

# LGB and T People: Labels and Faith

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Spectrum is the Home Office Network representing LGB&T staff.

The article was revised on the 23 January 2013 to include additional material extracted from the personal submission to the Church of England House of Bishops Working Party on Human Sexuality<sup>3</sup> and subsequent reports. Further revisions on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015 updated references and section 9:0 "Biblical Labels".

For more recent accounts and biographical information, see: [Gilchrist, S. 2015 d. "Living with Difference"](#)<sup>4</sup>. A complete analysis is given in: [Gilchrist, S. 2015 a. "Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-Think the Process"](#)<sup>5</sup>. For a description of the journey see the poetry anthology: [Gilchrist, S. 2011. "Verses in Search of the Self"](#)<sup>6</sup>.

This is part of a collection of notes, poems and papers which I have put together to help me deal with a conflict I have faced. Much of the material is very personal. However I have felt it appropriate to do this in the hope that my understanding can help others to deal with the same situation. Although they have been released on a website these documents are NOT intended for universal circulation. I would ask for anyone who sees them to treat them in the appropriate way.

Online notes for this paper are available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/notes002B>

## 1:0 Labels

We use labels to identify ourselves all the time. Others apply labels to us too. Sometimes these labels are useful. At other times labels may be used to keep people apart. Labels are used to answer the questions "Who am I?" or "Who are you?" We journey in life through labels but the need for labels increasingly falls away the more we fully we come to

<sup>1</sup> Personal Biography <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> This account draws on a series of papers which have already been, or will be published in due course. See footer for access.

<sup>3</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2012a): *A Personal submission to the Church of England House of Bishops Working Party on Human Sexuality*. See footer for access.

<sup>4</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015d): *Living with Difference*. See footer for access.

<sup>5</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-Think the Process*. See footer for access.

<sup>6</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2011): *Verses in Search of the Self*. See footer for access.

understand and accept the truth of who we are. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at about 6:30 p.m. Sonia Jardiniere (or Sonia Burgess as she has also been called) died under the wheels of a Westbound Piccadilly Line tube train at King's Cross station in London. The witnesses say she was pushed off the platform by another woman. This person was subsequently charged and convicted of her murder. Sonia was not always an angel, but she was a transgendered woman whose example and approach to her life inspires us to see the real person that she was and not the label instead. This account looks at labelling in three ways. These are the labelling of psychology, the labelling of personal experience and the labelling of Christian belief.

It is important to note that gender and sexual identities form independently of each other. Therefore as wide a range of sexual orientations and identities are found within the gender variant communities as those which exist in the population at large. Thus being transgender is no indication of sexual identity or orientation, and the reverse also applies<sup>7</sup>. However the same types of formation processes are involved in both cases. In many respects gender and sexually variant people share similar issues in terms of their relationships with society and that is why they can be considered together in this account.

## 2:0 My Journey

Nearly forty years ago I was sufficiently concerned about a problem I faced that I decided to take action and consult a psychiatrist. I didn't do things by halves - so I consulted the most eminent and expert in the field I could find. I had fought the conflict for the whole of my life, however willpower did not work and I felt I was facing a compulsive and runaway drive.

At this time I regarded myself to be a strongly gender motivated transvestite. That was because I was not seeking gender reassignment. Instead of this I was trying to find away to balance strongly conflicting demands. When I saw psychiatrist I told him about my approach; he responded by saying I was not a transvestite, but he would not explain why and instead he wanted me to embark on a course of reading in topics for which I was already well versed.

It should be noted that the pursuit of reassignment was the marker that was commonly used to distinguish transvestites from transsexuals at the time. Not surprisingly the consultation got nowhere. How we got the labels wrong!

Only afterwards I realised that we each were defining labels in different ways. Transvestites and transsexuals are people who feel discomfort with the gender that their bodies and society have assigned them to. Some people cross dress for sexual reasons but in transvestism a gender motivation is present. With transsexuals the rejection of the birth assigned gender is found to be complete. Transsexuals do not have to be actively seeking gender reassignment, but the completeness of the gender identity and the compulsion to possess it drives people without limit in that direction. Transvestites find a limit on the journey, beyond which there's no desire to progress.

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<sup>7</sup> For an extended analysis of their formations see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach".

Transsexuality is found in both sexes but transvestites are exclusively male and are generally happy with their male gender identity, however there is an overwhelming and usually periodic compulsion to express the female side. The equivalent drive in women may express itself in different ways. There is a vast range of experience, everyone follows their own path and the outcome for no two people is alike. This account examines why, something which is often misinterpreted by others as a willed desire, is instead a conflict of self identity which destroys.

It took a long time before I was able to accept my transsexuality. As part of this process I documented my journey in an anthology of poems<sup>8</sup>. I want to use one poem from this anthology. It is called "What Thoughts are these?"

But we are all different. How can one poem help? And how does my journey differ from everyone else? In many ways my journey is the same as it is for others, with the same hopes and fears and aspirations. But just as each tree branches in a way that is unique, so we too build a self identity which is also unique and different to everyone else. That uniqueness creates all the quirks and the individualities, the richness and the varieties of life that we each possess. So everyone has a different label. Labels can help but labels can destroy; labels force people into categories and they may also be used as instruments of power. This is not an account of transsexuality. It is about the journey of being oneself and how we use labels in the process.

## 3:0 The Poem

### What Thoughts Are These?

What thoughts are these?  
That lie behind those eyes  
A tree of mind  
Branching upwards towards the skies  
And downwards towards the roots  
From whence it came  
Of futures past  
And past things yet to come.

What thoughts to fear?  
From shaking of this tree of mind  
Grafted to roots  
That would bear fruit of another kind  
And yearning for this base  
Sow conflict's yoke  
Upon my life  
To scourge myself and all my hope.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on the relationship and the differences between transvestism and transsexuality see Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Verses in Search of the Self": Poetry Anthology and Commentary. See footer for access.

What thoughts to share?  
My memories of the early shoots  
Of childish hopes  
Fresh sprung on the ground to soak  
The dew of life and build  
One's own creation  
On happy times  
And on a fresh love tended core.

