

Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church

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Abstract

The assessment of gender and sexual difference in the early and modern Christian Church is examined using the results of a new neurophysiological and psychological research study. The conclusions of this study show that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexuality cannot be correct.

By removing the veil of the theological presumptions on gender and sexuality, which dominated both Church and society for the last two thousand years, new insights are gained, which include previously barred interpretations of biblical texts. It is shown that the teaching of Jesus on gender equality and gender and sexual variance would be completely accepted in the present day. It is shown that the abandonment of these doctrines and their replacement with doctrines that were more representative of those of a gender polarised Greco/Roman society came from the requirement to give respectability to the Church. These transformations lead to the direct conclusion which states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on gender equality, and sexual and gender variant behaviour are built on a false foundation. They come from the desire to obtain respectability in Greco/Roman society and they do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself.

For many years the Church of England has espoused the need to listen to the views of LGBTI people. It has produced two reports on sexuality which have been intended to provide a framework for the debate. However the relatively limited depth of the theology, together with the underlying assumptions within them, make them appear as schema for protecting the traditional teaching and doctrine of the Church, while seeking greater inclusion of LGBTI people within it. Any suggestion which questions the traditional teaching on sexual and gender variance is completely rejected by the Roman Catholic Church. These refusals and denials should not be acceptable to anybody, clergy, churchwomen, to laity and to people of all gender identities and sexualities. The reluctance of the Church of England to embrace any prospect of change is described within this paper, which also considers the wide variety of views and the threats of schism within the Church. Much of the concern seems about the preservation of an institution. It was the refusal of Jesus to compromise his Gospel message for any state or institution that led to his death on the cross. Is it time for a new resurrection of the Christian Church?

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

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1:0. Introduction

This document has been extracted from “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”³

1:1. Present Day Attitudes

People will engage in same-sex activities for many reasons. There were fundamental cultural clashes between the Jewish and Greco/Roman cultures. Within the dominant Greco/Roman societies same-sex rape was used as a weapon to humiliate a beaten enemy, and the codes of sexual morality were fixed by responsibility and authority. Therefore these societies condoned what today would be regarded as heterosexual and homosexual rape⁴. So to begin to consider those bible texts which in the present day, are employed to condemn homosexuality, and particularly the writings of Paul,

² Personal Biography <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

³ Gilchrist, S. (2014): “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church”. See footer for access.

⁴ Activities which were considered to be totally moral inside the culture of one society could also be horrific in another, and within the dominant and subject societies almost the reverse outlooks were adopted. Inside Greco/Roman society the standards of sexual morality were determined by responsibility and authority. This meant that any Greek or Roman male citizen could engage with any other woman or a man who was of lesser status without any form of penalty for the purposes of his own sexual gratification, and this included the anal penetrative acts. Same-sex rape was likewise employed as a weapon to humiliate a beaten enemy. This meant that the only protection which such people had against heterosexual or same-sex rape were the social obligations for responsibility in action, and slaves had no choice. Maintaining the social status was given absolute priority, and where there was a public expression of any same-sex relationships between two male citizens who were of equal status, it was only the penetrated or the submissive partner who was condemned. Within a victimized and subjugated society the reverse situation is encountered. The horror of same-sex rape and the lack of hospitality and respect being inflicted upon the Israelites are very obvious in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and this resonates through all of the Jewish tradition. The cultural clashes between the dominant Greco/Roman culture and the subjugated Jewish one were also violent and extreme. Today the prohibitions of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are usually taken to mean the prohibition of all forms of same-sex behaviour, but the rabbis of the first century were at great pains to make it clear that this prohibition exclusively applied to anal penetrative sex. The Jewish condemnations of this were very strongly expressed but the nature of the duality which was found in Jewish society meant that this did not preclude any other intimate acts. See: Gilchrist, S. (2014): “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church”. See footer for access. A more complete description is given later in this account.

becomes a trivialisation, both of their meaning and their intent. Through his careful use of words, Paul also skirts round any references to consensual sex⁵. That does not mean that all gender and sexually variant people are immune to inappropriate behaviour⁶. The absence of reproductive consequences means that one barrier to promiscuous behaviour is removed and the centuries of criminalisation of same-sex behaviour also prevents any long term stable relationships being formed. There is little incentive for a group of people who are completely rejected by the surrounding society to conform to the standards which the condemning society would expect⁷.

One consequence of this total rejection is that a counter-culture is created within the gender and sexually variant groups and their opponents can capitalise on this to condemn all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being in pursuit of illicit, immoral and inappropriate sex. That has happened in the Christian Church but it is demonstrated in this examination, on both theological and on neurophysiological and psychological grounds that this interpretation is incorrect. The conclusions of the neurophysiological and psychological studies also show that these conditions are identity driven, and that as extended a range of moral attitudes and behaviour will be encountered in the gender and sexually variant communities as there are in society at large. That invalidates the assumptions which Christianity makes. Instead of these a duality is shown to exist whereby people who attempt to live to the highest moral standards which their society expects can live according to the ways of light. Those people who do the reverse follow the paths of darkness instead. Equivalent dualities are encountered across cultures and continents, where those people who attempt to transcend the sex/gender boundaries by living in ways which are true to the ideals of

⁵ The passages which are most often used to condemn gender and sexually variant behaviour are found in the epistles and the letters of Paul. In Romans 1:18-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul, makes use of the verses in Leviticus, as it is translated in the Greek Septuagint, when he coins the word “arsenokoitai”, to describe those people who are engaged in heterosexual and same-sex promiscuity and prostitution as “Abusers of themselves with mankind”. By linking his invented word directly to Leviticus he made it clear that the Jewish rather than the Greek view should be understood. This directly refers a first century reader back to the specific interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 which Jesus, John and Paul would have known, and which refers to anal penetration alone. The interpretation of this word is controversial. Without a clear definition of the word no absolute distinction between loving and abusive same-sex relationships can be made, or any firm interpretation of Paul’s attitude to loving relationships can be established. The careful use of the word “arsenokoital” strongly suggests that Paul condemns all same-sex actions where lust is the major motive, but it does not condemn those which are given in love. With the need for the early Christian Church to gain Respectability in Greco/Roman society it would not have been to Paul’s advantage to refer in any way to consensual or loving same-sex acts.

⁶ Clearly the distinction has to be made between those whose principal purpose is to engage in same-sex behaviour and relationships for reasons of love and those who engaged in this behaviour for the physical gratifications or the practice of safe sex. However within the lesbian, gay and transgender communities there is also a large incidence of promiscuity, one night stands and multiple partnerships. Some of this may be because of economic necessity and being forced into the sex trade by the rejection of society, or it may be through the counter culture of sexual licence which has been promoted by the rejection of lesbian and gay people by both society and the Christian Church. Others may feel free to indulge in these activities because of the absence of reproductive consequences, however with the widespread availability of contraception that issue has now moved from an area which was of specific gay and lesbian concerns, to one which challenges the attitude of the Christian church to all aspects of the practice of heterosexual and homosexual sex.

