

# Reform and the Christian Church

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### Abstract

SuG0129e

There were many doctrinal changes which the Christian Church adopted in regard to the positions of women, in attitudes to gender complementarity and to gender and sexual variance during the first three centuries of its existence. This analysis uses the results of some recent research work on gender dysphoria and on personality development as a tool for re-considering the historical backgrounds and the reasons for these changes. A précis of that investigation is given in this account. It is shown that, contrary to the exclusive obsessions with lust and immoral sex which Christian propaganda always presented, the male domination of first century Greco/Roman society was also facing serious political attack. Early Christianity and the Goddess cults had a number of concerns in common since they both represented subjugated groups. For the Church to achieve the breakthrough from the beliefs of a minority and a conquered Jewish sect into the universal religion of a dominant society an initial period of full gender equality and transcendence was required. This research demonstrates that without this period the transition would never have occurred. Early Christianity had demanded a revolution in the social attitudes, but the message of Jesus that is found in the Gospels required the Church to work within existing society in order to change it, instead of destroying it. This gave the Church a difficult choice and it sought to compromise the initial Gospel doctrines of full gender transcendence and fairness in order to gain the respectability which would enable it to convey the remainder of the Gospel message into the wider world. By conforming with society's expectations, and from adopting the dogmas of gender complementarity which were associated with the male dominated Greco/Roman and Jewish societies instead of the gender transcendence of the Gospel message, the ability of the Church to bring these Gospel challenges to all people in the matters of gender equality and to all sexual and gender variance was destroyed.

One of the aims of the Reformation Movement of sixteenth century was to return to the teaching of the bible alone. This included the rejection of later traditions that had been adopted by the Church. The reformers took Augustine as a frame of reference. Although they rejected many of the Church traditions which Augustine had endorsed, they continued to maintain and reinforced the doctrines of an exclusive heterosexual orthodoxy, which included the abhorrence of homosexuality and all other gender and sexually variant behaviour that had been propagated by the Church. This analysis provides new insights into the crises about gender and sexuality which are faced by the Christian Church of today and it shows how the teaching of Jesus had created an attitude to gender equality and sexual and gender variance that would be acceptable in the present day. A major disconnection has therefore occurred. So what is now regarded as the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church on homosexuality and on all sexual and gender variance are built on the false foundation of the demand to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, and it opposes that of the first Christians in the Gospel Church.

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

# Reform and the Christian Church

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## 1:0: Overview

This is one of three companion papers which make use of new developments in neurophysiological and psychological research to put together a new understanding of gender and sexually variant behaviour in the Christian Church. These documents may be read as standalone papers or together. The first paper is: Gilchrist, S. (2013), "A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian teaching on Homosexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach" The second is: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". The third paper is: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Reform and the Christian Church".

A summary is also given in Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Christianity and Crisis: An Overview of Gender and Sexual Differences in the Early and Modern Christian Church".

This paper: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "Reform and the Christian Church" is a précis of an extended reference document: Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation"

## 2:0. Introduction

### 2:1. Respectability and the Christian Church

One of the principal concerns about determining what the correct Christian attitudes should be to the issues of gender transcendence, gender complementarity, gender equality, gender identity, gender role, and to sexual orientation arises through the contradictions that the bible seems to present. This is most obvious in the apparently changing attitudes which Paul adopts in the New Testament, where his declaration which demands the total Christian transcendence of gender and of sex in Galatians 3:28<sup>3</sup> is subsequently contradicted or amended in the later epistles and letters by the segregation of the gender roles that were expected of men and women. By the time the later epistles were written a form of gender complementarity which demands the submission of women is to be enforced<sup>4</sup>. These differences are often explained by

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

<sup>3</sup> The statement made by Paul in Galatians 3:28 that: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", is a declaration which challenged both gender complementarity and the male domination within Greco/Roman society. The later statements by Peter and Paul seem to contradict that by re-imposing these requirements. Indeed they do even more than this for they re-impose the demand that women should always be in submission to men

<sup>4</sup>See for example the statement by Paul: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the

the increasing length of time it was expected to have to wait before the end of the world, when the second coming of Christ would be fulfilled.

In early Christianity an immediate second coming of Jesus was expected. It is now generally understood that this is the reason why the early Church believed that there was no requirement to conform to the social and the cultural divisions of the strongly gender stratified Greco/Roman societies. However as time went on and the second coming did not take place, the requirement to conform to the social expectations of this dominant and patristic society increased, and thus the gender expectations that were associated with Greco/Roman society came to be more strongly imposed. This is why it is usually considered that many of the later Christian doctrines about gender and sexually variant behaviour which have been arrived at through the development of the church traditions only arise as a consequence of this delay.