What thoughts to find?  
For peace of mind in future times  
This tree of mind  
Which reaching upwards to the skies  
Finds nutrition in the light  
To heal the wound  
And live anew  
Embracing self and all mankind.

January 1994

This poem is a statement of intent. I have always tried to take a positive stance and I have tried to be totally honest with myself. I have carried out extensive research.<sup>9</sup> In this analysis it will be shown that the conflict must not be fought. It also shows that these conditions are identity driven. That means that I must work with my sense of gender identity in order to find an approach to life that is capable of transcending its demands. What are the alternatives? There are two, one is fight the conflict and let it destroy all my hopes and aspirations. The second is to transform its demands by using inclusion and transcendence so that I may seek to celebrate the richness of life.

## 4:0 Progression

The first two verses in the poem describe how conflict develops. This applies for me and for many other people. It begins with a sense of discomfort and unease with gender role one is expected to fulfil. This discomfort is often present from the first memories of earliest years. Something simply feels to be wrong and attempts to fight or suppress the sense of gender identity do not succeed.

Every one of us is a different person from everyone else. Some people refuse to conform to the gender behaviour expected of them from the earliest years and from the outset they reject the gender identity they have been assigned to. Others try to fight their inner feelings

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<sup>9</sup>Some of this has, or will be available in the following documents: 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"; Gilchrist, S. (2011b) *Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*; Gilchrist, S. (2013d). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-Think the Process*: See footer for access.

and to repress the discomfort that is felt. Many overcompensate for this and outward expressions of masculinity or femininity give no indication of the trauma that is faced.

The second verse refers to the nature of this conflict. The more the conflict is fought the stronger it becomes. Rational arguments do not work. Attempts to impose them reinforce the drive and exhaustion occurs from the attrition of meeting the constant demand. The drive to reject the gender identity assigned at birth becomes overwhelming. There is an increasing alienation from the imposed gender role accompanied with a desperate drive for surgery and gender reassignment, which can often be made the scapegoat for the trauma incurred.

There are many conflicting attempts to explain the origins of the condition. Nevertheless is clear that the subconscious sense of the gender that belongs to every person has become locked in place from earliest years. For some the conscious awareness of the gender conflict may not be felt until puberty or even adulthood. For others the awareness that something is wrong is present from the earliest times. In both cases it is the rejection of any association with the enforced gender that creates the conflict between a life that is lived for others and a life that is lived for oneself.

Gender and sexuality go their different ways. Many transsexuals marry in their imposed gender role for all the right reasons and love they possess. However as age increases the drive gets stronger and if no way is found to manage these dynamics the outcome can be a total, sudden and catastrophic collapse. This can have devastating results. When gender and sexuality are in conflict it is usually sexuality that is suppressed. There is the destruction of relationships and commitments through the failure to cope, even when love is as strong as ever. There is the blame for letting oneself down, the hurt to other people that has been caused and the guilt for the inability to conform to the edicts of others and one's own expectations. Crippling harm can be created by the attitudes of some religious groups who heap guilt on transsexuals who cannot follow the path they prescribe. The trauma that this creates can be enormous and further attempts to fight the conflict only accelerate the demand. Much of one's self identity is built on a foundation that is wrong and a different approach is required<sup>10</sup>. This must calm the dynamics and provide a firm base.

The truce that has to be kept is crucially dependent on the attitudes of others<sup>11</sup>. Even well meaning opinion can be counterproductive since any advice which expects transsexuals to use willpower to control the conflict has the opposite effect and it reinforces the runaway drive. The need for everybody to confirm their own self identities means that people are always likely to live in a gender polarised society. However that need not be an intolerant

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<sup>10</sup> These are more fully discussed in Gilchrist, S. (2013d). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Gilchrist, S. (2015a) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*: and in Gilchrist, S. (2011e) "Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality".

Research and clinical practice has shown that the core concept of gender, in the sense of being who one is, is one of the first, (if not the first) general concept of self to be formed. It develops from birth. Attempts to fight it or to suppress it invariably fail and methods similar to those which are used to manage addiction or depression must be employed. However addiction and depression are compulsions of mortido which lead to oblivion or death. The compulsions associated with the gender conflict lead towards fulfilment and life. They grow stronger with age and gender reassignment is generally considered to be the inevitable outcome of the condition. Once it has been correctly assessed current psychiatric approaches concentrate on enabling ways of enabling the most effective and least disruptive transition. See footer for access.

<sup>11</sup>The word truce is used instead of balance here because this still represents the outcome of unresolved battles.

society. For this reason a public education programme is urgently needed to correct the current misunderstandings of the condition.

## 5:0 Management

Although transsexuality is manifested in gender terms, it springs from the foundation of selfhood itself. It is imposed through compulsion and it is not a lifestyle choice. For many the road to transition and gender reassignment is the right path to take, and when that decision is made people should be assisted on their way. However other people who have reasons which they truly believe in - and this only works for reasons that they truly believe in - may desperately want to keep to their present role. This means that some form of equilibrium is needed and instead of fighting the conflict an approach which uses inclusion and transcendence is required. This must be neutral about the outcome which is sought, but the transcendence is still needed to calm the demands. It means that any management method must accept and provide for the need for change, it must maximise the freedom of choice and ensure that any changes which do become necessary can take place in an orderly way.

The contradiction between the extremity of the conflict and the modesty of the demand implies that gender is the focus but not the drive. Most transsexuals simply want to change the frame of reference in which they live and in every other way wish to preserve their current life.

The third and fourth verses of the poem emphasise the need to completely embrace the reality of one's gender identity. A total inversion is required<sup>12</sup>. This is essential; for the aim of this approach is to build an inclusive identity that celebrates the full richness of life. Once self acceptance and self esteem can be found a firm base may then be provided. By welcoming this base and by calming the dynamics a balance, (or more correctly a truce) between the conflicting demands may be sought. That truce crucially depends on society's attitudes and the relationships with other people as well as oneself. A positive approach must also be adopted to sustain the transcendence required.

