effect, for as long as they themselves and their Churches continue to deny even the possibility of any changes to the traditional teaching in their own Churches. Or to work to encourage other Churches to recognise the possibility of the same need throughout the world. At a personal level I have totally supported the principles of the Church of England Love and Faith Process and I have given it, where I can, my total support. However, tinkering round the edges and refusing to consider these more fundamental differences just does not work. That is why I also refused to take a formal role in the Church of England Living in Love and Faith Process: for I believe that any hope of resolving these schisms demands that we look again at the traditional teaching of the Church.

9:1 Condemnations

This refusal to change demands that we must examine relationships between all men and women regardless of the gender identities and sexualities they seek to express. Whatever the ideals of gender complementarity may be, the experiences of history have shown that by using this doctrine, all heterosexual women and all gender and sexually variant people have been subject to social discrimination for centuries by the Christian Church. We have seen that as early as the end of the second century women were no longer allowed to preach, teach, baptise, or perform any *"manly"* function in the Roman Church. In place of this, women have been placed on pedestals, most notably the Virgin Mary, for fulfilling the *"womanly"* role. For the centuries since then, we have created complete social structures in many cultures and societies, which are based on the presumptions that Roman Christianity brought. The commonality this has created has led to the collusion

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of the Churches in those societies with the secular scapegoating of all gender and sexually variant people, together with all others who do not follow the stereotypes of male and female social behaviour that these Christian presumptions expect. That has led to the severe criminalisation and condemnation of all gender and sexually variant people. This has often included the death penalty; and these extreme penalties are justified on religious grounds. Today that division is still seen in the disputes over the ordination of women and the exclusion of gender and sexually variant people from Christian Churches and organisations, where condemnations continue to be enforced on the presumption that those gender and sexually variant people who dare to express their identities are invariably engaging in intrinsically disordered behaviour, in a “*Falling from Grace*” or ideals, and are pursuing inappropriate sex. Gender-critical groups likewise engage in the same types of arguments through their allegations that those male-to-female transsexuals who claim to identify as women are by definition attacking women’s identities, seeking power and domination over women, and are destroying women’s sex-based rights. Yet those universal condemnations should not be, and that is why these issues should urgently be addressed.

10:0 The Ancient Church of the East and Irish Celtic Christianity

Today we have two models for Christianity, both of which, I argue derive equally from Apostolic traditions. Women were still be claimed to be redeemed through the birth of children in the Eastern Church. However, that redemption for all women came through Mary’s consent to give birth to the Christ child. This redemption came immediately for all women, and for all time, unlike the Roman Church, where the reward for that redemption only took place in heaven. Therefore, all women were expected to penance for the sins of Eve during their earthly lives. That contrast identifies how the social framework developed within the Roman Church differs from the egalitarianism encountered in the Gospel of Thomas and in the Eastern Church. This also corresponded to the expectations of Zoroastrian culture and Persian society. It further set the framework for a religious tradition where extremes of asceticism could come to be practiced for the pursuit of the Gospel message. A notable feature in the Gospel of Thomas, is that there is no direct link made between the justifications for celibacy, and the harms of sexual acts, in contrast to the condemnations of sexual practice in the Roman Church, reference is instead made to “*The Solitary Ones*” who are the elect, who are charged with bringing the Gospel message to the world with a single-minded devotion that avoids the distraction of other commitments and family life.

This clear distinction becomes less obvious in some later works and acts that are attributed to Thomas, but which could not have been recorded by him. Both the Ancient Church of the East and the Irish Celtic Churches were founded on monastic traditions. In the Church of the East, this existed in two phases. The earliest evidence of this monasticism is found in the *B’nai Q’yama* and the *B’nat Q’yama* (the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant). This was an ascetic group which began in the third century. However, by the time of Ephraim (c306-393) a strong eremitical (hermit like) second phase had developed. This second phase looked for separation and withdrawal from the world, and it reflected a fundamental move towards the later Egyptian models and the Desert Fathers. Unlike the second phase, this first phase involved community engagement. A further feature of this monasticism is that it specifically included in the same structure those monks who believed they were called to live in isolation as hermits, and those who were fully engaged in community life. These early monasteries functioned like small towns with secular communities gathered round them. Thus the “*Solitary Ones*” were only solitary because of their commitment to the Gospel, and many were fully engaged with the world⁸⁷.