⁷ Homosexuality was only made legal during the 1960's (in Britain in 1967) but the discrimination still continued. For homosexuals who were coming out of the religious and legal repression, the two opposite reactions of flaunting it or of hiding it still possessed considerable force. There was little incentive to conform to the ethics which were demanded by the religious and state institutions which had condemned them, and the challenges of confrontation were always present.

both lives may be given a high and often a priestly status. However those who follow the path of transgression are ruthlessly condemned for their acts.

For as long as the Christian Church held the power to maintain its secular authority, its traditional views on sexual and gender variance and its traditional teaching on homosexuality could never be challenged or usurped. In some Churches the social changes arising in the last fifty years have promoted a re-evaluation of Christian teaching, but these have also resulted in the retrenchment into literalism and fundamentalism in others. That has been accompanied with their rejection by the mainstream of society. The consequences of this are shown by the threats of schism within the Church.

Current social developments have included the disappearance of Church authority, the rejection of religious belief, the widespread introduction and use of contraception, the social acceptance of same-sex relationships, the enacting of anti-discrimination legislation, legalisation of same-sex relationships in the form of Civil Partnerships, and also, since June 2013, the legalisation of Equal (or same-sex) Marriage. These same changes have also meant that most people now have had personal and direct experiences of relating to homosexual couples and to other people who are gender variant or in other same-sex relationships. Such observers do not need to have any special knowledge to understand that the same values of love, care and commitment can be expressed within loving same-sex partnerships as there are in heterosexual marriages, and that is now supported by recent research⁸. It is also easy for them to distinguish between the behaviour of any two people who are involved in a strong heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are involved in a loving homosexual relationship, even in the circumstances where there is a total absence of sex. It is these clashes between what is perceived today as the common sense values, and the fervent reliance on the traditional doctrines which is destroying the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the world.

1:2. Church Responses

On the 28th August 2013 the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, told an audience of traditional born-again Christians that they must “repent” over the ways in which gay and lesbian people have been treated in the past. In a speech

⁸ A common misconception is that the goals and values of lesbian and gay couples are different from those of heterosexual couples. Instead, research has found that the factors that influence relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability are remarkably similar for both same-sex cohabiting couples and heterosexual married couples. There is no reliable evidence which support allegations that homosexuals are promiscuous, predatory, or unable to sustain long term relationships (American Psychological Association. (2008). Answers to your questions: For a better understanding of sexual orientation and homosexuality. Washington, DC: Office of Public and Member Communications 202.336.5700. Available on: www.apa.org/topics/sorientation.pdf). However there is a small minority whose behaviour is used to justify the stereotypes that are applied. There is much other evidence to support these conclusions. An American dating agency found that just 2% of gay people are having 23% of the total reported gay sex. (www.okcupid.com). For a summary see: “So you think Gay Men are Promiscuous?” by Patrick Strudwick, Guardian Newspaper Tuesday 19 October 2010). In a society which now treats homosexuals and heterosexuals equally people can also see this for themselves. This is not the attitude that is found within many Christian churches and that is why all of those people in loving caring and stable same-sex relationships who seek to have the church bless their relationship feel totally betrayed by the prejudices that still exist.

which he gave to the Evangelical Alliance⁹ he said that the vast majority of people under 35 think that the Christian attitude to lesbian and gay people is “wicked” and “incomprehensible”, and that most young people considered Christians to be no better than racists on the issue.

The recent news that Pope Francis has called an extraordinary synod of the Roman Catholic Church in October 2014 to discuss the subject of the family is a welcome development. A questionnaire has been sent to the Bishops asked them to provide local views on issues of premarital cohabitation, birth control and same sex marriage and it is hoped that significant changes can be made, however it is also made clear that the synod will not be expected to change or to reverse the traditional teachings of the Church.

This awareness and concern appears a welcome development. Within the Anglican Church a number of documents have been published. The two which are the most significant are the Church of England report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality, or the Pilling Report¹⁰ which was commissioned by the House of Bishops of the Church of England in January 2012, and was published on the 28 November 2013. The previous report on “Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Working Party of the House of Bishops” was published by the Church of England on the 4 November 2003¹¹. Both of these reports advocate a “Listening Process” in order to further the debate.

Despite their advocacy of the “Listening process” a particular concern is the hesitant progress and also the seeming lack of awareness of the urgency of the situation. A further concern involves the limitations which both of these reports, which are and were, intended to be frameworks to inform the debate, seem to impose in regard to the questioning of the traditional teaching and doctrine of the Christian Church. Many of the presumptions which were made in the 2003 report date from the time of St Thomas Aquinas onwards. As this report says: “Where St Thomas led the Christian tradition has followed” and the statement which is taken from the Catechism of the Catholic Church¹² is also accepted as the traditional view on homosexuality, without regard to the developments in the earlier Church¹³. The later Pilling report notes that attitudes to same sex attraction, both in English society and also amongst Christians in many parts of the world, have changed markedly since the report on the “Issues in

⁹On Wednesday, 28 August, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby visited the Evangelical Alliance's new home in Copenhagen Street, King's Cross, London, to officially open the building.

Evangelical leaders from across the country joined national newspaper and broadcast journalists and members of staff from the Evangelical Alliance at the event, which also celebrated the Alliance's work over the past 170 years and looked ahead to its future. More information and a video of the speech is available on the Evangelical Alliance website: <http://www.eauk.org/church/stories/official-opening-with-the-archbishop-of-canterbury.cfm>

¹⁰ Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality (The Pilling Report) Published: 28/11/2013: Church House Publishing ISBN-13: 9780715144374 ISBN-10: 0715144375

http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1891063/pilling_report_gs_1929_web.pdf

¹¹ Church of England 4 November 2003 Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Working Party of the House of Bishops. Church House, Westminster ISBN No: 9780715138687

¹²Catechism of the Catholic Church: Paragraph 2357. The Second Edition English Translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with corrections promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 8 September 1997

¹³ For an account of these see Gilchrist, S. (2011). “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”. See footer for access.

Human Sexuality" was published, and that a new review is needed, but in Paragraph 61 it also cautions against major change on the doctrines which for centuries have established the traditional teaching of the Church.