This can eliminate much of the trauma, thereby keeping commitments and relationships alive that would have been harmed by the runaway drive. The conflict is not goal directed since it is driven by rejection rather than desire, so some people may find that a threshold is

<sup>12</sup> An unconsciously held sense of core gender identity (which indicates the sense of being only) is one of the first, if not the first, global elements of self-identity to be formed. If it is not that which is expected it cannot be replaced, and its denial leaves a sense of emptiness inside. Attempting to build the rest of one's self-identity on top of this foundation without acknowledging it is like building a tower on a shaky base. The tower will collapse when the stresses become too great. Inversion demands the recognition, acceptance and the full affirmation of this gender identity even if it does not match the physical characteristics of the body itself: for it is only through welcoming this sense of gender that it is possible to find a firm base. That does not remove the conflicts but it provides a tower that can sway with the wind and remain erect. For most people the forces are so strong that gender reassignment will still be the outcome that is sought. However inversion allows this journey to proceed in an orderly manner and other choices may be made. Nevertheless this must be considered as a conflict that cannot be fought. Scapegoat mechanisms fail to work. The demands that the conflict makes are self-reinforcing and this leads to a runaway drive. Therefore willpower and suppression also fail and the choices that are available only allow people to follow the correct path. I have chosen not to follow the path to gender reassignment but these issues cannot be fudged and I must genuinely believe that my reasons are correct. If I lose that belief and take no other action, my control will be lost and it will lead to collapse. For more information refer to: Gilchrist, S. (2013e). "Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality". See also the poetry anthology Gilchrist, S. (2003): "Selfhood's Tower". See footer for access.

crossed where the compulsions may seem to disappear. The euphoria of religious belief can sometimes create this situation and this is why some religious groups claim that a cure can be found. However that only hides the conflict and transcendence only allows people to follow the correct path. That is why the attempts which are made by some religious groups to enforce their approach can be so disastrous. The balance that is found will alter with circumstances and with age and the drive towards transition grows stronger as hopes and expectations for the future give way to the realities of the past. Therefore keeping the freedom to change is essential for success. This path may end in gender reassignment or it may not. When the decision to seek gender reassignment is made, the possession of transcendence allows the changes which are required to be pursued in an orderly way.

## 6:0 Underlying Demands

A full account of these is given elsewhere<sup>13</sup>. Arguments about the influences of nature and nurture abound, and the condition is not well understood<sup>14</sup>. This analysis identifies the conflict with gender identity to be the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity rather than the cause. Instead of building a gender identity which is totally male

<sup>13</sup> See: 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". Gilchrist, S. (2013d). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Gilchrist, S. (2015a) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*: See footer for access.

<sup>14</sup> This analysis takes a new approach. It uses a Girardian model which is combined with infant neuropsychology and neurophysiology to examine the foundations of gender and self identity. The process of possessive imitation and Mimesis builds up individual strands, bubbles or pebbles of elementary thought in a self reinforcing process. (This process is somewhat analogous to Dawkin's description of the meme and how it works, but Girard's identification predates that analysis). These elements later coalesce together and it is the battle to make sense of how these strands or pebbles combine which give us the senses of gender and self identity that we each possess. There is a tuning process involved. If the mimetic processes are always too strong they can never be held in check, therefore overall co-ordination can never be achieved. The control processes which come through the development of a "Theory of Mind" give the moderating elements that are required. Early in life Mimesis dominates, and the control that is exerted through the "Theory of Mind" only gradually takes over. The rate at which these changes take place is tuned to maximise the individuality that each of us possess. That is what makes each one of us different from everybody else. This is where things can go wrong, for this is tuned to maximise this individuality. Timing is crucial and the influences of Mimesis and Theory of Mind have to be correctly balanced. The Girardian model of Mimesis indicates that once development starts to move in a particular direction it can be very difficult to change. The direction it takes is based on a self reinforcing process where little or no evidence for any original cause can be found. By the time we can use our "Theory of Mind" to perform any conscious check an unchangeable sense of "Core Gender Identity" has been formed. Everyone develops a sense of gender Identity in the same way. Transsexuals develop a sense of core gender identity that is biologically incorrect, but this may be even more strongly held than someone with a biologically correct sense of core gender identity since it has to be fought for along the way. Transsexuals never develop a gender identity that corresponds with the biological sex. Many attempts have been made over many years to use Social Learning Theories to try to explain the origins of the condition, but these have now been discredited. None of the Social Learning Theories work and there is no obvious relationship between the nature and the expectations of rearing, and the development of the conditions. Current theories argue that the development of the condition stems from the natural provision of male hormones in the womb. If these are not provided at the right time and in the right quantity, the brain continues to develop in a female direction and this gives rise to the conditions. However the incidence of transsexuality etc is much smaller than this argument would predict. Using the self generating models which are associated with Girardian dynamics it is possible to trace an alternative path that overcomes these difficulties. The impact on the learning and developmental processes arising from both brain plasticity and the differential development of the pre-frontal cortex are considered, and it is shown how the potential effects of any foetal hormonal inputs can be incorporated into the Girardian model. Sexual orientation is also identity driven and an analogous process is involved. Although this analysis concentrates on the development of gender and sexual identity the early development of the sense of core gender identity provides a model which can be used to examine the whole process of personality development and this is considered in the research. See: 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". Gilchrist, S. (2013d). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Gilchrist, S. (2015a): *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*: See footer for access.

or female, every person creates a sense of self identity which a composite of all the early concepts that are formed<sup>15</sup>. It is this composite that underpins conscious thought<sup>16 17</sup>. The need to make sense of this requires each person to create an exclusive gender allegiance which is polarised into either male or female, to which total loyalty is required. This gender allegiance is too deep seated to replace, when any dispute occurs the normal methods of conflict resolution do not work, and the symbols of the gender that is rejected become the scapegoat to eject.

It is the rejection of the assigned gender identity that drives the dynamics of the conflict and this is the medium through which the discord is expressed. Gender reassignment surgery becomes an overwhelming demand, and the relief when that is completed is enormous. Removing the symbols of the rejected gender allows transsexuals to move forward in the new role. In this way reassignment satisfies the objective of allowing people to be themselves.

Although the outcomes are independent there is evidence to suggest that sexual identity and sexual orientation (or allegiance), develop in a similar way.

