

# Future Approaches to the Science and Theology of Gender and Sexual Variation in the Church of England and the Christian Church.

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SuH0427a

14 April 2017<sup>2</sup>

On the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017 the Church of England's "Bishops' Reflection Group on Sexuality" presented its report on: "*Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations: A Report from the House of Bishops*"<sup>3</sup>. The working party which created it identified two issues which they considered to be particularly important. First, there was little support inside the working party for changing the Church of England's teaching on marriage and sexual relationships. However there was a strong sense that existing resources, guidance and tone needed to be reassessed. The Bishop's report advocated compassion but no changes in the teaching of the Church<sup>4</sup>. This was after two years of a "Shared Conversations" process whose stated aim was "*to enable the different sections of the Church to understand one another better*". Many LGBTI people contributed to these discussions, some at considerable cost to themselves<sup>5</sup>.

There is also no consideration of the impact of science in the Bishop's 2017 report. By making it clear that all future discussions must take place within the context of the traditional teaching of the Church, this report denies from the beginning the fundamental depth of listening and range of input that is needed for future meaningful discussions to occur. The General Synod of the Church of England voted not to "Take Note" of the report at a debate on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017<sup>6</sup>.

Apart from this refusal to examine the doctrine, it is remarkable that the issues of science are not at the forefront of any report. This is particularly important when the psychology on which the Church teaching is based is determined by the influences of history, theology and tradition, instead of the independence and objectivity that is required any scientific approach. That refusal to engage in these issues is of long standing. This was highlighted in a paper by the author: "*Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*"<sup>7</sup>.

For many centuries the Christian Church has condemned all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as "*acts of grave depravity that choose the sexual act to the gift of life, which do not proceed from a genuine*

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

<sup>2</sup> Issued 14 April 2017: This paper is available online at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/232P-FutureApproaches.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Church of England (2017): *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations. A Report from the House of Bishops*: General Synod Document 2055 <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/3863472/gs-2055-marriage-and-same-sex-relationships-after-the-shared-conversations-report-from-the-house-of-bishops.pdf> :See also: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/229P-GS2055.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> It describes this as: "*Interpreting the existing law and guidance to permit maximum freedom within it, without changes to the law, or the doctrine of the Church*". Clause 32 also notes that: "*It would also need to be acknowledged that some deep-seated questions are likely to come to the fore in addressing these matters. In particular, issues of identity that are both controversial and profoundly personal would need to be faced..... Can the Church of England establish a consistent tone and culture when it encompasses those who hold to some sharply differing moral judgments about those choices in this case?*" Clause 33 notes: "*This is therefore a critical and highly challenging area for further work. Tackling it well will be crucial for everything that follows*".

<sup>5</sup> Shared Conversations: See: Church of England (2015) Grace and Disagreement article: Grace and Disagreement Shared Conversations on Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality: [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2165248/grace2.pdf> . Also: Church of England (2015) Shared Conversations Website: [Online]. [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <http://www.sharedconversations.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "*What Next? Some thoughts following the rejection by the General Synod of the Church of England, of report issued by the "Bishop's Reflection Group on Sexuality"*". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/229P-WhatNext.pdf> . This was published in letter form in the Church of England Newspaper on the 24 February 2017

<sup>7</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2014): "*Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*". <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversoryAndCrisis.pdf>

*effective and sexual complementarity and under no circumstances can they be approved*"<sup>8</sup>. That defines this behaviour as a reward driven lifestyle choice, which can be diverted through the predations of others, and is invariably in pursuit of lust and inappropriate acts. The danger in making such a judgement is that the principles which give rise to it can be tested by science. Currently a great majority of professional institutions in the Western world regard gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as being naturally expected variations of the human condition which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development, and which cannot be changed by the individual concerned or by the actions of others in subsequent life. This is the position taken for example by the British Royal College of Psychiatrists<sup>9</sup>, the British Psychological Society and parallel United Kingdom organisations<sup>10</sup>. Equivalent positions are taken by the American Psychiatric Association<sup>11</sup> and the American Psychological Association<sup>12</sup>. Other international mental health organizations, including the World Health Organization have followed. Against this is set minority conservative organisations such as the American College of Paediatricians<sup>13</sup> and the might of the Christian Church.