Foremost among the monasteries which followed this earlier tradition was that of Mount Izla, which is now in South-Eastern Turkey. Another was near Nag Hammadi in Egypt, where the Gospel of Thomas was found. Almost exact mirrors of these Eastern monasteries are found in the ancient Irish Celtic Church. Here too, men and women lived together in double monasteries as members of common orders, who were governed by a single abbot or abbess. Although Irish society was similarly strongly divided by social class, men and women were treated much more equally within each group. St Brigid founded a double monastery under her rule in

⁸⁷ Solitary Ones These are considered in Gilchrist, S. (2019): “East and West: A Comparison of How the Apostles Interpreted the Gospel Message in Roman and Persian Cultures”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/035B-EastAndWest.pdf> A further document: Gilchrist, S. (2019): “The Gospel of Thomas: Its Origins and Consequences for Understandings of Theology, Gender and Sex in the Christian Church”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/027B-ThomasAnalysis.pdf>

Kildare, and the three major saints of the Irish Church, Patrick, Brigid, and Colmcille were all given equal status, authority, and respect. Close emotional, though celibate relationships were accepted. These were known as “*Anam Cara*”, or “*Soul Friend*”, and the similarities between relationships expected in a first century Jewish Chavruta partnership should be noted. St Brigid is understood to have a close female companion whose name was Darlugdach, and both were reputed to have slept in the same bed. Another close relationship was that between St Bernard of Clairvaux and St Malachy, bishop of Armagh.

There is surprisingly little condemnation of gender and sexually people within this Irish Christianity. Although St Patrick is reputed to have re-written the previously existing Irish law code to exclude only those aspects which he considered incompatible with Christianity, male-same-sex intercourse still remained legal and accepted, although under this Irish law code there were regulations to protect married relationships and family life. Little or no discussion about gender transformation or homosexuality is found in the Irish Celtic Church. However, that is not because this did not exist. Condemnations of sexual improprieties are found in the monastic penitential texts. The monastic penances required for same-sex intercourse and heterosexual intercourse are broadly comparable to each other, and they are milder than the penances applied to bestiality and abuse. St Anselm, writing as Archbishop of Canterbury between 1093 and 1109, prohibited the publication of a decree by the Council of London in 1102 condemning homosexuality. This urged condemnation of homosexuality in accordance with the latest trends in the Roman Church. St Anselm advised the Council that it was widespread, stating that few were embarrassed by it, and that none were ever aware that the Church considered it a serious matter. Thus, gender and sexuality do not appear to be an issue in the Irish Celtic Church, neither does there appear to be any direct teaching on homosexuality and its relationship to Christianity by any Celtic writer or saint. That leads to the conclusion that, in the Irish Celtic Church and Celtic traditions, homosexual behaviour, same-sex attraction, and gender transformation were things that happened, but they do not seem to have been issues of concern. So, we are now left with a situation in which we have two different traditions for the development of Christianity, which took place independently in different cultures, both with claims for Apostolic origins, but one which endorses an egalitarian approach to the relationships between men and women, and the other which adopts a gender complementarity approach.

10:1 Jesus and Women

The final arbiter in this dispute must lie in the teaching of Jesus himself. In the account of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38–42), Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to his teaching and religious instruction. Not only does this passage show that Mary chose the “*Good part*”, but that Jesus related to her in a teacher-disciple relationship, and he commended her for her choice. The account of the woman at the well in Samaria is highly significant for a number of reasons. By talking openly with this woman, Jesus had crossed a number of barriers which normally would have separated a Jewish teacher from such a person. He did three things which were highly unconventional and astonishing for his cultural and religious situation: As a man he discussed theology openly with a woman, as a Jew he asked to drink from the ritually unclean bucket of a Samaritan, then finally he did not attempt to avoid her. From the beginning of his ministry, Jewish women, which included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, accompanied Jesus during his ministry and they supported him out of their private means (Luke 8:1-3). Of all of the founders of religions and religious sects, Jesus stands alone as the one who did not socially discriminate against women in any way. In the story of the Centurion and his slave, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that when there is true equality and love between two partners, and when all abuses of power are absent, there should be no automatic condemnation of any same-sex relationship, or sexual acts engaged in, when true love and commitment are present. In Isaiah 56:3-5, eunuchs were given a high status within Jewish society. In the Old Testament this passage only applied to those who were castrated by others. However, in Matthew 19:12, Jesus extended the same welcome to all eunuchs who kept the Jewish Law That was regardless of whether they had castrated themselves or not. Both of these stories are in line with the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant, where distinctions are no longer to be made upon performing the letter of the Jewish Law, but upon what it means through love, virtue, commitment, and intention of the acts⁸⁸.