When transsexuals are asked to explain their quandary a common answer is that of "Being a member of one gender who is trapped inside the body the other". This is not literally true but the development process creates an identical effect. Forcing transsexuals to embrace a gender allegiance which is in accordance with their biological sex reveals a sense of emptiness inside.

Most people simply accept their sense of gender identity as a fact. However the distinctions between male and female, masculinity and femininity often have to be made. Both gender identity and the gender allegiance are defined as the sense of belonging to a particular group, and there are no behavioural implications at all. This basic concept of gender identity is a foundation stone on which the other concepts of self are built - and neural pathways cannot be mapped to a centre which has never been created. Thus any failure of the foundation stone will destroy all the concepts that are built on top of it, and any attempt to enforce such a linkage becomes an attack on the whole structure of selfhood itself. This is

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<sup>15</sup>This can also be used to explain the differences and the wide range of experiences which are encountered, even if just one specific condition is examined. For example the relationship between transvestism and transsexuality can be explained by this analysis, as well as providing explanations for both conditions. For a consideration of how this applies to all transgendered people see: Gilchrist, S. (2015a) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*; and Gilchrist, S. (2013d) and "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". See footer for access.

<sup>16</sup>This analysis makes a distinction between identity and allegiance. Instead of building a gender identity which is either male or female, people create an identity which a composite of the early concepts that were developing. There is a different end point for every individual who resolves their conflict with the gender that they are assigned to, and this can account for the great variety of experience that is encountered. The rejection of the assigned gender identity drives the dynamics of the conflict, and it is the medium through which the discord is expressed. It is the need to make sense of this graininess which means that individuals and society create their own exclusive gender allegiance. For both sectors, this allegiance is exclusively male or female and it is one to which total loyalty is required. There is bipolarity in this process and the change from gender identity to gender allegiance can be compared to the finger which pulls the switch. Gender identity presses the switch but gender allegiance is determined by the way the switch becomes set. See: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". See footer for access.

<sup>17</sup>It is important to note that the way in which people increasingly identify themselves may not be in accordance with these binaries. The conflict for transsexuals pits the desire to satisfy ones deepest sense of self identity against relationships with others that one wants to keep. The changes in society enable people to more easily reject the exclusive allegiances that are enforced.

why integration and transcendence always has to be worked for, and it is why neutrality is not enough.

I have never consciously wanted to be a woman. Indeed I vehemently fought against any such idea until I was about 30. As a man I have totally conformed to the expectations of the male role. I have been successful and completely committed to this way of life. However identifying myself and relating to others as a woman enables me to be me; and, despite all of these battles it is the feeling that I ought to be a woman which has dominated my life. I value and cherish everything in the life I have built and there is nothing I would change except the frame of reference in which it is lived. Thus underlying the pre-occupation with gender there is a deeper drive. This is why the labels I seek are not those that define me in gender terms. The labels relate to the person I am.

The reader is reminded that there is only space for a summary in this account. For full descriptions of this approach, and information on the management and origins of the condition see the sources listed in the footnotes.

## 7:0 Being Me

Who am I? Am I Susan, or Daphne, or Tricia, or Joan?  
Or am I David, or Richard, or Kenneth, or William?

Our names are very important to us. They declare our existence to others and define who we are. We go to great lengths to create names and labels which match the correct gender and we can be very hurt and offended if the incorrect gender pronoun is used. They also compel the polarisation of gender identity that we and others enforce.

Reassignment or transition is often regarded as the inevitable outcome of the condition. After transition most people want to merge invisibly into society in their new role. So instead of it remaining a matter of contention, gender is no longer a focus. It becomes an ordinary fact of everyday life. Support Groups and LGB and T organisations can be of great help when people are making the transition. But when that has been successfully been completed the need for such groups and contact with them can often disappear.

This journey challenges many of the labels we use and there is the need to re-interpret them as it progresses. We may use labels to resist change by hiding an underlying drive. For example I could not find a way to manage my transsexuality before I could fully accept the label it brought. People also use labels to impose their views: Transsexual objections to the use of incorrect pronouns can be an attempt to impose gender self concepts on other individuals and on the public at large. Other people may deliberately address the transsexual or transvestite being spoken to with the incorrect pronoun to make it clear that they have been “read”. Both of these are exercises of power and inevitably it is the transsexual who gets hurt because of the exposure it brings. On criticism of transsexuals is that they reinforce polarised gender expectations by the need to consider so many things in gender terms. The conversations between transsexuals can loose sight of the fact that gender identity is only one part of a rich and multifaceted self.

Transsexuals change labels many times but the old ones remain as markers that are left behind. It is necessary to balance the benefit of hiding the cross gender background against the problems that unwanted disclosure can bring. There is often a severe rejection or abuse if the previous history or current circumstances become known. If anything newsworthy happens the press will tell the public about the most sensational or derogatory label they can find. However transcendence seeks to create an inclusive identity which celebrates the wholeness of one's self. Hiding past history is hiding part of oneself. Thus openness and acceptance may be better. This might usually be done on a need to know basis, but that is an individual decision, and it may not be an easy choice.

Names and labels are essential for us to differentiate the self from the other and to provide a base upon which we can build self esteem and recognise other people's worth. "To say I ought to be a woman" or "I ought to be a man" creates labels of division and strife, and we cannot begin to know what it is like to be a member of the other gender any more than we can know what it is like to be anyone else. The effects of hormones and of previous experience must also be taken into account. To turn labels of division into labels which say "I am at ease with myself as a woman", or "I am at ease with myself as a man", or "I am at ease with myself in my present situation" creates the paths that are needed to come to terms with the gender identity possessed. The hope that this brings gives paths to peace.

Being myself gives me a name. It may be a personal appellation or a label of any kind. However the labels of separation must be replaced by the labels of inclusion if they are to represent all that we are.

## 8:0 Sonia: A Tribute

On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at about 6:30 p.m. Sonia Jardiniere (or Sonia Burgess as she has also been called) died under the wheels of an Eastbound Piccadilly Line Tube Train at King's cross station. Witnesses say she was pushed off the platform by another woman. This person was subsequently charged with her murder.