However this ignores the tensions within Greco/Roman and Judean society as well as the influence of their social structures on the formation of the early Church. There were major cultural clashes between these societies, not least in the matters of sex, and the failure to take these clashes into account has largely led to the adoption of the present Church doctrines which declare that any form of engagement in gender and sexually variant behaviour is a heinous sin and that it is always in pursuit of lust, licentiousness, prostitution and immoral sex. That presumption is challenged by this analysis, which is carried out in two separate parts. The paper: Gilchrist, S. (2013) on: "A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach"<sup>5</sup> examines traditional Church teaching from a psychological perspective. It demonstrates that these conditions are identity driven. It also disproves the current Christian doctrines which exclusively attribute the driving forces which lie behind all gender and sexually variant behaviour to the pursuit of lust, illicit and immoral sex. It further rejects the Church assertions that the gender and sexually variant conditions are intrinsically disordered, and it shows that within the gender and sexually variant communities as great a range of moral attitudes and expectations must exist as in the whole of society. That places identical obligations on the members of the gender and sexually variant communities to conform to the same moral obligations that are applied to everyone else, and it does not denigrate the moral values of the Church.

The second part of the analysis is described in two papers. These are: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development

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body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24) and also Peter "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (1 Peter 3:1-6) (The statement said to be by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34: "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church", is often considered to be a later addition to the text of this earlier epistle).

<sup>5</sup> (See the footer for access)

of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church” and Gilchrist, S. (2013). “Reform and the Christian Church” (See the footer for access). Both of these papers examine the historical setting and the developing traditions of the Christian Church using the results of the neurophysiological and psychological analysis, but from different perspectives. The first paper examines the behaviour, the historical background and the development of the Christian Church from the point of view of gender equality, gender complementarity and gender transcendence. The second paper (this paper), also covers the same background, but with the focus on gender and sexual variation in the early and modern Church.

It is established that the changes from the early teaching have been driven through the requirement for the Church to obtain respectability in a strongly gender polarised Greco/Roman society. The pressing need for respectability is evident in all of the Pauline epistles and also the Letters. The development of this accommodation can be observed at various points in the New Testament texts, and also within the early Church; where the Church had come to accept the social norms of the surrounding societies and then tried to adapt these to fit its own theology and beliefs. The decision to make these adaptations has set the Church on a trajectory whereby the original Gospel teachings on gender transcendence, and also on the sexually variant conditions were lost. By the time of Augustine (354-430) and the fourth century Church, an almost complete transformation in outlook had occurred.

It will be demonstrated in this analysis that the traditional teachings, together with the present day Church doctrines on gender complementarity and on sexual and gender variance, do not form any part of the original Gospel message. This is even though the doctrines related to gender complementarity possess an apostolic imprint, and they developed very early in the life of the Church. It will also be shown how and why early Christianity rejected the principles of gender complementarity associated with both Greco/Roman and Jewish societies, why this was subsequently embraced as a doctrine of the Church, and why the teaching of Jesus created an attitude to gender equality which would be acceptable in the present day.

This is a radical statement, which clearly needs to be justified. It is the subject of the new examination which is presented within these documents. The presumption is frequently made that the statement of gender and social transcendence by Paul in Galatians 3:28 only represents some sort of abstract Christian ideal. Therefore the consequence of the attacks which this doctrine made on the social values and the power structures of the dominant surrounding gender polarised and gender unequal societies tends to be ignored. That is very far from the case, and a more detailed examination of the attitudes to gender equality is given in more extended accounts<sup>6</sup>. The earliest Apostolic Church gave women a very high place in the Gospel ministry. This is evident not only in the attitude of Jesus as this is described in the Gospels, by Mary Magdalene’s role in announcing the resurrection, by the high worth which Paul gives to the missionary work of women, together with the influence they had in

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<sup>6</sup> See Section 2:2:4 in Gilchrist, S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation” Gilchrist, S. (2013): “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. See footer for access.

running the early Church and in their roles in spreading the Gospel of Christ.<sup>7</sup> In those societies where the social roles of men and women were inflexibly segregated through the customs and divine influences, these were challenging acts<sup>8</sup>. A further examination of the biblical texts and contemporary literature which is undertaken in this analysis indicates in greater detail the radical impact on Greco/Roman society which was created by the early Gospel message. It also reveals the ways in which early Christianity in common with the principal Goddess cults of the Greco/Roman Empire, both disrupted and challenged the gendered security of a male dominated society<sup>9</sup>. The boldness of this challenge had a major impact on the formation of the Christian Church, but the magnitude of that challenge has since been hidden by the later doctrines which the Church enforced.

## 2:2. Social Dynamics

In the terms of their social messages, both Christianity and the Goddess cults shared some key elements in common. This was because both represented minority groups in dominant societies. Therefore a major challenge (and achievement) that was met by Christianity was its success in transferring the distinctive views of the minority Jewish religion into a dominant culture. That success meant confronting the self-centred moralities of the culture and the sexual values which were characteristic of the 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 that 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.