⁸⁸ Gilchrist, S. (****): “*Jesus and Women*”: <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/040B-JesusAndWomen.pdf>

11:0 The Need for Change

11:1 Objections

This should lead us to the conclusion that the teaching of Jesus is one of an egalitarian Gospel, which includes all people in an egalitarian society, and in an egalitarian world. For Thomas, there was relatively little difficulty since a sufficient degree of egalitarianism was already largely present in Zoroastrian culture and Persian society, even though this was stratified by social class. However, Peter and Paul had a much more difficult task in their attempts to gain acceptability of Christianity in Roman society. The need to gain respect and to obey the Roman authorities is constantly emphasised in both Peter and Paul's letters and epistles. This meant endorsing a gender complementarity which would allow the early Church to survive in the culture of that time. I argue in this account that the crucial difference between Peter and Paul was in the endpoint that was sought. For Paul, adopting a gender complementarity was only an essential temporary expedient. And he looked forward to an egalitarian Church, but for Peter it represented what was to become the permanent teaching of the Church. By the end of the second century women were already being excluded from engaging in any "manly" function within the Church, and the diatribes which concentrated on the perceived weaknesses of women, with their unsuitability for roles which asserted "manly authority", and an emphasis on gender complementarity, as highlighted by Peter, became a distressing and disturbing theme within the Roman Church. Through which the effective discrimination and the exclusion of women from positions of ministry and authority under the Church-sanctioned dogma of gender complementarity, has become a continuing feature within the Church.

Even though religious organisations and feminist groups approach these issues from very different perspectives women and gender and sexually variant people have the same needs. That is to counter the male domination, victimisation and sufferings which have been suffered for centuries by both groups. For the feminist pioneers, along with many others today, an egalitarianism was and is expressed where men and women are differentiated from each other through the performance of gender. In these social interactions, everyone is enabled to cross the gender divide. However, by refusing to separate the expressions of gender from the biology of sex, gender-critical groups create a gender complementarity where the acceptable social behaviour for men and women is instead divided by biological sex. These departures from the stereotypical male and female conventions demanded by society are interpreted as being driven by sexually motivated perversions or disruptions, and as disordered behaviour. Egalitarianism includes the celebration of difference; gender complementarity excludes it. And adopting one or the other can depend greatly on the fears of the unknown which are created. In the present febrile atmosphere created by the present high level of attacks against women and the genuine and urgent need for groups like the "me too" movement, it is only natural that women should be very concerned.

By claiming the first of these but by adopting the second, gender-critical movements deny the views of the feminist pioneers and adopt a misleading approach. Most people define the terms "men" and "women" through the ways in which people interact with society. That is the way in which the feminist pioneers, transgender people, and many of today's feminists all use it. But we also have the terms "male" and "female" to refer to the biology of sex. By identifying "women" as "adult human females" and denying any other, the legitimacy of all transgender identities is denied. That leads to the adoption of a totally false "gender ideology" which claims that transgender people can somehow "choose, change, or deny biological sex". By embracing an identification as women, male-to-female transsexuals are alleged to be seeking power over women, attacking their identities, and destroying their sex-based-rights. Thus, nobody can legitimately cross this social and gender divide. Male-to-female transsexuals are also identified as "men" (and vice versa) in many gender-critical statements and literature. Other groups use inappropriate pronouns and may deliberately "deadname" transsexual people.