At the time Sonia was on her way to hear a lecture to be given at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, as part of its Autumn Education Programme. Sonia had only recently started to attend St Martin-in-the-Fields after previously being involved in St Anne's Soho. In that time she had become a very active member of the St Martin's congregation and was involved in many of the activities.

Not many in the congregation knew that Sonia was a transsexual. For those who did it was of little consequence. Everyone knew Sonia as a loving, caring and compassionate woman who had a challenging intellect and questioning mind.

Sonia did advertise her services on an escort agency website. She had told me about it and it was part of her journey of finding who she was. To my knowledge little if any work came from this and it had no real part in her life. Needless to say this was the one thing the tabloid press focussed on. The obituaries in the Times and the Guardian, together with the later Observer article gave a much more accurate account.

Sonia had time for everybody; one of her greatest gifts was her empathy. Her attentive, non-judgemental listening and her experience of all the dark moments enabled other people to unburden themselves in her company. Whether it was Sonia at St Martin's or David at work it was still the same kind, patient and courteous person. Perhaps her most defining characteristic was her kindness. She was able to place herself alongside people and offer inspiration and hope. She made everyone feel valued and would go to enormous efforts to help others however she could.

Some at St Martins knew that she was a human rights lawyer, but that was all. Nobody at St Martin in the Fields knew of her trailblazing career in this field, in which she still practiced in her male role, using her given name of David Burgess. As was typical she gave no indication of the immense contribution in these areas that she has made.

In immigration matters David specialized in rescuing the dispossessed, refugees and asylum seekers, lesbian, gay and transgendered people. The Guardian obituary with full justification reported that David was regarded as the finest immigration layer of that generation. From 1992 to semi-retirement in 2002, David also acted as the lawyer to "Press for Change", the UK's lobbying and activism group for transgender people's rights.

As well as being an active member of the congregation of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Sonia was a member of the Sibyls and The London and Southwark Changing Attitude group. In her lifetime Sonia has made an enormous, though largely hidden contribution to the integration of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people into the mainstream Anglican Church.

Even through all of the tragedy and in ways that Sonia might never have expected, her death has helped others to understand the issues of gender dysphoria. It has helped people to be able to appreciate what it means and to see the real person, not the label instead.

In St Martin-in-the-Fields the sadness and the shock over her death and the manner of its happening, was palpable. The handling of this by the church community was a great encouragement to others. It became a celebration of the completeness of the person. The acceptance shown by the congregation of St Martin's was a catalyst which enabled people in similar situations to be open with their children and others. The perception of the congregation was transformed as to what transgender means, and their response was a witness to the richness that Sonia brought. All of us have much to learn from how the Church community and Sonia's family responded to her death. We have also much to learn from the example of Sonia's life.

A week after Sonia's death a meeting was held to share memories of her in St Martin-in-the-Fields. There were people there from St Martin's, St Anne's and all of the professional organisations Sonia had worked for. The Parish hall was full. One of the clergy introduced the session with a brief prayer and some music. There was then a period of about an hour when either silence was kept or people could talk about Sonia or David as they wished. There were many contributions. The pronouns "He" and "She" and the names Sonia and David were used almost interchangeably. It really did not matter because everyone was talking about how cherished a person Sonia/David was.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November, a funeral service for Sonia was held at St Martin-in-the-Fields. The church was filled with around 600 people from diverse backgrounds – there were many members of the St Martin’s congregation, lawyers, university contemporaries, former asylum seekers, members of the transgender community and countless others who, in some way, had had their lives touched by the person they knew as either David or Sonia. Sonia’s three children stood up to deliver a eulogy about the father they had known, slipping easily between female and male pronouns as they talked. It was, everyone agreed, a moving tribute to an exceptional person.

Transgender labels and pronouns were of no consequence whatever, for people saw and loved the person instead. In that experience the labels of separation dropped away in the witness of Christian Love

However Sonia was not an angel. She involved herself in some things which I and others did not approve of, but none of us are angels in life.

## 9:0 Biblical Labels

The physiological and psychological analyses which have been developed as part of this investigation have shown that both gender and sexually variant conditions, such as homosexuality and transsexuality are identity driven<sup>18</sup>. Desire does not drive these battles. Even though the conflicts manifest themselves in terms of gender and sexual orientation, their origins lie at the foundation of self-identity itself. A coherent sense of identity is sought and what people become is built on this base<sup>19</sup>. This means that the conflicts are driven by the rejection of the enforced role and not by the desire for the new. Therefore the dominating, but usually hidden compulsion, powered by its deep seated driving force, comes through the need for people to true to themselves. This means that behaviour is not the focus and that as extended a range of moral attitudes and motivations are found within these communities as those that are encountered in society at large.

However that is not the usually understood perception. Transsexuals typically express their predicament by saying they want to seek gender reassignment to make their bodies conform to the gender that they have always belonged to. This is interpreted as desire. The usual presumption is that this condition is driven by the desire to become a man or a woman, and the possibility that these conflicts are imposed by the rejection of the enforced gender identity is thereby dismissed. All gender and sexually variant behaviour is frequently condemned because its motives are considered to be a pursuit of sexual gratification, promiscuity and lust, yet exactly the opposite is the case. This misunderstanding has resulted in many counterproductive “treatments” being enforced<sup>20</sup>. For centuries such

<sup>18</sup>Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”. See also Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief”. See footer for access.

<sup>19</sup> Transsexuals may strongly express the desire to be members of the opposite gender, however they are not men who want to become women and vice versa: instead they want to be themselves. Many seek gender reassignment surgery to make their bodies appear as those of the gender identity they believe that they have belonged to from birth, but the extremity of this trauma strongly contrasts with the modesty of the outcome that is sought. Sexual desire plays no role in creating the gender trauma. Most dress and live unremarkably and modestly in the role that they have embraced. After gender reassignment has been carried out, these people can feel that they are true to themselves, gender no longer becomes an issue in their lives and many merge invisibly into society in their new role.

<sup>20</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013e): “Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality”. See footer for access.

people have been condemned for their actions, even when their earnest aim and intention is to live moral, faithful, committed and honest lives.