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>14</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.

This experiential evidence is further confirmed in a new neurophysiological and psychological investigation. This takes a novel approach which links the early physiologically driven forces which propel early development to the cognitive processes which become active in later life. The investigation is described in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life*"<sup>15</sup>. It is established that the search for both gender and sexual identities are identity driven. Therefore behaviour and reward are not the focus. As a consequence a moral duality must exist whereby gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies should be highly regarded while those who misuse these relationships ought to be very severely condemned for their acts. Not only is the traditional teaching of the Christian Church contradicted by the experiential scientific evidence, it is also contradicted by these scientific results. An additional concern arises because the traditional teaching of the Christian Churches medically misdiagnoses these conditions and great harm has been done because the wrong methods have been applied<sup>16</sup>.

A second part of this investigation determines how and why this contradiction has occurred. An extended theological and historical study has been conducted which uses the results of this scientific analysis to

<sup>8</sup> Extracted from 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

<sup>9</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists' statement on sexual orientation [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/ps02\\_2014.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/ps02_2014.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> British Psychological Society and other organisations: Conversion Therapy: Consensus Statement.

[http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/conversion\\_therapy\\_final\\_version.pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/conversion_therapy_final_version.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> APA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Statement: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/sexual-orientation.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> APA Policy Statements on LGBT Concerns <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/policy/>

<sup>13</sup> American College of Paediatricians <https://www.acped.org/> : 'Transgender' Conditioning Is 'Child Abuse':

<http://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/j-matt-barber/american-college-pediatricians-transgender-conditioning-child-abuse>

<sup>14</sup> For an extended analysis of their formations see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "*Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/201P-PersonalityDevelopmentAndLGBTPeople.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> This is described in Gilchrist, S. (2016): "*Science and Belief. A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life*", which is available on the internet at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-PaperPersonality.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> All of the major medical organizations across the UK have very strongly condemned any attempt to try to 'cure' transgender people. In 2015 a "*Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK*" was issued by these health organisations. This was updated in 2017. It says: "*We the undersigned UK organisations wish to state that the practice of conversion therapy has no place in the modern world. It is unethical and harmful and not supported by evidence....Sexual orientations and gender identities are not mental health disorders, although exclusion, stigma and prejudice may precipitate mental health issues for any person subjected to these abuses. Anyone accessing therapeutic help should be able to do so without fear of judgement or the threat of being pressured to change a fundamental aspect of who they are*" The signatories are: UK Council for Psychotherapy, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, British Psychoanalytic Council, British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, The British Psychological Society, College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists, The Association of LGBT Doctors and Dentists, The National Counselling Society, NHS Scotland, Pink Therapy, Royal College of General Practitioners, the Scottish Government and Stonewall. Original document available at: <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Memorandum-of-understanding-on-conversion-therapy.pdf> . For update see: <http://www.cosrt.org.uk/latest-news/memorandum-understanding-statement-published-today/>

examine the development of Christianity from the standpoint of the surrounding societies, and not just from the evidence presented by the Christian Church. This is examined in a further paper: Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church"<sup>17</sup>

Because the moral duality which is identified in this investigation is inherent to gender and sexually variant behaviour, its characteristics must be present in all societies and at all times. It must also be visible in societies where same-sex relationships can be expressed. Rather than sexual propriety being determined on a gendered basis, moral judgements in antiquity were made by separating the noble pursuit of love from the carnal abuse of sex. The relationships between power and sex in these grossly gender and socially unequal societies are also examined, and it is shown that it was the abuses of power which gave permission for extreme abuses of sex: most notably in male same-sex acts. All of these features would have been known Jesus, John, Paul, and the other disciples. People would have been aware of them in the cultures in which they lived. It is clear that any future discussions on the places and roles of gender and sexually variant (LGBTI) people within the Christian Churches are unlikely to succeed unless these fundamental issues are addressed. These concerns are covered in three further papers: Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": and Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church"<sup>18</sup>