Today many transgender people use the word "they" in the singular, instead of "he" or "she" to define themselves. But "they" is a gender-neutral collective term: We only have "it" to refer to the singular. And that is the term the murderers of Brianna Ghey, used to describe her. By denying the use of fitting pronouns the advice now being given in the EHRC documentation and in the present United Kingdom Government Policy, including its advice on transgender children and its proposals to change the constitution of the UK National

Health service, do much the same. Nevertheless, gender-critical groups state they extend a welcome to transgender people by arguing that these sexual motives are turned inwards towards themselves. Many more are embracing a non-binary identity and role. While I do support these intentions and freedoms, that is still not the point. The motives are still understood to parallel those of sexual abusers and the conditions are still defined as sexually motivated personality disruptions. As a consequence, fears of predation, indoctrination, and recruitment are generated, and inappropriate methods of management are applied.

In this account male-to-female transsexuals in particular are imagined to be on a journey. The failure by gender-critical groups to believe that these people are genuine in their arguments denies them the possibility of any recognition of the legitimacy of their journey. It does not provide a solution, and it continues the gender wars. The argument that transgender people are deliberately lying is also put forward by some more extreme feminist groups. And trust is totally absent in these disputes. The continued attempts to enforce the diagnoses which, despite the current evidence, still defines transgender conditions... or all gender and sexually variant people in the case of religious organisations as sexually motivated perversions or disruptions of some divinely or biologically ordained path, is not only a feature which is common to these religious and gender-critical groups, it measures the magnitude of the changes in understanding which are required.

11:2 Actions

There are three key areas where these traditional approaches should be challenged. The first is the experiential evidence which was rendered unavailable after the paradigm shift formulated by Aquinas, which disregards the abuses of power in these relationships, and invariably condemns engaging in any form of gender or sexually variant behaviour as sexually motivated acts of grave depravity, intrinsically disordered, which deny the gift of life. That has led to the subsequent criminalisation and condemnation of all such acts, with extreme penalties being imposed on those who engage in these acts. No change was possible for as long as experiential access was denied. Despite this, attitudes to transgender people have been transformed in countries where access to that experiential evidence has again become available. But the same severe condemnations remain in force in many cultures, countries, and religious traditions, where this is not accepted, or is not available. That paradigm shift has also greatly affected all other Church teaching which involves the relationships between power and sex.

The second is the advances in the medical and scientific understanding of these conditions. Although Sigmund Freud, Jeremy Bentham and some others pointed the way, this did not properly become available until the 1960's when the work of Gallesse, Girard, Dawkins and others showed that innate neural forces drive development forward. These pursue a coherence of identity: And that opposes the assumptions of the traditional psychodynamic and social learning theories, which assume that cognition itself acting on a neutral base provides the impetus. Where, in place of seeking a coherence of identity the motives continue to be characterized as desires of sex. Although many of the psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists who are most likely to be involved in gender clinics and the treatment of the distresses experienced by transgender people do now take account of the nature of these changes, others do not: This has led to the disagreements described in this account, and to the toxicity of the present disputes.

The third consideration relies on the interpretation of the Gospel texts. The destruction of much of the evidence which would enable the present understandings to be challenged, when taken together with the beliefs that this teaching is divinely ordained by Jesus, which means it must never be challenged, automatically dismisses, or denies consideration of any other approach. However, by its own admission, this traditional teaching which today is adopted by many in the Church does not depend on any direct statement of Jesus. But upon its own interpretation of the scriptures and on the traditions of the Church. That does allow a challenge to be made. Here, it is not just the theology which has to be considered. For the whole social structures of many societies are based on the same Christian ethics, and on the gender complementarity adopted by the Church.

However, a Jewish Rabbi in Palestine had addressed these same issues just over two thousand years ago. In the story of the Centurion and the slave he showed how relationships of love and commitment can cross the boundaries that sex and gender provide. In the passage on eunuchs, he showed how all people who seek to live to the highest standards of the Gospel Message can also cross the boundaries that sex and gender

provide. In his teaching on the New Covenant, he further stated that his intention was not to change the Jewish Law, but to interpret it in a way where judgement is now to be based on the grounds of love, virtue, commitment, and intention of the acts. Thereby to introduce an interpretation where all people, whether they be heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual who live in ways which are true to their own identities and to the highest standards of the Gospel message are all accepted alike. Where there is no toleration of the abuses of power and the abuses of sex: And where there is no automatic prohibition of any sexual act.