The concern about facing change is also present in the Roman Catholic Church. On the 5th February 2014 the United Nations accused the Vatican of systematically turning a blind eye to the decades of sexual abuse of children by the priests, and it demanded that immediately turns over all the known or suspected offenders to civil justice. In this scathingly blunt report, the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child said that Church officials had imposed a "code of silence" on the clerics, and that it moved the abusers from parish to parish "in an attempt to cover up such crimes"^{14 15}. Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, in giving his response to the criticisms in the report on the Church's stance on homosexuality, abortion and contraception, said the world body cannot require the Church to change its "non-negotiable" moral teachings¹⁶. Despite this refusal, this analysis has demonstrated both on the neurophysiological, psychological and theological grounds precisely why the Christian Churches need to reconsider their traditional teaching on these matters. The historic development of sexual abuse is also chronicled in a companion document which forms part of this research¹⁷.

If the Pilling Report at least leaves these matters open to some discussion inside the Church of England, this is not the case at present within the Roman Catholic Church, where it has been made clear that no changes of the traditional Church teaching on homosexuality or on gender and on sexual variance will be contemplated. Yet this analysis makes it clear that this is precisely what is required; and there seems to be little immediate prospect of this taking place. Without such change those Christian Churches will continue to create perpetrators and victims of sexual abuse.

1:3. Pilling Report

Although matters have moved on significantly since the publication of the Pilling Report in November 2013, there is much that should have been welcomed within it in relation to the pastoral care and acceptance of lesbian and gay people, inside the Church (regrettably transgendered people were excluded from consideration in the report by the working party itself). However it is good that the Pilling report endorsed the requirement for a greater understanding of the physiological and psychological processes which lie behind the gender and sexually variant conditions. It is also good that the report recognised the diversity of theological views on these issues, including those within the evangelical wings of the Church. Nevertheless there are

¹⁴"Scathing U.N. report demands Vatican act against child sex abuse". By Stephanie Nebehay And Philip Pullella. Reuters, 5 February 2014. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/02/05/uk-vatican-abuse-un-idUKBREA140LM20140205>

¹⁵"UN denounces Vatican over child abuse and demands immediate action. Devastating UN report demands Vatican 'immediately remove' all clergy who are known or suspected child abusers". The Guardian, 5 February 2014. Lizzy Davies and Henry McDonald. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/05/un-denounces-vatican-child-abuse>

¹⁶"Vatican says U.N. report on child sexual abuse is distorted, unfair". Reuters, 5 February 2014. See: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/02/05/uk-vatican-abuse-tomasi-idUKBREA1414820140205>

¹⁷ Gilchrist, S. (2011). "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships". See footer for access.

still concerns about the depth of the theology which it expects from future debate and that is indicated by the level of the consideration that is given within the report itself.

The possibility of theological change is also considered. Recommendation 11 of the report states that: "Whilst abiding by the Church's traditional teaching on human sexuality, we encourage the Church to continue to engage openly and honestly and to reflect theologically on the circumstances in which we find ourselves to discern the mind of Christ and what the Spirit is saying to the Church now". Nevertheless paragraph 61 declares that: "Because of the centrality of Scripture in the life of the Church, changes which imply that Scripture has been interpreted wrongly or too narrowly in the past, or that the meanings of Scripture once considered certain are, in fact, uncertain, will only be contemplated with great caution. Yet such conclusions remain a possibility, precisely because of the inadequacies of fallen humanity and the fact that it is God's nature to go on revealing himself afresh in every generation".

1:4. Retrenchment and Reaction

If this is a cautious welcome, the hope for this possibility of openness had since been seriously damaged by the issue of the Church of England House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance Document on Same Sex Marriage, which was issued 14 February 2014 in response to the Pilling Report¹⁸. This guidance which this contains has caused a great deal of anger and dismay among the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Communities, not least because its tone and action has foreclosed on many of the issues which should be the subject of the facilitated discussions that are called for in the Report. Not only is it disastrous for the Church, the repute of Christianity is damaged as well. There is already evidence from the advice that is being given by the individual bishops to their clergy of a witch hunt beginning in some dioceses but not in others, and that can only lead to greater schism in the Church.

A consequence of this guidance has been to increase the censures imposed on gay and lesbian clergy with an implied threat of exclusion from office by the Church. That dismay is clearly expressed in the statement issued by the LGBTI Anglican Coalition which responded to the Church of England House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance Document on Same Sex Marriage¹⁹. This statement notes that the new guidance emphasises the well-known fact that same-sex couples will not be able to marry in Church of England churches, even when equal marriage takes effect. Furthermore, despite the recommendations of the Pilling Report, the prohibition on the blessing same-sex couples is also reinforced. The guidance also excludes people who are married to members of the same sex from ordination, and it forbids all LGBTI clergy to marry same-sex partners. It states that this is cruel and unjust to clergy who have faithfully served the church, hitherto with the full knowledge and support of their bishops, and it will also impoverish the ministry by driving away LGBTI ordinands. Only those who are prepared to lie will remain. It further notes that the guidance was

¹⁸Statement from the College of Bishops on the Pilling Report 27th January, 2014

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/01/statement-from-the-college-of-bishops.aspx>

¹⁹16 February 2014. LGBTI Anglican Coalition Response to the Church of England House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance Document on Same Sex Marriage. Issued 14 February 2014. See the Press Releases Tab on the LGBTI Anglican Coalition Website: www.lgbtac.org.uk

prepared without any consultation with openly gay people, and fails to acknowledge that some of the bishops who are signatories to the guidance are understood to be gay themselves. This also heightens the corrosive sense of hypocrisy and cynicism with which this issue is surrounded within the Church. On the 16th February Bishop Steven Croft in an interview on the Sunday Programme on BBC Radio 4²⁰ made it clear that the foundations for this reinforcing document are based on the traditional and the un-negotiable teaching on homosexuality, which is held by the world wide Church. If that is the argument which is being made, it has already been shown that the foundation on which it is based is destroyed by this analysis.

Progress can only be made when a dialogue for change has been opened, and that is the case with the Pilling Report. However discussions which take place exclusively within the House of Bishops of the Church of England, where it is suspected that a number of its members are themselves homosexual, but who are also too concerned to be open about it, is not a good start. It is said that the Church of England exists as much for those who are outside it as those who are within it, and the numbers and strength of lesbian and gay people in society as a whole must be fully represented in any discussions that take place. It is not sufficient to use a framework for discussion where only a selected group which represents all shades of opinion in the Church of England alone, is given equal weight in the discussion. The urgency and the need for this full and proper representation is reflected in the address which the Archbishop of Canterbury gave to the Evangelical Alliance meeting on the 28th August 2013, as is described earlier in this document. The Pilling report makes recommendations for a programme of facilitated discussions during the following two years. The nature and the scope of this facilitation are crucial. That demands the full inclusion of all LGBTI²¹ people in the discussion, and it requires the abandonment of previous approaches in the Church of England, which have been described by LGBTI people as "Talking about us without us", if these conversations are to have any credibility with LGBTI people themselves. This investigation makes it clear that an intense and unrestricted level of debate is needed. If the discussions do not, or cannot take place at this deep level then the Pilling report be seen as a document which is characterised by "Too little, and too late" and its impact will be lost.