Changing attitudes to the relationships between power and sex are shown to have played a key role in these developments. It is also demonstrated that a paradigm shift has taken place, and that this is why the contradiction occurs. The prohibitions of same-sex intercourse in Leviticus 20:13 and 18:22 are examined from both the first century Jewish perspectives and the Old Testament viewpoints, where sources such as those from Ugarit are used. It is demonstrated that the specific reason for this prohibition in Leviticus was to condemn its use in enforcing power, humiliation, domination and subjugation inside and across the different grossly gender and socially unequal societies. Contrary to present day expectations this condemnation was not primarily concerned with the denunciations of sexual abuse, temple prostitution or fertility rites<sup>19</sup>. However this does not indicate a reduction in moral standards. Sexual abuse is condemned in many passages in the bible and in other halachic literature. In addition heterosexual intercourse was permitted for "the good of relationships" as well as procreation. Contraception was also endorsed in some limited circumstances; however ejaculation for any other purpose was strongly condemned as "spilling one's seed in vain". Jews were also required to "populate the world"<sup>20</sup>.

These criteria put strict boundaries on what was acceptable. Nevertheless the Rabbis were quite specific in citing the abuse of power as the particular reason for the prohibition in Leviticus 20:13 and 18:22<sup>21</sup>. This means that unlike to today's understanding, the primary focus of this prohibition in Leviticus as it was understood in the first century, was on the abuse of its purpose in enforcing power and domination: not due to an intrinsic abhorrence of sexual penetration, or the ecstasies of the sexual act. That understanding corresponds with the condemnations of Sodom and Gomorrah for "Lack of hospitality" by Jesus in the New Testament and the misbehaviours in Jewish first century Chavruta and Rabbinic partnerships; which were

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<sup>17</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): "A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf> .

<sup>18</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015): "Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> See Genesis 1:28 and other passages. In Genesis Chapter 35 Onan was stuck dead for "spilling his seed on the ground". This was an act of coitus interruptus. However it is sometimes taken to condemn masturbation. It can also be regarded as the penalty Onan endured because of his failure to obey God's command to populate the world. The attitudes and prohibitions involved in same-sex and heterosexual intercourse are extensively discussed in: Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> For discussions on temple prostitution and its relationship to fertility acts and sex, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/016B-UnfinishedReformationArticle.pdf>

condemned for “Lack of respect”<sup>22</sup>. It is also supported in the Old Testament analysis<sup>23 24</sup>. Significantly this means that when these abuses of power are absent, the moral judgements that are applied to same-sex intercourse should be the same as those which are applied to any other same-sex or heterosexual act of sex.

Roman society viewed sexual activity and same-sex intercourse through the prism of subjection and domination. Slaves, non-citizens and members of subject and conquered societies were particularly vulnerable to the resulting sexual abuses. However there is no evidence for these power struggles in the Letters and Epistles of the New Testament. Instead of this, Peter and Paul repeatedly emphasise the need to obey the Roman authorities and the efforts they made to ensure the respectability of Christian behaviour in conformity with the social codes that applied in the Roman world, are also well described. This meant that Christianity could no longer attack these institutional power structures. However it could still attack the personal sexual abuses that arose from them. The early Church did so, but as a consequence the denunciations contained in the New Testament focus entirely on the abuses of sex. Christianity was virulent in its attacks. Because of the intensity of these condemnations, and the subsequent criminalisation of gender and sexually variant behaviour, it is not surprising that all evidence for, and the awareness of the moral duality which is inherent in it was lost. In addition: in a society where power and domination was enforced through same-sex intercourse, doctrines which demanded the celibacy of Jesus and the virginity of John also became essential for the life of the Church<sup>25</sup>