It has also been shown that the same principles of duality are found to apply across cultures, continents and religious beliefs<sup>21</sup>. The people who transcend the sex gender boundaries to adopt moral standards which were seen to be true to the ideals of both lives were frequently given a high and often priestly status. Those who transgressed the sex gender boundaries for the pursuit of gratification and lust without regard to the moral standards of society were very strongly condemned. The passage from Jeremiah<sup>22</sup> shows that there was no easy option for the Israelites, and often there is a difficult choice. This sense of duality is absent from the Christian tradition, and this section of the document examines what happened to the principles of that duality during the development of the religious traditions of the early Christian Church.

## 9:1 Respectability and Disconnection

Christianity was very concerned with labels that others applied to it. Jesus and the early church were disrupters of the accepted values of society, and many of its followers paid the ultimate price. Paul was not reticent about producing virtue and vice lists but a constant theme within the Pauline epistles was that of establishing the respectability of the Church. This respectability was greatly added to through its total condemnation of fornication and its refutation of the dominant culture of authority which governed the rules of anal penetration in Greco/Roman society. The uprightness of the Church was further affirmed by the requirement that all sexual relationships should be motivated by love<sup>23</sup>.

A major challenge and achievement which was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into a dominant culture. That meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and sexual values which were characteristic of Greco/Roman male dominated society. This additionally meant challenging and usurping the male power structures which are formed inside these powerful and dominant societies by placing the concern for the victims and the suppressed first on the religious and the social agendas of those cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality which is founded on compassion, nurturing and love. These moral characteristics were more typical of the first century female expectations, and women were themselves a subject group<sup>24</sup>.

The first century was also a time of upheaval for Greco/Roman society. Many traditional religions had lost much of their credibility. There was a proliferation of new religious beliefs, the Goddess cults were having a major resurgence and because of their gender challenging activities, the male domination of society was strongly being put to the test<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013b). "Reform and the Christian Church". See footer for access.

<sup>22</sup> "This is what the Lord says: See; I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever stays in the city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives" (Jeremiah 21:8-9).

<sup>23</sup> 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". See footer for access

<sup>24</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013b). "Reform and the Christian Church". See footer for access.

<sup>25</sup> Frymer-Kensky, Tivka. (1993) "In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth" Ballantine Books; (First Edition February 10, 1993) ISBN-10: 0449907465 ISBN-13: 978-0449907467. See also Barker, Margaret. (2001) "The Temple Roots Of The Liturgy". This is developed from a paper read in Dublin in November 2000 subsequently published in Sourozh. A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought. Available online at:

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

However a major roadblock was encountered because the gender determined nature of Goddess cults in a polytheistic society always created a glass ceiling that could not be crossed<sup>26</sup>. Because of its gender transcendent God the Christian Church became able to break down this barrier; and the social transformation which Christianity had demanded could then be made. However without this Jewish and Christian gender transcendent God, that cultural transformation could never have occurred, and it is shown that the existence of the initial period of complete gender equality which was expressed in the teachings of Jesus was essential for the breakthrough to be made.

Instead of simply seeking gender neutrality the Christian Gospel had at first provided major roles for women. A doctrine of complete gender equality was expressed within early Christianity, which would obtain acceptance in present day society, thus it is also not surprising that women figured prominently in the early church. However even though these important functions at first were given to women, the social constraints that were imposed through gender complementarity meant that the public spokespersons for this new religion could only be men. Through their pursuit of a male agenda and from its pursuit of authority and respectability, the doctrines of the early Church have been disconnected from the traditions and doctrines that were embraced by the later Church<sup>27</sup>. Therefore the theological justifications that in the present day are used to validate the presumptions for a male leadership, together with its male prerogatives, and its arguments for an exclusively male priesthood are also founded on these subsequent traditions. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus and the Gospel Church<sup>28</sup>.

This also meant that possibility of an association with the Cult of Cybele and its Gallae priests had to be very strongly rejected because of the disruption to social order which the cult still caused within the male dominated social structures of the time<sup>29</sup>. That was perceived to have a very negative input on respectability, even though the cult had shared many values in common with the early church. The church at this time considered that the prohibition on cross dressing contained in Deuteronomy 22:5 was directed against the effeminacy of these priests<sup>30</sup> and this was used strongly by Augustine and others to condemn the cult.

That transformation leads to the simple and direct conclusion which states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrine of the Christian Church on sexual and gender

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

<sup>26</sup>Even if full gender equality could be achieved in a polytheistic society, the rewards it brings could only be expressed in terms of the sex-gender ideologies of that society and males and females would continue to be separated into their religiously determined and socially segregated roles. See: Frymer-Kensky, Tivka. (1993) "*In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*" Ballantine Books; (First Edition February 10, 1993) ISBN-10: 0449907465 ISBN-13: 978-0449907467.

<sup>27</sup> See Section 3:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): "*An Unfinished Reformation*".

<sup>28</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2014a) *Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*. See footer for access.

<sup>29</sup> As a goddess religion in a polytheistic society the cult of Cybele could not break through the gendered divisions of that society. Therefore it could never move from being a female identified cult which posed a threat to the culture of male domination.

<sup>30</sup> Around AD 195 Clement of Alexandria wrote: "What is the purpose in the Law's prohibition against a man wearing woman's clothing? Is it not that the Law would have us to be masculine and not to be effeminate in either person or actions - or in thought and word? Rather, it would have the man who devotes himself to the truth to be masculine both in acts of endurance and patience - in life, conduct, word, and discipline". That particular interpretation was applied at this time but there have been many different interpretations of this verse and for a full account see Gilchrist, S. (2013a): "*An Unfinished Reformation*"

variance are built on a false foundation. They were driven by the need to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society and they do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself.

However an even greater reversal was required, because in order to obtain respectability in this society, Christianity quickly had to separate itself from the still continuing social and gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. This meant that instead of just adopting the social structures and gender complementarity which provided a cornerstone of the gender unequal Greco/Roman society, Christianity had to be seen to take a proactive role in its enforcement of them, and it is shown that this pursuit of respectability has led to the imposition of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and exclusive orthodoxy in which all types of expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be a mortal sin and an immoral act. This has also led to the great severity of the Christian condemnations of all gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of these acts.