It is nobody's interest to continue these battles, and the routes to dialogue must be re-opened. In an open letter addressed to the House and College of Bishops²² the LGBTI Anglican Coalition asked a series of questions in the hope of re-opening the debate. It also notes the long history of events in which the Church of England asked for a listening process to take place, whereby understanding may be gained. First, it notes the affirmation of the traditional Anglican 'insistence upon the duty of thinking and learning as essential elements in the Christian life' (Lambeth Conference 1930) and 'facing with intellectual integrity the questions raised by modern knowledge' (Lambeth 1958). Secondly it notes the repeated calls from the Lambeth Conference since 1978 for deep study of sexuality, including dialogue with homosexual people,

²⁰<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qnb0/episodes/player>

²¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People

²² 21 February 2014. LGBTI Anglican Coalition Open Letter to House Of Bishops Regarding Pastoral Guidance On Same Sex Marriage, Issued 14 February 2014. See the Press Releases Tab on the LGBTI Anglican Coalition Website: www.lgbtac.org.uk

which has been echoed by the Church of England from 1979. Given that the 1988 Lambeth Conference urged that such study and reflection should take full account of 'the socio-cultural factors that lead to the different attitudes in the provinces of our Communion', it enquires how the House of Bishops has approached the difficult task of seeking to understand the socio-cultural factors which might have influenced its members' views on sexual ethics. Finally it asks how the House of Bishops intends to resolve the issues of the presumed bipolarity of male and female in gender and sexual orientations, and in their relationships, in the light of the latest scientific and theological knowledge, so that all people whether they are, intersex, transgendered, lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual, who seek to enter into committed, loving and faithful relationships, can find their rightful places within a renewed Church, which draws its teaching from the New Covenant and the unconditional love of Christ.

Although the Church of England and the Anglican Community have made overtures about the need for listening, true listening must be an interactive process. There is a key element which is heard but not listened to and that is the claim which is made by LGBTI people that the motives for same-sex relationships and gender and sexually variant behaviour is about finding their own identities: it is about being who they are, and it is not determined by drives for the goals of promiscuous, illicit or inappropriate sex²³. Changes in modern society mean that it is now easy for people to distinguish between the behaviour of any two people who are involved in a strong heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are involved in a loving homosexual relationship, even in circumstances where there is a total absence of sex. Therefore a reliance on this analysis should never have been needed, for this point of view has been so strongly and consistently made, and the refusal of the Christian churches to hear what LGBTI people have been saying for centuries is a measure of how much, and how strongly, the Christian Churches have needed to maintain their traditional teaching on gender and sex.

There is much evidence for that opposition. The bishops of the Anglican Communion in the 1998 Lambeth Conference upheld the traditional Christian teaching, which stated that that marriage is between a man and a woman and that those who are not called to marriage, as so defined should remain celibate. A resolution was passed stating that homosexual acts are "incompatible with Scripture" by a vote of 526-70.²⁴ It also included a statement which "calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex". It noted importantly: "We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ." As a consequence of the controversy over the ordination of gay bishops and the blessing of same-sex unions, on 15 October 2003, the Anglican leaders from around the world met in Lambeth Palace in an attempt to

²³ See footnote 8.

²⁴ David Skidmore, 7 August 1998, Lambeth Conference 1998 Archives
<http://www.lambethconference.org/1998/news/lc098.cfm>

avoid a schism on the issue²⁵. In 2004, the Lambeth Commission on Communion issued a report on the issue of homosexuality within the Anglican Communion, which became known as the Windsor Report. This report adopted a strong stand against homosexual practice. It recommended that there should be a moratorium on all further consecrations of actively homosexual bishops and on blessings of same-sex unions,²⁶ and it called for all who were involved in the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson's "to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion".²⁷ However, they did not recommend imposing any discipline on the Episcopal Church or Anglican Church of Canada. During February 2005, the Primates of the Anglican Communion held their regular meeting at Dromantine in Northern Ireland, where the issue of homosexuality was extensively discussed. Of the 38 Primates, 35 attended. The Primates issued a communiqué which reiterated most of the Windsor Report's statements, but it also added a new element. The Episcopal Church and Anglican Church of Canada were asked to voluntarily withdraw from the Anglican Consultative Council, until the next Lambeth Conference which took place in 2008. In January 2014 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York used the conciliatory elements in the Dromantine statement to comment on and to condemn the criminalisation of homosexuality on a worldwide basis²⁸. However this was also after a campaign to take action on these matters by members of the Church.

²⁵ BBC News, 16 October 2003, Anglican leaders' statement. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3198992.stm>

²⁶ The Windsor Report 2004. On public Rites of Blessing of same sex unions.

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/section_d/p3.cfm

²⁷ The Windsor Report 2004. On elections to the episcopate

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/section_d/p2.cfm

²⁸ Following questions regarding the Church of England's attitude to new legislation in several countries that penalizes people with same-sex attraction, on 29 January 2014 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York wrote to all Primates of the Anglican Communion, and to the Presidents of Nigeria and Uganda, recalling the commitment made by the Primates of the Anglican Communion to the pastoral support and care of everyone worldwide, regardless of sexual orientation. Their letter includes an extract from the Dromantine Communiqué issued after a meeting of Primates from across the Communion in 2005. It states

"Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

In recent days, questions have been asked about the Church of England's attitude to new legislation in several countries that penalises people with same-sex attraction. In answer to these questions, we have recalled the common mind of the Primates of the Anglican Communion, as expressed in the Dromantine communiqué of 2005.

The Communiqué also said;

'....we wish to make it quite clear that in our discussion and assessment of moral appropriateness of specific human behaviours, we continue unreservedly to be committed to the pastoral support and care of homosexual people.'

The victimisation or diminishment of human beings whose affections happen to be ordered towards people of the same sex is anathema to us. We assure homosexual people that they are children of God, loved and valued by Him and deserving the best we can give – pastoral care and friendship.'

We hope that the pastoral care and friendship that the Communiqué described is accepted and acted upon in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We call upon the leaders of churches in such places to demonstrate the love of Christ and the affirmation of which the Dromantine communiqué speaks."

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Other changes have taken place. However these have largely been driven by the social changes in society which have overpowered the theological objections of the Church. The Church of England affirmed in July 2005 that all lay homosexuals and lesbians who have entered into civil partnerships still remain eligible for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and communion²⁹ and that a celibate person of homosexual or lesbian orientation is to be eligible for ordination, even if the person has entered into a civil same-sex partnership, noting "The Church should not collude with the present assumptions of society that all close relationships necessarily include sexual activity."³⁰ Now the major concern in the Church of England and the Western Churches is not about the sincerity and social values of these relationships, but over any gay and lesbian sexual acts, (most notably the acts of anal penetration in gay relationships), even though engagement in any type of same-sex behaviour still remain life or death matters in many parts of the world.