A paradigm shift has therefore occurred. This has moved the understanding from, what in New Testament times was the condemnation of same-sex intercourse based on denouncing the purpose of the act, into the unvarying condemnation of the same act: as something which is invariably depraved, disordered, and in pursuit of inappropriate sex. This transference was consolidated in the work of Aquinas, who was largely responsible for formulating what today is regarded as the traditional teaching of the Church on same-sex intercourse, and by extension on gender and sexually variant behaviour. For Aquinas the supremacy of the Church, which was vested in the Popes, was greater than that of Kings and Emperors. Aquinas also sought to restore the authority of the Church after the Cathar revolt which began in 1243. This revolt was partly due to repulsion at the abuses of power and sex that had been taking place within the socially dominant Church. Aquinas enforced the paradigm shift by excluding consideration of these priestly abuses of power on sexual behaviour; by focussing his condemnations solely on the motives of sex, and by condemning all sexual behaviour outside marriage as mortal sins which are always in pursuit of lust and improper sex<sup>26</sup>. The presumption that same-sex relationships attack the sanctity of marriage is also inherent in these doctrines

<sup>22</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2014): “*Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Difference in the Early and Modern Christian Church*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/017B-ChristianityAndCrisisOverview.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2015): “*Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Among the Early Church Fathers, Origen considered that this condemnation was about the lack of hospitality.

<sup>25</sup> The virginity of John is repeatedly emphasised in the writings of the Early Church Fathers. It is still celebrated today in the Orthodox Churches. See Gilchrist, S. (2016f): “*Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> In 1051 the book by Peter Damian (1007-1072), “*Liber Gomorrhianus [Book of Gomorrha]*” was presented to Pope Leo IX. In it St. Peter Damian attacks same-sex practices, mutual masturbation, ejaculating between the thighs, anal copulation and solitary masturbation as subversive disruptions against moral order. He identifies these with madness associated with excesses of lust. He was especially indignant about priests having sexual relationships with adolescent boys. He singles out superiors who, due to excessive and misplaced piety, have been lax in their duty to uphold church discipline. He opposes the ordination of those who are given to “unclean acts” and wants those already ordained dismissed from Holy Orders. Those who misuse the sacraments to defile boys are treated with particular contempt. In his description he writes: “This vice strives to destroy the walls of one’s heavenly motherland and rebuild those of devastated Sodom. Indeed, it violates temperance, kills purity, stifles chastity and annihilates virginity ... It infects, stains and pollutes everything; it leaves nothing pure, there is nothing but filth ... This vice expels one from the choir of the ecclesiastical host and obliges one to join the energumens and those who work in league with the devil; it separates the soul from God and links it with the demons... What else shall I say? It expels all the forces of virtue from the temple of the human heart and, pulling the door from its hinges, introduces into it all the barbarity of vice ... In effect, the one whom ... this atrocious beast has swallowed down its bloody throat is prevented, by the weight of his chains, from practicing all good works and is precipitated into the very abysses of its uttermost wickedness. Thus, as soon as someone has fallen into this chasm of extreme perdition, he is exiled from the heavenly motherland, separated from the Body of Christ, confounded by the authority of the whole Church, condemned by the judgment of all the Holy Fathers, despised by men on earth, and reproved by the society of heavenly citizens”. The author also provides a refutation of the canonical sources used by offending clerics to justify their behaviour. He also provides chapters which assess the damage done to the church by offending clerics. His final chapter is an appeal to the reigning pope (Leo IX) to take action. The book caused considerable controversy and it aroused some enmity against its author. Even Pope Leo IX, who had at first praised the work, came to conclude that it was exaggerated. He softened Peter Damian’s suggestions by excluding only the clergy who had offended repeatedly for a long period of time..... Does this have any echoes in the present day Church? See: Gilchrist, S. (2011): “*Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships*”: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

which Aquinas developed. The sanctity of marriage is very highly valued in the teaching of Jesus, and in the Jewish tradition, yet none of the statements in the bible automatically condemn the possibility of other relationships. Neither does Jesus do this in his own teaching. As a consequence there is no equivalent condemnation to that which Aquinas imposes in the Bible itself.