Even though women in Greco/Roman society were subject to male authority in every way the attitudes them are often misunderstood. In principle gender complementarity was expected to be practiced, but that would depend entirely on the attitude that was taken by each "Pater Familias", who held full responsibility for the household, even over the matters of life and death. Restrictive rules could be placed on women and this meant that severe gender discrimination could always occur. The Christian apologists of today cite this gender discrimination for their condemnations, but many of them only provide a partial account because they simply describe the numerous restrictive rules. However this discrimination and separation of role broke down to a large extent in Greece around 400 BC, and again in Rome around 205 BC<sup>10</sup>. War

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<sup>7</sup> See Gilchrist, S. (2011): "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships" See footer for access

<sup>8</sup> This is fully discussed in section 2:2:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation" See footer for access

<sup>9</sup> See section 3:1:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". See footer for access

<sup>10</sup> In earlier Greek Societies before 400 BC women had to have their husband's permission to leave their homes. With the exception of women in ancient Sparta, Greek women at this time had very limited freedom outside the home. If they had their husband's permission, they could attend weddings, funerals, some religious festivals, and visit female neighbours for brief periods of time. But without their husband's permission, they could do none of these things. However inside the house at this time Greek women were in charge. After 400 BC there was a rapid change and a transformation in the freedom of women, largely because of the reverses Greece suffered in war. Not every boundary was broken, however it is undeniable that the visibility and role of women during this time of violent change in ancient Greece greatly increased. See Scott, Michael (2009) "The Rise of Women in Ancient Greece" History Today Volume: 59 Issue: 11 2009. Also: Pomeroy, Sarah B. (1994) Goddesses, Whores, Wives

had decimated the male population, and women then became even more essential for maintaining key functions of society<sup>11</sup>. Within the marriage relationships, as well as in the occupations which men and women fulfilled in society, compatibility of intellect between men and women was also expected<sup>12</sup>. By the time of the first century many women had become well educated; they made significant contributions to society; nevertheless they were still denied any form of power and authority over their own lives. The first century was a period 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 test<sup>13</sup>.

The gender challenging behaviour of all of these Goddess cults may be regarded as a challenge to this male domination, and the examination of the cult of Cybele shows that the “Women’s liberation” element which is contained within it cannot be ignored<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless none of the presently published research work on the Cult of

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And Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity”. Publisher: Pimlico; New Edition (5 May 1994) ISBN-10: 0712660542 ISBN-13: 978-0712660549

<sup>11</sup> Between the fall of Athens in 404 BC and the rise of Alexander the Great in the 330s BC, the Greek world was turned on its head. The transformations were motivated in part by the catastrophic effects of the Peloponnesian War, the 30-year conflict which had brought democratic Athens to its knees. In response to the increased poverty that resulted, Greek women began to work outside the home. The orator Demosthenes, writing in the middle of the fourth century, complained that they now worked as nurses, wool-workers and grape-pickers because of the city’s penury. This primarily economic drive was coupled with great political upheaval, an increasingly muddled distinction between public and private worlds and new forms of religious expression. In different parts of ancient Greece women become visible for different reasons and in Athens they appear centre stage in comic discussions of sexual and political equality and in the law courts on issues relating to citizenship. See Scott, Michael. (2009) “The Rise of Women in Ancient Greece” History Today Volume: 59 Issue: 11 <http://www.historytoday.com/michael-scott/rise-women-ancient-greece>

<sup>12</sup> Plato considered that the only innate differences between males and females were the reproductive ones. Socrates likewise believed that that males and females have no distinct qualifications for any particular pursuits and that no particular function should be reserved for men and women, but both sexes should be treated alike. In Plato’s Republic, the Guardians are put into place to defend morality and to rule society because they know the truth and possess the knowledge and wisdom of true forms. The equality of opportunity for both men and women to enter the Guardian Class requires an equality of education for both sexes, and this principle of the equality of education for both men and women was adopted in the real world. This meant that, rather than gender polarisation, a gender complementarity was exercised in which men and women were placed into separate and exclusive gender roles which were considered to have equivalent esteem. In Roman society, at least among the upper classes, women seem to have been very well-educated. Only after children had come of age did the standards differ. See: Blundell, Sue. (1995) “Women in ancient Greece: Harvard University Press, 1995 ISBN 0674954734, 780674954731: Plato, The Republic. Books I–V: The eutopia portraying the ideal community and the education of the Guardians: See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/> “Plato’s Ethics and Politics in The Republic” First published Tue Apr 1, 2003; substantive revision Mon Aug 31, 2009: Rawson, Beryl (1987) “The Roman Family,” in “The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives” Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 30, 40–41. ISBN0801494605, 9780801494604.

<sup>13</sup> 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). “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. See footer for access.

<sup>14</sup> An extended analysis is given in section 2:3:2 of Gilchrist, S. (2013) “an Unfinished Reformation”. See footer for access This

Cybele takes full account of these political elements<sup>15</sup> and in this analysis it is shown that this omission has had significant consequences for interpreting the behaviour of the cult<sup>16</sup>. However there was a problem. The existence of the gender defined Gods and Goddesses within a polytheistic society created a glass ceiling which could never be crossed<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, even if full gender equality could be achieved in a polytheistic society, the rewards that it brings could only be expressed in terms of the sex-gender ideologies of that society. Males and females would continue to be separated into their religiously determined and their socially segregated roles. What was required to make the breakthrough was a religion that worshipped a single gender transcendent God and also possessed a social perspective that was close to the cults<sup>18 19 20 21</sup>. Christianity, because of its agenda for women, and with the moral values of a subject society could bridge that void<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>For a description of the cult of Cybele see: Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. ISBN 0-520-21024-7. Philippe Borgeaud, *Mother of the Gods. From Cybele to the Virgin Mary*. Originally published as *La Mère des dieux: De Cybele à la Vierge Marie*. Éditions de Seuil, Collection "La Librairie du XXe siècle", 1996. Translated from the French by Lysa Hochroth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8018-7985-X. Eugene N. Lane (ed.), *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Religions in the Greco-Roman World, 131. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996. ISBN 90-04-10196-9. The attitude taken to gender and sexually variant behaviour tends to follow the presumptions embodied in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This implies that the gender disruptive behaviour of the cults self-castrated Gallae priests can only be in pursuit of immoral sex. That is not perhaps surprising given the nature of the ancient myths. See for example, Borgeaud pages 48-49, 54-55. Borgeaud is reciting the ancient myths which surround such behaviour. The possibility of other types of behaviour does not appear to be given full value and the changes to the social attitudes to women are not fully considered in these accounts. See Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access.