11:3 Moving Forward

Nevertheless, that is not what is today understood by many in the Church and Society. Christianity had to adapt to the expectations of society around it if it was to be able to survive and thrive in an uncomprehending and often hostile world. In Roman society, as early as the second century this egalitarian teaching of Jesus on both social and sexual relationships was well on the way to being changed into the gender complementarity still adopted by large portions of the Christian Church. Fewer of these pressures applied to the Ancient Church of the East where more egalitarian Persian and Zoroastrian cultures prevailed. In this account I have shown how much of this egalitarianism and inclusion in the teaching of Jesus continued to be expressed in this Ancient Church. However, the demise of this Ancient Church of the East and the destruction of much of its literature by the Roman Church has deprived us of a great deal of material that would enable a true comparison to be made. Despite this, we do have a link through the Desert Fathers whose approaches and theologies originated in large part from the Ancient Church of the East: And through them into Irish Celtic Christianity. So, today we can get a better understanding of these differences by comparing the outlook and theology of the Roman Church with that of Irish Celtic Christianity, where the egalitarianism and inclusion that was present in the teaching of Jesus continued to be expressed. Michael Mitton describes how much of that egalitarianism was lost when Irish Celtic Christianity gave way to the authority of the Roman Church in Britain after the Synod of Whitby, held between 663 and 664. It was not just the social relationships between women and men that were affected. The same degrees of inclusion and welcome which had been offered to all gender and sexually variant people in Irish Celtic Christianity likewise came to be diminished and ultimately destroyed.

Some changes may be underway. The attempts of Pope Benedict to reconcile the Church teaching on the Song of Solomon to that of Aquinas and the Greek Philosophers⁸⁹ should be contrasted with the open and inclusive approach which Pope Francis now adopts. The combined visit of Pope Francis, The Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in their attempts to dissuade the Church of Uganda from supporting the draconian laws against gender and sexually variant people currently being introduced in that country, is a sign of hope. The profound apology of the past harm that has been created in the foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York in the Church of England's "*Living in Love and Faith*" documentation is a sign of intention. The introduction of Church blessings for lesbian and gay couples in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches is a sign of progress, but their recent delaying in the Church of England, because some groups threaten schism, is a sign of despair.

12:0 Conclusions

These are sensitive issues. Any incorrect attack or misdiagnosis of transgender conditions becomes seen as attack either on women's identities or transgender people's identities. In this situation, the maximum respect for differing views is needed, and it is essential to get the diagnoses correct. At present I observe there to be a retreat into traditional values, where the now available advances in theology and psychology continue to be denied. I expect many people will consider the arguments I present in this account to be radical reassessments of conventional understanding: I may be wrong; or I may be right in these, that is now for others to judge, but I believe it is important for all views to be heard. It is also the absolute duty of every Government, Church or Human Rights body take full account of all of the views and arguments encountered in any dispute or conflict, and not to try to hide or dismiss their effects. In today what is a strongly contested

⁸⁹ See: "*Deus Caritas Est*" of Pope Benedict XVI, on Christian Love. Also discussed in section 6:2 "*Agape and Love*" of Gilchrist, S. (2011b): "*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*": <https://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>)

dispute, any Government, Church, or any Human Rights Body which is prepared to legislate solely on the grounds of endorsing one set of arguments or theories, while totally disregarding any other, destroys all our Human Rights.