This paradigm shift is shown to be the reason why the contradiction between science and theology occurs. The teaching of Jesus is also examined in the light of this paradigm shift and the neurophysiological and psychological study<sup>27</sup>. It is shown that there is no contradiction with the results of the scientific study. From each of the scientific, theological and historical points of view it is demonstrated in this investigation that the traditional teaching and doctrines of the Christian Church on gender and sexual variation are built on an incorrect foundation. They do not correspond with the teaching of Jesus: they come instead from the need to gain respectability in Roman society. For as long as the Christian Church held control over the social attitudes of society, this traditional doctrine could never be challenged. Because of the changes in present day world, that control has now been broken. The de-criminalisation of homosexuality in the 1960s and the subsequent anti-discrimination legislation on a world-wide basis means that for the first time in at least 1000 years people are able to see for themselves the full range of experience in gender and sexually variant behaviour. They now have the ability to distinguish relationships that result from the outpouring of love, faithfulness and lifelong commitment, from those which only seek the gratifications of sex. They can also make their own assessment of the moral duality that exists. It is the continued refusal of the Catholic Church and the Church of England in particular to consider even the possibility of any change in their traditional doctrines on gender and sexually variant behaviour which is destroying the credibility of Christianity and the Church in the present day world.

The crucial feature that must be resolved is therefore identified by the scientific analysis which demonstrates that there is a fundamental contradiction between the conclusions of science and the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. The theological, historical and social analyses, at most, can only show how and why this conflict occurs, and chart ways of escape. A radical approach is taken in this investigation. It is not necessary to agree with the results of this historical, theological and social study, however it is essential to find ways to resolve the contradiction between science and theology that occurs. This demands that there must be some changes to the traditional teaching of the Church. The change that is needed is not one which departs from the Gospel message: It is one that returns to the Gospel texts.

It is the paradigm shift that needs to be corrected. Attempts of conservative groups such as GAFCON<sup>28</sup>, who believe that the traditional teaching of the Church on homosexuality and on gender and sexual variation is true to the Gospel message are instead seeking to return to a Christianity which is defined by the needs of the thirteenth century Church<sup>29</sup>.

This is not an analysis which demands or supports any relaxation of moral values in attitudes to gender and sex. Instead it demands that the boundary between use and abuse be changed from one that condemns all gender and sexually variant behaviour irrespective of purpose, to one that applies identical criteria of use and abuse to all heterosexual, cross-gender and same-sex sexual acts. The transformations that this change demands within the gender and sexually variant communities, for some, may be as great as those which are required by the Christian Church. These concerns are not just a matter of theology. It is important to note that discrimination against gender and sexually variant people is a socially led phenomenon and it would be a mistake to identify its cause with religious belief. All forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour, for any purpose challenges the good order in every society where the separation of gender roles is legally or socially enforced. Therefore the condemnation of all gender and sexually variant behaviour, regardless of purpose, places the Christian Church in a role which colludes with and gives legitimacy to the scapegoating of all gender and sexually variant people in the secular world. In many countries extreme legal penalties are applied: and this scapegoating will continue for as long as these doctrines are in force.

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<sup>27</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> The "Global Anglican Future Conference", a group, mainly of African churches, representing the conservative elements in the Anglican Communion.

<sup>29</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): "Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?": <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/226P-ConsiderScience.pdf>

There is no doubt that there was a great deal of sexual abuse in first century society, where the blatant abuses of power gave permission for extreme abuses of same-sex acts. However to condemn all gender and sexually variant behaviour for the abuses of some, is akin to saying today that every member of a minority community is a terrorist because some engage in terrorist acts. Therefore change is urgently needed<sup>30</sup>. Instead of making homosexuality and every gender and sexually variant person the scapegoat for sexual abuse, it requires that the correct role for the Christian Church should be one of combatting all forms of abusive sex.

It has already been noted that the conclusions of the scientific study are in accord with the large amount of experiential scientific evidence that is now available. It also affirms the policies currently adopted by the major professional institutions. In addition it reflects the lived experiences of LGBTI people. At present there is a great deal of anger amongst the LGBTI communities who feel that the contributions they made in good faith to the *"Shared Conversations"* process have been ignored. The results of this investigation have also been made available to the Church of England, from before the start of the *"Shared Conversations"* process<sup>31</sup>. If the presumption the author makes about clauses 32 and 33 in the Bishop's 2017 report are correct, these results were known to the working party as well. Obviously any academic study must be subjected to the rigours of a peer review process. However to foreclose on any investigation by declaring that there should be no change in the traditional teaching of the Church, before all of the evidence that has been made available to the working party is fully considered, can have little justification. It is therefore very difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is an attempt to avoid the real issues that should be addressed. Presenting the report to Synod at this time in a *"Take note"* debate could be seen as a way to get Synod to stifle further discussion of the full range of factors that are involved.