<sup>16</sup> Roller, Borgeaud and others perceive a single boundary between reputable and disruptive behaviour. The popular viewpoints exclusively associate the Gallae and the morals of the cult with sexual orgies, prostitution and for the practice of immoral sex. This analysis argues that both these presumptions are incorrect, and that more than one boundary must exist. It also follows from this argument that two boundaries must be set. One is that between co-operative and disruptive behaviour in the pursuit of female interests and rights. The second is the boundary between proper and improper sex. The importance of identifying these separate boundaries is a key feature which has not been identified in previous studies. The creation of these separate boundaries permits a re-evaluation of the roles of the self-castrated Gallae priests. The psychological analysis has demonstrated that as wide a range of attitudes must be found in the gender and sexually variant section of the population as there are in society at large. This also allows the Gallae priests to be treated in the same way as those belonging to other religious beliefs, where across cultures and across continents the equivalent people who seek to transcend gender may be understood to celebrate and to express the ideals of both lives. Some religions believe that holding both the male and female experience in one body is the closest that human beings can get to a total holiness and that within this relationship the worshipper "Receives the inner-most essence and power of a God." Within these traditions the descriptions of "Two spirit" or "Double gendered" may be used and in yet other cultures these people may, as with the Gallae, be considered to belong to a "Third Sex". Possession of this inclusiveness is often considered to be appropriate to a priestly role and in those societies where the requisite outlets for behaviour are provided such people can have a very high status. Indeed the reverence which they are accorded can commonly exceed the esteem that is given to other people who conform to the normal expectations of their sex. In Ancient Rome those people who transcended the sex-gender boundaries could be described as "The Wise Ones, the Pure Ones and the Holy Ones" and the myths of the cult indicate that those who crossed the sex gender boundaries were given special status. For the full account see Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access.

<sup>17</sup>Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access.

<sup>18</sup> In 395 BC, just nine years after Athens had suffered catastrophic defeat in war the comic playwright Aristophanes wrote and produced a play called *Women in the Assembly* (*Ecclesiazusae*). The plot is simple and striking. The women of Athens are fed up with the mess men have made of the city and its affairs. They infiltrate the political assembly and persuade it to hand over all power to the women. It is a comedy, and the demand for true gender equality is taken to excess so that for example if a man wanted to have sex with a pretty woman he had to have sex with an ugly one first. In ancient society the different roles assigned to men and women were determined by their perceived usefulness to society and not by modern ideas of universal equality. In Greece at

This is the transformation which Christianity brought. Yet that achievement carried its own dangers because this meant that in order to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, Christianity had to quickly separate itself from the still continuing social and gender disrupting behaviour of the Goddess cults. In addition there were many other moral, cultural and theological differences between the two religious groups, and these equally required an absolute and an immediate rejection of any possible links with the Goddess cults<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, instead of continuing with the challenges and social disruption of following the doctrine of true gender transcendence contained in the Gospel message which is taught by Jesus, and also by Paul in Galatians 3:28, Christianity came to adopt the form of gender complementarity which demanded the submission of women as is described by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24, 1 Corinthians 14:34, and 1 Timothy 2:1-7<sup>24</sup>, and additionally by Peter in 1 Peter 3:1-6. This dogma of gender complementarity was identical to that practiced by Greco/Roman society, and it shared much with Judaism as well. However, instead of simply adopting the social divisions and the gender complementarity of these gender unequal societies Christianity also had to be seen to take a pro-active role in their enforcement and this pursuit of respectability has led to the enforcement of a strong heterosexual, gender defined and exclusive orthodoxy in Christianity, where every expression of gender or of sexually variant behaviour is automatically considered to be an immoral act. It has

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this time plays were be used to criticise authority and society. This play illustrates the parity of esteem that was given. See Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access..

<sup>19</sup>Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. (1993) "In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth" Ballantine Books; (First Edition February 10, 1993) ISBN-10: 0449907465 ISBN-13: 978-0449907467.