There is a fundamental deceitfulness over situations where in one part of the world the Church can seek to welcome loving same-sex relationships, and then condemn as evil the sexual behaviour which is the outcome of such loving acts, while in other parts of the world the same Christian Church advocates and endorses the extreme penalties that are imposed by the civil authorities on any form of same-sex act.

Although the Pilling report does make recommendations which could be immediately implemented, its remit was to create the framework for the debate. Recommendation 3 of the Pilling Report stated that: "Consultation on this report should be conducted without undue haste but with a sense of urgency, perhaps over a period of two years". Whilst it is important that theology is properly and fully discussed, the Church seems to be obsessed with internal matters concerned with the preservation of the institution, and blind to the changes that are taking place in the world outside.

However welcoming the Christian Church may become to the presence, and to the ministry and the witness of the gender and sexually variant people who are within it, however many services of blessing and of endorsement of same-sex relationships which are provided, these core issues of the Christian teaching must be fully and unreservedly addressed. Without that total commitment, the fundamental questioning and the unease about the legitimacy of the status of all gender and sexually variant people who worship within the Christian Church provides a road which leads to even more hypocrisy instead. In a keynote address which the Anglican Bishop of Salisbury presented to the Cutting Edge Consortium Conference on "Making Space for an

Yours in Christ,

+Justin Cantuar +Sentamu Eboracensis
<http://www.lawandreligionuk.com/2014/02/04/human-sexuality-the-archbishops-statement-and-the-dromantine-communique/>

²⁹ Church of England News, 25 July 2005. House of Bishops issues pastoral statement on Civil Partnerships.
<http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2005/07/pr5605.aspx>

³⁰ Church of England News, 25 July 2005. House of Bishops issues pastoral statement on Civil Partnerships..
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Honest Conversation”, held on the 21st April 2012³¹ the Rt. Rev. Nicholas Holtam declared: “In British society, the game is up. Gay people are equal members of our society”. There is other evidence that many other people in the Christian Churches are also aware of what has to happen, but only limited movement has been made. A full and unhindered engagement is now essential, and committed action is urgently required.

2:0. Scientific and Theological Foundations

2.1. Reassessment and Change

For much of the last two thousand years Christian teaching on gender and on sexual variance was predicated on the doctrines that, while it was not by itself a sin to have these specific feelings, to take any action which would express them in any way was a heinous and a sinful act. That doctrine is challenged from three directions. The first comes from new neurophysiological and psychological studies which examine the development of personality and of self-identity during the first few years of life³². The conclusions of these neurophysiological and psychological studies demonstrate that there is no scientific justification for the traditional teaching and the doctrines of the Christian Church, which considers all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour is engaged in for lust, promiscuity, prostitution and immoral or inappropriate sex³³. It is also shown that the gender and sexually variant conditions are identity driven, so behaviour is not the focus and as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour will be discovered among these people as there is in society at large. This analysis also demonstrates that two distinct and opposing driving mechanisms are involved, in which the techniques that are required to manage the traumas which arise through the two different types of conflict are almost opposite to one another. Therefore the attempts to enforce the doctrines of the Church, which has determined that only the goal driven types of conflict can exist creates severe counterproductive effects.

The neurophysiological and psychological studies have shown that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and on sexually variant behaviour cannot be correct³⁴. A reassessment is therefore required and the theological, social and

³¹ Available at: <http://www.lgbtac.org.uk/documents/SuC0422a-BishopOFSalisburyAddressToCECCConf-21apr12.pdf>

³² Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach”. This paper considers the neurophysiological and the psychological processes which are involved in the early development of personality and self-identity. See the footer to access this document.

³³ See for example the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Paragraph 2357. The Second Edition English Translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with corrections promulgated by Pope John Paul II on 8 September 1997: “Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that “Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”

³⁴ Gilchrist, S. (2013). “A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach”. See footer for access.

cultural development of the Christian Church, together with the surrounding societies is examined from four perspectives. The first uses the neurophysiological and the psychological studies. The second looks backwards within Church history and its traditions in an attempt to determine what the earliest doctrines adopted by the Christian Church had been. The third independently examines the social and cultural backgrounds of the Greek, Roman and Jewish societies in which Christianity and the early Church was first formed. The fourth perspective examines the teaching of Jesus himself. By removing the theological presumptions that have been imposed by the Christian Church on society, science and culture for the last two thousand years this analysis opens up the previously barred interpretations of the key biblical texts. Contrary to the traditional Christian teaching it is demonstrated that a duality was encountered in all of the first century societies, whereby those gender and sexually variant people who conformed to the highest moral values of their own societies could be given a high and a priestly status, while the people who transgressed these boundaries were very severely condemned for their acts³⁵.

The results of this analysis have been fully written up elsewhere³⁶. Not only do these demonstrate that the teaching of Jesus on gender and on sexually variant behaviour is consistent with the doctrines of the New Covenant. The results also correspond to and are in line with all other aspects of his teaching, whereby the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is made upon the basis of love and upon the intentions of the acts³⁷. Contrary to the traditional teaching and the doctrines of the Christian Church³⁸ it is additionally established that all transgendered, transsexual³⁹

³⁵ For a Jewish perspective see Greenberg, Steven; (2004) "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition" The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3. The topic is also covered in Gilchrist, S. 2011. "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships".

³⁶ Gilchrist, S. (2014): "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". Gilchrist, S. (2014): "Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church". See footer for access

³⁷ As with Paul in Galatians 3:28

³⁸ It has earlier been noted that in a complete contrast to the vehement condemnations of the Goddess cults by the fourth century Christian Church it is shown in this investigation that, as well as a way of darkness there was also a way of light and that within the core of the theologies of the Goddess cults there was also the calling for responsible sex. In all of the first century cultures an equivalent type of duality is found whereby those gender and sexually variant people who attempt to live to the highest moral standards which their society expects can live according to the way of light. The people who do the reverse follow the paths of darkness instead. Not only did this duality in gender and sexual matters exist in first century Greco/Roman society it is shown to exist in Judaism as well. Equivalent dualities are encountered across cultures and continents, whereby those people who seek to transcend the sex/gender boundaries by living in ways which are true to the ideals of their lives may be given a high and frequently a priestly status. However those people who instead embrace the paths of transgression are very ruthlessly condemned for their acts. This is also in line with what would be expected from the neurophysiological and the psychological studies, and the recognition of this duality also opens up the possibility of fresh interpretations of biblical texts.