## 9:2 Moving Forward

In the last fifty years the loss of Church authority, the widespread introduction of contraception, the legalisation of same-sex relationships and the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation has meant that most people now have personal and direct experience of relating to homosexual couples and others in same-sex relationships. These observers do not need to have any special knowledge see that the same values of love and care and commitment can be expressed within loving same-sex partnerships as there are in heterosexual marriage. It is also easy for them to distinguish between the behaviour of two people in a same-sex heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are in a homosexual relationship, even if there is a total absence of sex.

The conflicts in the Church over gender issues and same-sex relationships have lasted for over two thousand years. Despite the disruption which these conflicts have brought the Church has always failed to resolve the conflict at source, and today the issues of homosexuality and sexual abuse have come to dominate much of its religious life. The reaction has always been to hide, or to deny or to suppress these problems, but with the changes in attitude in present day society this will no longer work, for secular society refuses to tolerate the abuses, prejudices and the inequities that it sees. The tendency is to retreat. So far too often the churches are adopting an increasingly reactionary position, and many of them are retreating into fundamentalism and traditional values. The refusal of the churches to listen and their continued failure to address these issues has already begun to seriously destroy their own reputations, and that is taking the reputation of Christianity with it as well.

A more pro-active approach is needed. There is an urgent need to develop a greater understanding of homosexual and transgender experiences and all sides urgently need to be able to recognise the problems and circumstances of the other. Transgender issues are often more hidden, but they are no less relevant. Both sides have their own serious questions to answer, the gay and lesbian community must critically address the consequences of the culture of homosexual promiscuity if same-sex relationships are to be fully accepted within the church. The church must recognise the way in which it has made homosexuality the scapegoat for all illicit sexual acts. It must also address the consequences of reinterpretation and translation drift, and it must embrace the

understanding that faithful and committed relationships which are expressed in love between two people of the same-sex can be sanctified by Christ<sup>31</sup>. The standards which are set for moral behaviour must never be reduced. However the same standards must be applied equally to heterosexual, transgender and to homosexual people alike. People may agree or disagree with those which are set, but nothing should or need to diminish these standards in any way. Indeed this account requires that the highest standards for everybody are sought.

A conference on “Sexuality and Human Flourishing” held in Birmingham on the 6th February 2010 sought to address these issues<sup>32</sup>. A wide range of people attended and the outcome of this was to agree that all sexual relationships given and received in love should be acceptable to the Church. An important priority is to get rid of the obsession with sex. The Christian Church has brought enormous benefits to the world and these should now be concentrated on instead.

There is so much capital invested in the traditional teaching on homosexuality that these changes may be difficult to make. Views on homosexuality in Islam, Judaism and other religions can vary as much as they do in the Christian tradition. Differences in culture between societies and religious traditions may cause schisms to occur. These issues must urgently be addressed and an effective listening and negotiating process which results in action must be implemented without delay. If the Christian churches do not, or they cannot, resolve the problems brought by homosexuality, transgender issues, celibacy and sexual abuse which have affected it from its foundation, it will continue to destroy its credibility in society at large.

### 9:3 Labels and Division

It is necessary to ask, what is the real division? Both sides can agree that to have homosexual and transgender feelings is not itself sinful and the question that needs to be asked is, “Can the relationships between homosexual couples and transgender couples who express their feelings in faithful, loving, chaste and committed lives be accepted by the church?” Answering yes to this question does not require a new dispensation for it returns to the truths of biblical texts.

This means that all same-sex, opposite-sex and transgendered relationships that are given in love should be acceptable to the Church. The duality which is found in the cult of Cybele and in Greek philosophy also indicates that those people who transcended the sex-gender boundaries for noble reasons were given high esteem within first century society. The intimacies of same-sex relationships were also valued in the Jewish tradition, and the ceremony of Adelphopoiesis<sup>33</sup> suggests that the same outlook was also present at first in the Christian church. In common with the first century values it is also argued that moral judgements on sexual relationships were not made on a gendered basis, but through the distinctions between the noble pursuit of love and the carnal abuse of sex<sup>34 35</sup>.

<sup>31</sup>For the complete analysis see Gilchrist, S. (2011b) “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-sex Relationships*”.

<sup>32</sup>Gilchrist, S. (Ed) (2010a) *Proceedings of a conference on Sexuality and Human Flourishing*, Stirchley, Birmingham, 6 February 2010: See footer for access.

<sup>33</sup>Gilchrist, S. (2013b). “*Reform and the Christian Church*”. See footer for access.

<sup>34</sup>Gilchrist, S. (2011b). “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”. See footer for access.

<sup>35</sup>Gilchrist, S. (2013f). “*From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church*”. See footer for access.

Although it is taken from a non-canonical Gospel, saying 22 from the Gospel of Thomas perhaps expresses a somewhat deeper truth. It states: "Jesus saw some infants who were being suckled. He said to his disciples: These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom. They said to him: If we then become children, shall we enter the kingdom? Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inside as the outside, and the outside as the inside, and the upper as the lower, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male is not male and the female not female, and when you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then shall you enter [the kingdom]". Therefore these are not just issues of sexuality or gender identity for they are concerned about how we apply labels to the whole of life.

## 10:0 Context

The Bible must be read in the context of the time when it is written. Both Paul and Jesus recognised and accepted the conventions and practices of their own societies; but they transformed them through this Gospel of Christian Love. Just as Paul supported the restrictions placed on marriage he also showed how the relations between husband and wife are transformed by this Gospel of Christian love. Just as the writer of the epistle to Philemon had supported the conventions of slavery at the time, he also showed how the relationships between master and slave are transformed by this Gospel of Christian love. Just as Jesus accepted the relationship between the slave and the centurion (Luke, Chapter 7:1-10 and Matthew, Chapter 8:5-13), he also demonstrated how the relationships between two people of the same-sex can be transformed by the Gospel of Christian Love.

In Galatians 3:26 Paul stated: "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

(English Standard Version)

How much more should this be true of our interpretation of the Gospel of Christian Love?