Major issues still need to be addressed. Clause 33 in the report states: *"This is therefore a critical and highly challenging area for further work. Tackling it well will be crucial for everything that follows"*, emphasises that point. It is also of note that the use of the word "choices" in clause 32 and their use of the term *"same-sex attracted"*, suggests that the Bishops are still thinking that these are issues which are determined by lifestyle choices, instead of the search for identity and objective results. The real issue is not that of finding ways to be nice to LGBTI people, as the report decrees. The demand that LGBTI people make is that the duality and identity driven nature inherent in gender and sexually variant conditions is recognised, and that transgender, 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 and activities that are true to themselves should be accepted as full and equal members of the Christian Church. In return for this, the obligation that gender and sexually variant people accept is that the same standard of moral behaviour is required of them as it is of any other group.

The social consequences of these Christian doctrines are considerable. Part of clause 34 of the 2017 Church of England Bishop's report states *"There was some support for the view that the teaching document [which the report proposes] should include penitence for the treatment some lesbian and gay people have received at the hands of the Church"*. Penitence is not enough for it does not remove the slur, (as it is expressed in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church): *"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."*<sup>32</sup> By extension transgender experience may be included in this as well. The existence of this doctrine enables others to use it to condemn all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour no matter how welcoming or accepting Pope Francis and the Bishops of the Church of England attempt to be.

For a discussion on the Catholic viewpoint see: Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*<sup>33</sup>. These matters cannot just be seen as issues of religious doctrine, for they combine with the

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<sup>30</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?"*: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/226P-ConsiderScience.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2014): Articles Offered to The Church of England for use in its Process of Shared Discussions on LGBTI Matters: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/020B-OfferedPapersIntroduction.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> 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

<sup>33</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*, available on the internet at: <http://www.tqdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>

secular prejudices, social discrimination and the tribal identifications which are used to condemn any minority group. The traditional Church doctrine gives strong ammunition for that social discrimination and it leads elements of the Church to collude with the harm that this creates. In a letter which was sent after the rejection of the report by the Bishop's Reflection Group in the Church of England General Synod, the Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury and York indicated that, notwithstanding this rejection, discussions should still continue according to the traditional doctrine on gender and sexual variation as "The Church of England has received it"<sup>34</sup>. Despite all of these discussions and the evidence that is now available, both the Catholic Church and the Church of England still appear to remain resolutely determined to hold on to what today is regarded as this traditional teaching of the Church.

This is a time when Britain, the United States and many other countries are rejecting reasoned arguments in pursuit of narrow, nationalist and protectionist policies, which place self-interest first. For Christianity and the Churches to refuse to consider even the possibility of any change to its traditional doctrines on these matters is only tampering with the issues that are involved. Instead of colluding with these condemnations and prejudices, a clear moral stand by Christianity and the Churches is needed. Therefore changes or reconsiderations of the traditional teaching of the Church are urgently required. This is a time when Christianity most needs its faithful and committed gender and sexually variant members to stand as beacons of Christian Witness against the secular scapegoating by society. It is also a time when gender and sexually variant people most need the full and unwavering support of the Christian Church.

More detailed accounts of these investigations are given in the following two papers:

Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"No, Pope Francis: Gender Identity is not a Choice"*:  
<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/227P-No-PopeFrancis.pdf>.

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

A full bibliography is available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

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<sup>34</sup> Church of England, 2017: *"Letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York following General Synod"*.  
<https://staging.churchofengland.org/media/3878263/abc-and-aby-joint-letter.pdf>. See also: <https://churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2017/02/letter-from-the-archbishops-of-canterbury-and-york-following-general-synod.aspx>