³⁹ Not only did Jesus recognise the inherent duality which is encountered in gender and sexually variant behaviour, he acknowledged it, and he sided with the challenges to the male domination imposed by the Goddess cults. Modern interpretations attempt to construe that the references to eunuchs in Matthew 19:3-12 is restricted to an exhortation by Jesus for people not to marry, or to abstain from sexual intercourse, or just to embrace a celibate life. However that interpretation ignores the widespread endorsement in the surrounding first century cultures of the act of self-castration as an expression of supreme religious devotion, together with the major problems which its continued practice would cause throughout the early church. The close conjunction of the statements on marriage and eunuchs in Matthew 19: 3-12 strongly suggests that these two statements should be considered together. Both statements are included in the same sentence; the directly equivalent form of words is also employed, and the Jewish midrashic tradition of interpretation imposes a very careful structuring and analysis of any biblical text. Thus in regard to marriage, the usual interpretation that is given to this passage

lesbian, gay⁴⁰, heterosexual and bisexual people who try to live their lives in ways which fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted alike, and that this does not demand any automatic or universal condemnation of people in loving and committed same-sex relationships which involve anal penetrative sex⁴¹

declares that Jesus considered that marriage should be considered as a “Second best” option, and the same close relationship between these two statements further implies that those people “Who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” and the coupling with: “He that is able to receive it let him receive it”, should be treated in the same way. The eunuchs who kept the Law were given a high place within Jewish society (Isaiah 56:4-5) and it was considered that Deuteronomy 22:5 only prohibited actions of cross dressing for unapproved purposes or deceit. However these were eunuchs who were forcibly castrated by others. In this passage Jesus is extending that status to those people who have castrated themselves. Therefore their actions also should be regarded as another “Second best” approach. The Goddess cults were served by female priestesses and self-castrated male priests. This statement of Jesus caused great difficulties for the early Church since it indicates that the teaching of Jesus contradicted of the teaching and doctrines of the later Church, where all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour were condemned as heinous acts.

⁴⁰A similar duality is found in the area of same-sex relationships. Nobody in the first century understood, or could use words to describe what is meant by homosexuality today. Different words were used for the different types of love, and the distinction that was made between unacceptable and acceptable behaviour identified the boundary to be between activities engaged in for the noble pursuit of love, and those which were pursued for the carnal abuse of sex. The condemnation of such misuse is very strongly expressed in the Jewish tradition. However scriptural teaching within Judaism was conducted using didactic learning methods, whereby pairs of students examined and discussed the meanings of biblical texts. These relationships had to be between two equals, anal penetration was prohibited, but a strong pairing was encouraged. No rules for these partnerships are encountered which establish any boundaries that distinguish between strong heterosexual friendships on the one hand, and disapprove of homosexual relationships on the other. The rabbis in the academies repeatedly encouraged their students to adopt ever increasing degrees of intimacy. For example in the Avot de-Rabbi Hathan it is recommended that a partner should be someone with whom one can “eat and drink, read and study, sleep, and share secrets of the Torah and personal secrets”. The modern interpretations of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are usually taken to mean the prohibition of all forms of same-sex behaviour, but the rabbis of the first century were at pains to make it clear that this prohibition exclusively applied to anal penetrative sex. No other sexual acts are prohibited by the bible, and that includes oral sex. A more extended analysis of these topics is given in: Gilchrist, S. (2014): “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church” and Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church”. See footer for access. Throughout early and medieval Jewish history rabbinic partnerships of great intimacy are found, to which any present day definitions or labels of heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality cannot be applied. When the Gospel of John is likewise assessed in the light of these considerations, then the relationship between Jesus and John seems completely in accord with that expected in a first century rabbinic partnership. This is examined in this analysis, and it is notable that an equivalent or similar form of relationship was carried forward, and was consecrated in the services of “Brother making” by the Christian Church.

⁴¹The recognition of this duality also opens up an alternative interpretation to John 21:15-17 where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him. The first two times Jesus uses the word *agápē* for love. Peter replies that he does, but each time he uses the word *phileo* in response. Jesus uses *phileo* the third time that he asks Peter if he loves him, and it is to this definition of love that Peter gives his enthusiastic consent. The standard Christian interpretations argue that both *phileo* and *agápē* are devoid of any sexual content, and that *agápē* is the higher spiritual form of love which Peter was not yet ready to accept. The structure of this passage also suggests a deeper meaning, for it clearly positions the relationships between the two disciples by affirming the supremacy of Peter and the Church in Rome, while at the same time authenticating the use of the term “The disciple who Jesus loved” within John’s Gospel. It also demonstrates the unique nature of this Gospel and it shows why, and in what way, the Gospel of John should be regarded as complementary to the Synoptic texts. If the John’s Gospel is indeed the product of such a relationship then it is a unique and intimate account of the ministry of Jesus, which has a depth which reaches far beyond that which any other relationship could bring.

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3:0. Adaptation and Change

3:1. Social Disruption.

A major challenge (and achievement) that was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into this dominant culture. That meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the dominant culture and sexual values that were characteristic of Greco/Roman male dominated society. This additionally meant challenging and usurping the power structures which are formed inside these powerful societies by placing the concern for the victims and the suppressed first on the religious and the social agendas of those cultures, and by embracing an all-encompassing morality which is founded on compassion, nurturing and love. These moral characteristics were more typical of the first century female expectations, and women were also a subject group. By the time of the first century many women had become well educated⁴², had responsibility and they were making significant contributions to society; nevertheless they were still denied any form of power and authority over their own lives. This was also a time of religious upheaval within Greek and Roman society. Many of the traditional religions had lost credibility, the Goddess cults were undergoing a major resurgence, there was a proliferation of new religious beliefs, and the male domination of society was being put to the test⁴³.

In the terms of their social messages, both Christianity and the Goddess cults shared certain key elements in common. This was not least because they both represented minority groups inside dominant societies. Like the Goddess cults, early Christianity did not simply challenge gender inequality through its actions and the importance

⁴² It has been shown in this analysis that the prohibition of anal same-sex intercourse was made to preserve the social order in societies where same-sex rape was used as an instrument of humiliation, where married women were regarded as the property of their husbands and where women were not regarded as equals in their own right. With the equality of the sexes in present day society these biblical reasons of the prohibition of anal penetration have now disappeared. Therefore in a society where men and women are treated equally and where the relations between the two people are given to each other in love and faithfulness, there should be no prohibition of anal penetrative sex. Under the New Covenant all acts become incorporated into the Gospel of Christian Love. This meant that judgements were no longer to be made in literal terms, by literally applying the words of the law, but through love and upon the intentions of the acts. The acts of sexual domination that were approved by legal and cultural codes of Greco/Roman society are correctly and strongly condemned in the bible, yet the expectation of the same act of same sex act of anal penetration being carried out in that Greco/Roman culture and in the circumstances when it is given and received in love appear to be of little or no concern to Jesus, as it is described in the story of the Centurion and slave given in Luke, Chapter 7:1-10 and in Matthew, Chapter 8:5-13. For a complete account see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access. The doctrines of the New Covenant support pro-active acts. Therefore instead of waiting for society to change, in the circumstances where all actions are given and received in love and when they are within constant and committed relationships, there should be no prohibition of anal penetrative sex.