<sup>20</sup> That there were public official duties for women in Rome contradicts the commonplace notion that women in ancient Rome took part only in private or domestic religion. The dual male-female priesthoods may reflect the Roman tendency to seek a gender complement within the religious sphere. Most divine powers are represented by both a male and a female deity, as seen in divine pairs such as Liber and Libera. The twelve major gods were presented as six gender-balanced pairs, and Roman religion departed from Indo-European tradition in installing two goddesses in its supreme triad of patron deities, Juno and Minerva along with Jupiter. This triad "formed the core of Roman religion." (See Schultz, Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic, pp. 79–81. Lipka, Michael.(2009), "Roman Gods: A Conceptual Approach". Brill, pp. 141–142)

<sup>21</sup> Barker, Margaret. (2001)"The Temple Roots Of The Liturgy"

This is developed from a paper read in Dublin in November 2000 subsequently published in Sourozh. A Journal of Orthodox Life and Thought. Available online at:

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

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

<sup>22</sup>The closeness of the relationship between Christianity and the Goddess cults is described in section 3:1:4 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation", and Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access. Given the nature of their interaction the contest with Christianity can hardly be missed.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that sexual morality in these dominant societies was determined by authority. Responsibility in all activities was demanded, but provided the recipient was of a lesser status than the perpetrator, these societies endorsed what in the present day would be considered to be same-sex or heterosexual rape. That was horrendous to subject societies, whose members could be the victims of such actions. However this difference arises due to cultural clashes between subject and dominant societies more than the theologies of the cults

<sup>24</sup> "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all --this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth".



also led to the great severity of the Christian condemnations of all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being second only to bestiality in the heinousness of their acts.

However short or long this early period of absolute gender transcendence was, it had to be complete, for without this Christianity could never have made the transition into a world religion from a local gender defined sect. Therefore instead of simply seeking gender neutrality the Christian Gospel provided a major role for women. A doctrine of full gender equality was expressed in early Christianity, which would find acceptance in present day society, and it is also not surprising that women figure prominently in the early church. Despite this, even though these important roles at first were given to women, the social constraints imposed by gender complementarity meant that the public spokespeople for this new religion could only be men. Through their pursuit of a male agenda and from its pursuit of authority and respectability, the doctrines of the gospel Church have been disconnected from the traditions and the doctrines that came to be adopted by the later Church<sup>25</sup>. The theological justifications which, in the present day are employed to validate the presumptions for a male leadership, with its male prerogatives, and its justification for an exclusively male priesthood are built on these later traditions. They do not come from the teaching of Jesus, and they do not come from the Gospel Church.

### **2:3 Discipline or Doctrine?**

Perhaps a more telling way to measure these arguments is to 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, none of them attempt to derive their authority from the teaching of Christ.

As a revolutionary Jesus was also a disappointment to the Jewish nation, for instead of a battle leader conquering an oppressing empire in order to destroy it, the Gospel demanded that people work within their society and empire to change it instead. That gave the Church a difficult choice and instead of maintaining the original teaching of Jesus the Church sought to compromise the initial Gospel doctrines of total gender equality, transcendence and fairness in order to obtain the respectability which would enable it to convey the remainder of the Gospel message into the wider world.

Thus to embrace gender complementarity within Christianity is to follow the authority of Caesar and Rome, it is not the authority given by divine rule. This also means that gender complementarity must be regarded as a discipline and not a doctrine of the Church. This demands that in every generation the Church should work out anew, in

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<sup>25</sup> See Section 3:1 of Gilchrist, S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation".

relation to its contemporary culture and society, what its teaching should be<sup>26</sup>. For today's society, where complete gender equality is now demanded on the principles of universal human rights and opportunities, and not on the grounds of first century Jewish and Greco/Roman attitudes to the perceived usefulness of men and women in society, a completely different approach is urgently required. The transformation of what had once been a practical and changeable discipline into a permanent doctrine has placed the Church into a trap of its own making. If it does not escape from this trap, the Church will continue to destroy the credibility of its own Christian beliefs and Christianity itself. This is also the change in understanding which should enable the Christian Churches of the present day to create without any diminution of the moral values of Christian teaching, and without any degrees of departure from the Gospel message, an approach to gender and sexuality, to gender equality and to gender and sexual variance, which is entirely appropriate for present day world.

## **2:4 Changing Perceptions**

One of the main objectives of the Reformation movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century was to eliminate the spurious traditions that had developed within the Church, and to restore it to the fundamental teachings that are in the bible itself. Many changes were made by these reformers, but their understanding of the position of gender and sexually variant behaviour within the Church was largely unchanged by their reforms<sup>27</sup>. The doctrines which had been embraced on these matters by the fourth century Christian Church were believed to be correct. However the Reformer's own attitudes to the sexual and gender variant conditions would also be filtered through the theology that they themselves had developed. This has provided the background against which the present day attitudes to homosexuality and to gender and sexual variance have come to be created. The contributions of the reformers must therefore be recognised as crucial, but the key period for dealing with the Church doctrines on these matters is that of the first three hundred years of the Church.

## **3:0. Context**

### **3:1. Analytical Framework.**

The analysis which is presented in this document investigates the reasons for this disconnection, the driving forces and the nature of the changes which occurred. Two complementary approaches are adopted. The first, and most obvious one of these, is to try to trace back through the history and the traditions of the Church. The second method seeks to examine the Greek, Jewish and Roman backgrounds from which

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<sup>26</sup> Thus to embrace gender complementarity within Christianity is to follow the authority of Caesar and of Rome. It is not the authority given by divine rule. Therefore every person in every society is required to work out for themselves how to follow the Gospel of Christ in their own world. Exactly this is found in Paul's letter to Philemon, the owner of a runaway slave. Paul does not demand that the contract of slavery should be broken but he asks his master to treat the slave as an equal partner in the love of Christ. Today nobody (one hopes) would use the letter to Philemon to justify slavery. Equally no one should use these arguments on gender complementarity to impose that requirement on laity or priests in 20th Century life.