In our present-day gender equal and inclusive societies, we have largely returned to the same teaching on relationships between men and women, gender, and sexuality as that offered by a certain Jewish Rabbi in Palestine just over 2000 years ago. If we wish to establish a Christianity which truly reflects the teaching of Jesus and is appropriate to present day, we must re-examine how we in pursuit of our own exclusions, self-interests, tribal barriers, and ideologies, have destroyed the egalitarian teachings of Jesus, and how we have included these exclusions, self-interests, tribal barriers, and ideologies within the Christian Church. The arguments I present in this analysis both on religious and feminist viewpoints are radical, they may be wrong, or they may be right. But that is not the point. When the motives and methods of management of personality variations and personality disruptions differ to the extent that the approach which one group considers to be that of compassion, acceptance and concern is almost inevitably regarded to be one of grooming, recruitment, and coercion by the other, it is hardly surprising that strong and toxic disputes occur. At the present time there is a retrenchment into false certainty and simple ideology. This is a danger which must urgently be addressed, and it something we must not deny or avoid.

With disagreement is strong as these, it is essential that truly independent and objective and impartial studies which consider all of available evidence are undertaken. That cannot happen when any feminist, medical, and religious group, any Church, Government, or any other organisation seeks to pursue an ideology in defiance or denial of advances in knowledge: including the increasing understanding of science, sociology, history, or other discipline. And who also refuses consider the possible legitimacy of any other approach and dismisses or disparages the motives of those who present them. Equally problematic is the paralysis and inaction which occurs in any organisation, which may genuinely express its good intentions, but who denies or fails to face up to these challenges and advances in understanding and knowledge... and who fails to take them into account. correspondingly important is the harm that is created when misdiagnoses take place, and when the approach of any Government in uncritical pursuit of these ideologies attacks or destroys our human rights. The authenticity of the Gospel of Thomas may rightly be questioned, but the meaning of the statements can remain. In saying 42 Jesus says: "*Be passers-by.*" Many interpretations have been put on this statement, but one argues that this refers to the intransigence and legalism of the Jewish Authorities, to the disagreements between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and to the oppression of this legalism on ordinary people. It reminds us that the Gospel message is found in the egalitarian and radical nature of the teaching of Jesus, as ordinary people... and not just scholars, both then and today, can best understand it. It does not rely in unchangingly preserving the traditions, institutions, and existing doctrines of any Church.

It was Jesus who allowed the Centurion and slave to complete their journeys across the sexual and gender divide without requiring a condemnation of any sexual act... and remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who allowed eunuchs and transgender people to complete their journeys cross the sexual and gender divide, without condemning the need for any surgical intervention... and remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who crossed the cultural and gender divide when he told Mary that by listening to his teaching, she had chosen "*the better part*" ... and remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who crossed the social divide by healing a Jewish woman in public... and remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who crossed the racial and gender divide by discussing theology as an equal with a Samaritan woman... and remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who refused to discriminate against women and refused to deny them opportunities in any way... to remain true to the Gospel message. It was Jesus who, in his teaching in the "*New Covenant*" told us that the judgements of Jewish Law were now to be made on the basis of, love, virtue, commitment and intention of all acts: instead of the legalism that Jewish tradition demanded... to remain true to the Gospel message. It was the Apostles who decided that physical circumcision was no longer required... to remain true to the Gospel message. It was the Ancient Church of the East and Celtic Christianity in Ireland who better preserved all these egalitarian teachings... to remain true to the Gospel message, and that is why we must look closely to the traditions preserved in these teachings... to remain true to the Gospel message.

That also raises particular responsibilities for all of us, who either individually or collectively have closer connections with Ireland and with the teaching and traditions Celtic Christianity. Even though we in the

Corrymeela Community, and other groups such as the Iona Community and the Northumbria Community adopt a fully inclusive Christianity and we make this an essential part of our missions, it also requires to us to work to break down the barriers to change currently being inflicted on many parts of the Christian Church. This includes GAFCON and other conservative elements in the Anglican Communion, the Churches in England and in Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Bishops in the United States, in African Churches and elsewhere, and also individually in the Churches in our own areas. But this does not just apply to us. It applies to everyone. How can you best enable this in your own work?

I am aware that I am presenting a radical and potentially controversial account. But if any argument is to be validated, all of the contesting elements must be fully explored. I may be wrong, or I may be right on any of these matters, but I believe that these are all views which must objectively be heard. If you have any thought-out comments to make please email them to me at spap4144@gmail.com . Please also be aware that all abuse will be reported. Also, I may not respond to every approach.

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