⁴³ This analysis gives a very different perspective on the role and function of the Goddess cults from that the traditional Christian viewpoint, which regards them as havens for lust, promiscuity and inappropriate sex. In this analysis it is demonstrated that the rituals and activities of the Goddess cults also embraced the attributes of protecting female interests against the attacks of male aggression and domination. They additionally included support for women's concerns, for birthing and nurture, for fertility and renewal, and in total contrast to the Christian condemnations, they further emphasised the requirement for responsible sex. Therefore, far from any thoughts that their existence was purely to promote the sexual orgies, the cult's activities had an important role. This included fortune telling, the production of charms and healing and welfare activities. They were also associated with the power struggles within these gender unequal societies, and the diversity, disruption and the nature of this behaviour caused both a strong disapproval and a high respect. A full analysis is given in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access.

and the high esteem which it gave to women. It also challenged the moral precepts and the perceptions upon which such a patriarchal society was based⁴⁴. It was not good enough for Jesus simply to express his care and his concern for the poor the outcast and the dispossessed. As with women, Jesus identified himself with them and he gave them the ownership of his message. Like the Gallae priests this action attacked the need for the preservation of status and structure inside a socially unequal world. Both groups inverted the power structures of society⁴⁵ and it was this fundamental difference between the identification of Jesus with women, the outcasts and the poor, not just his expressions of love, care and concern for them, which was a major handicap in obtaining the respectability of the Church. It was the refusal of Jesus to compromise on all these issues which led to his death on the cross.

The message of Jesus which is presented in the Gospel required the Church to work within society to change it, rather than destroy it, and this gave the Church a difficult choice. By capitulating on the political boundaries but not on the moral boundaries the Church could obtain the respectability which it needed to spread the Gospel into the wider world. However an even greater reversal than this 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. Instead of just adopting the social structures and the gender complementarity which were 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 an exclusive orthodoxy within which all forms of expression of gender or sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be a mortal sin and a disordered act. This has additionally led to the great severity of Christian condemnations of all gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of these acts. These transformations then lead to the simple and direct conclusion which states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variant behaviour are built on a false foundation. They were driven by the need to obtain respectability in Greco/Roman society and they do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself.

3:2. Discipline or Doctrine?

This investigation shows that the traditional attitudes of the Church to gender and sexuality come from the need to gain acceptance and respectability in Greco/Roman society, for even though a strong apostolic imprint is present, these views do not come from the teachings of Jesus and the witness of Gospel Church. Therefore they must be regarded as disciplines; and not as the doctrines of the Church. Evidence that Peter and Paul thought in the same way is present in the Epistles and the letters themselves and perhaps the most telling way to consider these arguments is to

⁴⁴It is shown that a major driving force behind the gender disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults was defined by the pursuit of power for female protection, concerns and rights. The Christian Church instead makes the presumption that this disruptive behaviour was entirely in pursuit of illicit sex.

⁴⁵The role of the scapegoat mechanism as defined by Girard is relevant here. See Gilchrist, S. (2014): "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". Use footer to access.

examine the authority which the Apostles invoke. In 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul was urging Christian women to keep silent in Church because that would be a disgrace to society, and there is no direct reference to Christ. For Peter likewise (1 Peter 3:1-16) the need for women's submission was because the esteem of the Church had to be nurtured within society at large. Paul's comment in Ephesians 5:22-24 again refers to the absolute authority and control exercised by the "Pater familias" in Greco/Roman society. All of these statements reflect the urgent need for the Church to gain respect in that society, and to provide models for the Church. Unlike Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28, which endorses true gender equality and transcendence, none of them attempt to derive their authority from the teaching of Christ⁴⁶.

The Gospel message of Jesus demanded that people work within society to change it, rather than destroy it. This means that it is the responsibility of Christianity and of the Christian Churches within every generation to work out anew what all of these relationships should be. Those relationships change with time, and in present day society, where complete gender equality is now determined by the belief in universal human rights, and not because of the compulsory complementarity of first century Greco/Roman and Jewish views which maximise the perceived usefulness of men and women in society; a totally different approach is urgently required.

This demands a radical change, but when the Christian Church is destroying itself in the eyes of society, these are changes which must urgently be made. This is also the change in viewpoint which should enable the Christian Churches of the present day to establish without any diminution of the moral values or the precepts of Christian teaching, and without any degree of departure from truth of the Gospel message, an approach to gender and to sexuality, to gender equality and to gender and sexual variance, which is entirely appropriate for present day world.

3:3. Scope of Analysis

Although the Pilling report has kept to its brief, which it required it to prepare a report of the House of Bishops Working Group on human sexuality, there are other major challenges that must also be met; for is not only the issues of gender and of sexual variance which must be addressed as a consequence of this analysis. These results also question the present teaching on gender equality, and on the presumptions for male authority, and the roles of women, both in ministry and in governance. This applies not only to the Churches that are within the Anglican Communion, it applies even more strongly to the Roman Catholic Church. The prevalence of sexual abuse in these Churches is also a major concern. That strongly suggests that the correct terms of reference for a full debate must include all of these areas, and that this must

⁴⁶Paul in Galatians 3:28 describes a doctrine of a complete transcendence of gender. This statement draws its authority from the Gospel itself. However there are many other statements within the Pauline Epistles which are concerned with how Christian men and women should behave in a first century society. Paul provides a whole compendium of these: 1 Corinthians 7:1-17, 32, 35, 39; 1 Corinthians 11:3-17; 1 Corinthians 14:33-37; Philippians 4:3; Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 5:21-31; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Timothy 5:1-16. Also 1 Peter 3:1-6 is at least as important as these others. Unlike the statement in Galatians 3:28 all of these statements draw their authority from the requirement for the respectability of the Christian Church. They do not rely on the teaching of Jesus for that, and it is argued that these must be regarded instead as contemporary rules of conduct that were determined by the needs of the Church in relation to Greco/Roman society.

consider not only attitudes and the traditions, but also the organisational structures of certain churches which have been founded on this base. That debate may demand a radical change, and the prospect of this could be why any movement, in even one of these areas, is strongly resisted.

There is a strong irony in paragraph 147 of the Pilling Report, when it declares that: "But the most effective missionaries, following the example of St Paul, have always sought aspects of the indigenous culture which they could affirm and thus lead their hearers deeper into Christ". The question which then has to be asked is: What did both Peter and Paul need to take from Greco/Roman society? That is answered in terms of the ability to transform the Christian movement from one which had first belonged to an oppressed and a conquered society into one which became able to identify itself with a dominant state. Jesus had first usurped and inverted the power structures of society, but in the processes of gaining respectability that process was reversed. It also resulted in the adoption of a strong heterosexual orthodoxy in order to separate itself from the politically challenging behaviour of the Goddess cults.