<sup>27</sup> Many transformations were made by the reformers in attitudes to celibacy, marriage and sex. However a strong and exclusive heterosexual orthodoxy was retained both by the reformers and the Catholic Church. Reasons are discussed later in this account

the early Church developed, and this assessment is done independently of the New Testament and the traditions of the Church. That approach is much more difficult because all of the records and information from the inception of the Church onwards has been filtered through the prisms of Christian belief. The consequences of this filtration are examined through a critical examination of the bible texts.

Without the provision of a fresh perspective, any new analysis would only be the recycling of previous work. This different perspective comes through a new exploration of personality development that was carried out by the author, which employs gender and sexually variant conditions as a model to test the accuracy of the results<sup>28</sup>. That investigation demonstrates that these conditions are identity driven. Even though the conflicts which they create may be expressed through a desire for engaging in certain types of relationship, or because of the craving for gender reassignment, it is shown that the driving forces that lie behind them are not driven either by gender or by sexual desires. They are driven by the rejection of what is wrong and by the need to create a coherent sense of self identity, which enables people to become true to themselves<sup>29</sup>.

The results of this neurophysiological and psychological investigation clearly show that two very different driving forces are involved. An assessment of the processes that are involved in personality development was undertaken, and it is demonstrated that a rapid step change in infant behaviour takes place at a time from about twenty months to three years of age. Up to this transition period, at around the age of two years, the development from birth is driven through feedforward, contagious and self reinforcing processes of possessive imitation which interact with brain development processes that are programmed to ensure the acquisition of huge amounts of largely uncoordinated data. During the transition period the separated strands of information begin to coalesce through another contagious process which enables basic but also more global concepts of self identity to be created. The third period is one where the conscious ability to separate of the self from the other first starts to develop and this is when children begin to try to make sense of what has already occurred. However children do not possess the ability to correctly assess what has happened to them until around the age of four years. Therefore, not only must the feedback forces of cognition and analysis which are needed during this third period be strong enough to overcome the contagious drives of imitation and acquisition, which still continue to exist, they must also ensure that an individual personality which stays constant over time is created.

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<sup>28</sup> The impetus for this research has come through personal experience. For further information on this, see: Gilchrist, S. (2011). "LGB&T People: Labels and Faith". See footer for access.

<sup>29</sup> This investigation is described in: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". Also in 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". And in: Gilchrist, Susan. (2013). "Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief". Other more detailed accounts have become available since this paper was first published. See: Gilchrist, S. (2015a): "Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf> Also Gilchrist, S. (2015c) Principles of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/212P-PrinciplesSexGender.pdf> : Use the footer to access these documents.

It is also of note that the analysis predicts that all of the key features that go to define the individuality of each person are formed before an effective cognitive sense of self identity is created. In this investigation it is considered that the conflicts which are associated with gender identity must be seen as the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity, rather than the cause. The change is also marked by the presence or the absence of an effective cognitive continuum. The presence or absence of this continuum determines whether intentions and actions can be judged on the basis of relating cause to effect. After the transition period the actions can be motivated by the pursuit of a reward. Conflicts which have their roots formed before this period are driven by the rejection of what is enforced.

Therefore the recognition of the differences between the goal driven and the identity driven conflicts is crucial for this understanding<sup>30</sup>. In a goal driven conflict the desire which is expressed is identical to the real goal which is being sought. Once that goal has been achieved, the behaviour which then results expresses the delights of the same goal that has now been fulfilled. In an identity driven conflict the real goal that people seek is to be able to be true to who they are. Thus in these cases the change which is made is to the frame of reference alone. No other changes need be made, and these types of identity driven conflicts are characterised by the rejection of what is wrong. Often no behavioural changes or any further goals are sought, and as wide a range of moral attitudes, goals, desires and perceptions are found amongst these groups as there are in society at large.

This viewpoint has been expressed by gender and sexually variant people for many years, but in the past it has only been based on the word of one group against the other. That view has now been confirmed by this research. There are four particular implications for this analysis. These are:

1. The first of these is the requirement to distinguish gender and sexually variant behaviour which is identity driven, and is about being oneself, from all goal driven behaviour which is instead pursued for sexual gratification, prostitution and irresponsible sex.
2. The second is to recognise that the conclusions of this analysis destroy the validity of all attempts of the Church to make homosexuality or every other type of identity driven sexual and gender variance a scapegoat for abusive or inappropriate sex.
3. The third requirement is to examine the cultures from which Christianity has developed while taking the first two of these criteria into account.
4. The fourth requirement is to re-examine the doctrines that are contained in the 1997 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This decrees that: "Tradition

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<sup>30</sup> Each type of process represents different stages in the process of personality development. Up to the age of about two years, identity driven conflicts, which are characterised by the rejection of what is wrong dominate. After the age of two years children have a sufficient sense of self identity to enable goal driven conflicts to be formed, here the desire that is expressed matches the goal that is sought. For the full implications of this, see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Self Identity, Gender, Sexuality and Religious Belief" and Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Personality Development and LGB&T People: A New Approach". See footer for access.