## 11:0 Conclusions

This article uses a new approach which is base on neurophysiological and psychological research<sup>36</sup>. Much of the underlying work was undertaken in analysing conflict situations where self identity plays an important part. This current application to sexual and gender variation is an outreach of that work.

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<sup>36</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013d) "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Also Gilchrist, S. (2013a) *An Unfinished Reformation*: 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*: Gilchrist, S. (2015a) *Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*:

Labels of psychology give medical names which often regard these conditions as psychoses or perversions, where the normal course of development has been disrupted by trauma or inappropriate desire. These are the presumptions on which traditional treatment has often been based. It fails to consider that these conditions are identity driven. Therefore the medical treatments which have been used are totally counterproductive since are directed towards the suppression of these desires, instead of enabling people to be themselves<sup>37</sup>.

Labels have been studied from three perspectives, those of psychology, those of personal experience and those of Christian belief. Too often these labels are used as a means of exclusion, to define concepts of separation and to transfer blame from one culture to another. Religion has the power to do the greatest evil and it has the power to do the greatest good. The greatest evil comes when religion misuses its power and a love for its own community by enforcing the labels which keep other people out. That is the way of identifying the enemy, and it leads to division and war. The greatest good comes when it is open to all and when all labels are removed. The Christian Gospel is one of inclusion. As heterosexual, homosexual and transsexual people we are all accepted alike by Christ and the labels of separation, blame and exclusion must drop away in the Gospel of Christian Love.

Labels must also be relevant to any current situation. Judaism always applies two meanings to any biblical text. The first is the original meaning and the second is what the text means in the present culture and the present time. In the Western societies of today; where all men and women are treated equally, when loving, committed, responsible and faithful same-sex relationships can be entered into with no humiliation being encountered, and where there is no disturbance to the social order that is found in a gender unequal society, all of the arguments that are presented in the bible for the prohibition of same-sex anal penetration within loving relationships disappear.

From the neurophysiological and psychological investigation, and from all of the scientific, social and theological perspectives, it is demonstrated in this analysis that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality and gender and sexual variation cannot be correct.<sup>38</sup> It has been shown that the results of this investigation lead to the simple and direct conclusion that states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variance rest on a false foundation. They arose from the need to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society and not from the teaching of Jesus himself. Christianity adopted a form of gender complementarity which was amenable to Greco/Roman society and the failure of this would lead to horrendous gender discrimination in the later Church<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> See Gilchrist, S. (2013e). "Management Techniques for Gender Dysphoria with Particular Reference to Transsexuality": for the full analysis. See footer for access.

<sup>38</sup> See Gilchrist, S. (2015c) *Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church*: This analysis has shown that from the scientific, social and theological bases that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality and gender and sexual variation cannot be correct. An extended examination of biblical passages is undertaken and a study of the parallel developments in Judaism is carried out. From these arguments, and from the more detailed considerations which are presented in the additional papers, it is demonstrated that in the teaching of Jesus, all transgendered, transsexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted alike. All sexual behaviour is governed by the purity of intention and there is no automatic condemnation of any same-sex act.

<sup>39</sup> See section 2:2:5 of Gilchrist, S. (2013a): *An Unfinished Reformation*

There should be no condemnation of any same-sex relationships which are based on love and commitment by the Church. However in gender unequal societies, the social and practical arguments presented against same-sex anal penetration still possess considerable force. These inter cultural conflicts must be addressed, but the use of all the labels which are at present being applied by each section of the Christian church to condemn the other destroys the credibility of Christianity in the world, it diminishes the Church, and it denies the Gospel of Christian love. Today there are many gay and lesbian couples within the Christian church, both in the clergy and the laity, who seek to live their lives in committed, loving and faithful relationships. However the Church has employed its labels of exclusion to refuse them the distinctive ministry that they could have given, and centuries of guilt from its labels of condemnation, has descended like the blight.

It should be emphasised that in this investigation a clear distinction is made between same-sex and cross-gender behaviour which is engaged in for the highest of motives, and that pursued for illicit or immoral purposes. This is the foundation for the approach that is here considered. There is no toleration of improper or immoral sex, and the same degrees of moral condemnation can still be applied without compromise to those who misuse all same-sex acts.

Labels of personal experience can challenge all arguments. They also allow people to see the humanity behind every person. Sonia was moving towards full transition. I believe she would have sought gender reassignment but there was another medical condition which was deterring her from taking that course. Should she have lived I am certain that she would have at least made the social transformation complete.

Unlike Sonia I am not moving towards gender reassignment, or to change my role. This is for reasons which I believe in and for valued relationships which I want to keep. If these were to disappear then know that I too would follow that path. This is not a conflict about gender or the search for any role; instead it is about being true to the person that I am - and nobody who did not know would have any suspicion that these gender issues exist. Despite this image I have made my personal experiences available in this account in the hope that they can help others to deal with their own situations. Understanding the dynamics is a considerable help. Instead of becoming trapped by a conflict both Sonia and I have made use of inclusion to transcend the demands. Instead of the suppression which leads to a dramatic change or disruptive collapse, change should only come through default. We have both dealt with the same situation but we have done it in different ways. Instead of reinforcing the tribal identities of men and women we both have sought to be ourselves.

I want to return to the last verse of the poem, which I believe describes the best outlook to take.

What thoughts to find?  
For peace of mind in future times  
This tree of mind  
Which reaching upwards to the skies  
Finds nutrition in the light  
To heal the wound  
And live anew  
Embracing self and all mankind.

I do not think that any of us would wish gender dysphoria upon our own worst enemy. Either we will go down with it through fighting its battles, or we seek to transcend its demands by looking for the richness to find.

That is what Sonia did.

Sonia would not have achieved all that she was able to without David behind her, and David could not have delivered his achievements without Sonia's support. Sonia has enabled many people to touch heaven. She asked many questions and would challenge our thoughts in many ways but her empathy and her expression of a true Christian self giving love in action did not need words.

All is not lost. In being true to herself and by what Sonia has done she brought a sight of heaven to earth.

Love must transcend labels and celebrate the fullness of life.

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References are given in the footnotes.

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All of these documents are, or will be available through the website:  
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm>

Refer to the website for current status

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