In the social context of that time those decisions may even have been correct, but the major departure has been to turn those pragmatic decisions into the immutable doctrines of the Church. For as long as the Christian Church holds to this viewpoint it will continue to be plagued by the issues of gender discrimination homophobia, and sexual abuse.

3:4 Conclusions

All forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour imposed a threat to any despotic, male dominated, powerful society. This was for two reasons. One was the disruption it caused to the power structures and institutions of those societies, and the second was the abandonment of responsibilities for the thrills of sex. The Christian Church rightly and vociferously condemned the use of gender and sexually variant behaviour for both of these reasons and in doing this it created a powerful political challenge which attacked the foundations upon which those powerful societies were built.

The refusal to properly consider the political imperatives of this seems to be common with much current theological analysis, and a further example of that is the failure to consider the political implications of the development of the Goddess Cults⁴⁷. It is considered in this study that early Christianity had at first found itself on the wrong side of the political boundaries and it had to jump across them in order gain the high respectability inside the mainstream of Greco/Roman society which it sought. That required the adoption of some of the attitudes to gender and sex that were enforced within Greco/Roman society. The consequences of these compromises and changes were to be expressed in the denial of the true gender transcendence of the Gospel message, the betrayal of the ministry of women, and through the condemnation of all

⁴⁷ For a full account see: Gilchrist, S. (2014): "Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church". Also Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access

forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being in pursuit of immorality and for inappropriate sex.

This assessment of gender and sexual difference in the early and modern Christian Church is examined using the results of a new neurophysiological and psychological research study which includes the development of personality and self-identity during infancy and early childhood. This demonstrates that the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexuality cannot be correct. Instead of the traditional teaching of the Church on sexual and on gender variance, which presumes that all forms of sexually and gender variant behaviour is intrinsically disordered and always in pursuit of lust, immorality and inappropriate sex a duality is shown to exist, and as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour will be found amongst such people as that which exists in society at large. It is also shown that conflicts that arise from the formation processes creating personality and self-identity up to around the age of two years are driven by intense and physiologically driven processes of imitation and rejection. Up to this period children have not developed the self-awareness and the mental abilities which allow them to convert these physiologically based functions of possession, imitation and rejection into cognitive abilities that can focus on goals and desire. The management methods which are needed for the different types of conflict are almost opposite to one another. It is demonstrated in this analysis that the sexual and gender variant conditions are identity driven, and are concerned with finding a place in society, therefore the attempts by the Church to impose its own doctrines on such gender and sexually variant people which presume that these emotions are always goal driven, and that they are a lifestyle choice, not only causes great harm and distress, they are also counterproductive in effect.

This paper is extracted from a longer document: Gilchrist, S. (2014): "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". Other documents which cover similar material are also available⁴⁸. The investigation examines how these traditions have developed within the Christian Church. This examination is carried out from four different standpoints, the development of the traditions inside the Church, the neurophysiological and psychological studies, the traditions, cultures and social structures belonging to the surrounding first century societies, and the teaching of Jesus himself. By removing the veil created by the theological presumptions on gender and sexuality, which have dominated both Church and society for the last two thousand years, and by looking for the dualities found in all societies, new insights can be gained, including a consideration of previously barred interpretations of key biblical texts. It is shown that the teaching of Jesus in relation to gender equality and on gender and sexual variance would find acceptance in the present day, and that as with St Paul in Galatians 3:28, all people are to be as one in the love of Christ. It is also established that all transgendered, transsexual lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways which fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities in roles that are true to themselves; must be accepted alike, and this does not demand any automatic or a universal

⁴⁸Gilchrist, S. (2014): "Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church". Also Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access.

condemnation of people who are in loving and committed same-sex relationships which involve anal penetrative sex. The social and political challenges which this made to a despotic, male dominated, patriarchal society were considerable, and it is further demonstrated in this analysis that the abandonment of these doctrines of true gender transcendence and equality, and their replacement with the doctrines that were more representative of those of a gender polarised Greco/Roman society came because of the requirement to give respectability to the Church.

These transformations then lead to the simple and direct conclusion which states that what today are considered to be the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on gender equality, and on sexual and gender variant behaviour are built on a false foundation. They were driven by the need to obtain respectability in Greco/Roman society and they do not come from the teaching of Jesus himself. It is also shown that this pursuit of respectability has led to the enforcement of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and an exclusive orthodoxy within which every method of expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour is considered to be a mortal sin and a disordered act. This has additionally led to the extreme severity of the Christian condemnations of all gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of these acts.

For as long as the Christian Church was able to dominate the social structures and the moral values of society these doctrines could not be challenged. The changes in present day society mean that this control has now been broken. Many people now have personal experience of those who are in loving same-sex relationships and it is also easy for them to distinguish between the behaviour of any two people who are involved in a strong heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are involved in a loving homosexual relationship, even in the circumstances where there is a total absence of sex. It is these clashes between what is perceived today as the common sense values, and the fervent reliance on the traditional doctrines which continues to destroy the credibility of, and the believability in Christianity in the eyes of the world. The deprivation of any personal livelihood, whether it is that of clergy or lay people, in pursuit of doctrines which this investigation considers are wrong, and where many people in society believe them to be incorrect, brings Christianity and the Church into an even greater disrepute. It also leaves it vulnerable to any legal challenges which may ensue. These are issues which the Church must fully address.

For many years the Church of England has espoused the need to listen to the views of LGBTI people. It has produced a number of reports on sexuality⁴⁹ ⁵⁰, two of which have been intended to provide a framework for the debate. However the relatively limited depth of theology with the underlying assumptions within them make them appear as schema for protecting the traditional teaching of the Christian Church while providing for a greater inclusion of LGBTI people within it. These refusals and denials should not be acceptable to anybody, churchmen, churchwomen, laity and

⁴⁹ Church of England 4 November 2003 Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Working Party of the House of Bishops. Church House, Westminster ISBN No: 9780715138687

⁵⁰ Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality (The Pilling Report) Published: 28/11/2013: Church House Publishing ISBN-13: 9780715144374 ISBN-10: 0715144375
http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1891063/pilling_report_gs_1929_web.pdf

people of all gender identities and sexualities. Any suggestion which questions the traditional teaching on sexual and gender variance is presently totally rejected by the Roman Catholic Church. The reluctance of the Church of England to embrace any prospect of change is also described in additional papers⁵¹, which also consider the wide variety of views and the threats of schism within the Church. Much of the concern seems to be about the preservation of an institution and it was the refusal of Jesus to compromise his Gospel message for any state or institution that led to his death on the cross. Is it time for a new resurrection of the Christian Church?

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⁵¹ Access these at: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/articles/bibliography.htm>