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”<sup>31</sup>.

This means that, according to this Church theology all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour arise from a goal driven conflict. According to that doctrine and the traditional Church teaching, all gender and sexually variant activities can only be engaged in for reasons of lust, promiscuity, prostitution or inappropriate sex.

This analysis challenges that presumption, not only on the experiential, but also on psychological grounds. An aim of this analysis has been to compare the traditional doctrines and teaching of the Christian Church on sexual and gender variation with the results of present day neurophysiological and psychological research. It shows that these conditions are identity driven, and it contradicts the current Christian doctrines which exclusively attribute the driving forces behind all gender and sexually variant behaviour to the pursuit of lust, illicit and immoral sex. It rejects the Church assertions that the gender and sexually variant conditions are intrinsically disordered by demonstrating that these are all within the wide-ranging latitude of a process of personality development which is tuned to ensure the attainment of the maximum potential and individuality of every person, and this study further confirms that within the gender and sexually variant communities as wide a range of moral attitudes and expectations must be encountered as those which exist in all parts of society. There is a clear contradiction between the two viewpoints, and the neurophysiological and psychological analysis shows that the traditional Church teaching, which condemns all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour, is incorrect.

### 3:2. Cultural Differences

It is important to ensure that the differences in the moral structures of the different societies are recognised. Although it is perfectly valid to compare the moral codes and attributes of one society against another, the behaviour of any individual within a particular society must be judged by the standards of that society, on its own and not by any other<sup>32</sup>. The differences in the attitudes to anal penetration provide a strong case in point. For the Greeks and Romans the freedom to engage in sexual activity was based on authority, thus only the male citizen who adopted the submissive role in a same-sex relationship was condemned. It also meant that Greek or Roman male citizens could engage with any unattached woman or man who was of lesser status without any penalty for the purposes of sexual gratification, and this included the

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<sup>31</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: "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."

<sup>32</sup> Subject to a general overriding principle of the common good.

penetrative acts<sup>33</sup>. Same-sex rape was also used as a weapon to humiliate a beaten enemy. The horror of same-sex rape being inflicted on the Israelites is evident in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and throughout the Jewish tradition<sup>34</sup>. Therefore very different attitudes to anal penetration may be expected from within a subject Jewish society<sup>35</sup>. For Jews the freedom to engage in these penetrative relationships was governed by love. Authority played no role and even a slave would be protected by this requirement. Therefore the Greeks and Romans could be regarded as people who penetrated at will, but the Jews did not<sup>36</sup>.

Cultural clashes between the Judean and Greco/Roman societies were often strong and deeply felt. From the Jewish point of view a great deal of sexual misbehaviour took place in Greco/Roman society, but according to the moral codes of that society this sexual behaviour would be considered acceptable instead. The most obvious way for Christianity to respond to these cultural differences, and to gain respectability in Greco/Roman society, was to distance itself as far as possible from the activities of the politically challenging and gender disrupting Goddess cults, by dismissing all of their praiseworthy activities and by decreeing that their primary purpose was to give the opportunities for people to engage in promiscuity, licentious behaviour and irresponsible sex<sup>37</sup>.

Every other motive was excluded and this exclusion determined the Church doctrine that gender and sexually variant behaviour could only be engaged in for purposes of lust, promiscuity, prostitution or inappropriate sex. That view is clearly expressed in

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<sup>33</sup> Maintaining social status was extremely important. For a male citizen to be anally penetrated was regarded as a debasement of his citizenship to that of a woman. Conquest was also affirmed by the use of same-sex rape to humiliate a beaten enemy.

<sup>34</sup> This need not only be in battle. A male Roman citizen could rape a Jewish man without legal consequence.

<sup>35</sup> A full discussion is given in Gilchrist, S. (2011) "Issues on the Sanctity of Same Sex Relationships". However Greenberg, Steven; (2004) "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition" The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-19094-3 also gives a very complete account of Jewish attitudes to same-sex relationships.

<sup>36</sup> "The single most important concept that defines sexuality in the ancient Mediterranean world, whether we are talking about the kingdoms of Egypt or of Assyria or whether we are talking about the later kingdoms of Greece and Rome, is that approved sexual acts never occurred between social equals. Sexuality, by definition, in ancient Mediterranean societies required the combination of dominance and submission. This crucial social and political root metaphor of dominance and submission as the definition of sexuality rested upon a physical basis that assumed every sex act required a penetrator and someone who was penetrated. Needless to say, this definition of sexuality was entirely male—not surprising in the heavily patriarchal societies of the ancient Mediterranean. Nevertheless this assumption that the difference in status between the dominant penetrator and the submissive penetratee was essential to all sexual behavior is prevalent in most sources from at least the Egyptian empires of the Second Millennium BCE all the way through the late Roman Empire and beyond. Of course, we must recognize that the vast majority of the laws and other texts from antiquity that give us some insight into sexual roles were written by elite men. Whether or not the convention of dominance and submission as the defining aspect of sexuality was actually embodied in all sexual acts across these societies and not just in the writing about all sexual acts remains unknown. Our knowledge is constrained, as always in history, by our sources". Holbert, Mary A. (2002). "Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: Biblical Texts in Historical Contexts". Paper delivered to the Lancaster School of Theology November 20, 2002. Available on the Web at: <http://www.clqs.org/homoeroticism-biblical-world-biblical-texts-historical-contexts-0>

<sup>37</sup> The issue of temple prostitution is a complex topic. Some of the Gallae may have taken advantage of their situation entirely for the misuse of sex, but there were other reasons for eunuch priests to offer themselves to men for anal penetration. It could be a method of transmitting the blessings of the virgin goddess to laymen who were seeking fertility in their own reproductive lives. Within the moral values of Greco/Roman society this would be a positive act.

the 1997 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. However to do this, the Church has had to define every type of gender and sexually variant behaviour as being the result of a goal driven conflict, and this leaves no legitimate place for any form of identity driven sexual and gender variant behaviour, where relationships are given in love, commitment and faithfulness instead of immorality and lust. Not only does this Christian doctrine contradict the results of this analysis, it also contradicts the lived experience of many gender and sexually variant people, whose constant persecution and condemnation over many centuries brings shame on the Church.

### 3:3 Power and Sex

It is also essential to acknowledge that none of the goddess religions of the ancient Middle East expressed the kind of accepting feminine behaviour that Christianity might expect. As well as embodying a religious tradition, they were strong political movements which were concerned with the power structures within society. This analysis challenges current perceptions and a full account is given elsewhere<sup>38</sup>.

An introduction to the nature and the relevance of the cult of Cybele to Christianity has already been given in section 2:2 of this article. The Roman State had adopted the cult of Cybele in response its urgent need for success in battle, and it claimed that her conscription was a key religious component in their victory over Carthage during the Punic Wars. Certain of the cult practices and processions show Cybele to be an essentially foreign and exotic mystery-goddess who arrives in Rome driving a lion-drawn chariot to the accompaniment of wild music, wine and with a disorderly and ecstatic following<sup>39</sup>. Within Roman society Gods and Goddesses were given equal status. Of the three of these who were considered to be the principal Roman deities, two of them were goddesses, and the goddess religions had a prominent place within Roman society. Even though the roles of women and men were strongly segregated, women still maintained a strong influence within their own realm. In the banquets organised by male supporters of the cult and in the other events there is no doubt that a great deal of sexual misbehaviour did take place<sup>40</sup>, however rampant sex tends not to be represented within the theology of the cult. The Roman attitudes to Cybele and to her self-castrated Gallae priests were always ambivalent. A strong duality was perceived. On the one hand there were the severe condemnations of the wild activities of the cult and the allegations of gross immorality by the Gallae priests. On the other hand this condemnation was countered by a considerable respect for the moral purity of the same priests, and further affirmed by the high status of many of the devotees of the cult<sup>41</sup>. The current presumption that the ecstatic and disorderly

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<sup>38</sup> For a more complete account see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church".

<sup>39</sup> Christian apologists consider these gender disruptive activities to be concerned with the delights of sex rather than statements of power in a male dominated society.

<sup>40</sup> The attitudes of the different cultures must be taken into account before judgement is made.

<sup>41</sup> This duality also applied to the Gallae priests. On the one hand they were condemned by mainstream Roman society because their rejection and their effeminacy attacked the foundations of a male dominated society. On the other their act of self-castration was seen as an act of extreme devotion, greater even than that of voluntary celibates, through their inability to penetrate or to sexually climax in the worship of a Goddess who could never herself be penetrated, whose perpetual virginity was an important feature of the cult, and because there was no turning back. Also on one hand the Gallae priests were often accused of extreme sexual immorality, on the other hand they were involved in the healing roles of the cult. Possibly they could be considered to have occupied a

processions were entirely used for the delights of sex also has to be queried. They certainly disrupted the gendered security of male dominated society.

The existence of this duality has been widely recognised in current research. Roller<sup>42</sup> attributes this to dualism in the cult practices where the formal public components created and maintained the social boundaries of society, while the ecstatic elements transgressed them. Borgeaud set the boundary in accordance with traditional Church teaching which identified unacceptable behaviour with homosexuality, cross gender activity and the pursuit of variant sex<sup>43</sup>. Roller, Borgeaud and others identify a single boundary between the reputable and disruptive behaviour. This analysis argues that both these presumptions are incorrect, and that more than one boundary must exist. The political power of the Goddess cults has been described in section 2:2 of this document.

In line with the gender liberating elements of the cult, one of their purposes may well have been to protect the needs, concerns and the interests of women by reminding that male dominated society about the consideration, influence and the social rights which women needed and sought.

### 3:3. Duality and Belief

Virtually every religion monitors the moral standards of its society and it imposes distinctions between what is wrong and what is right. When the myths and theologies of the cults are examined after this sexual background is excluded a much broader perspective is observed. A duality is shown to exist whereby those people who try to live to the highest moral standards which their society expects can live according to the way of light. Those who do the reverse will follow the way of darkness instead. Similar dualities are encountered across cultures and continents, where people who seek to transcend the sex/gender boundaries by living in ways that are true to the ideals of both lives may be given a high and often priestly status<sup>44</sup>. However those who choose the path of transgression instead are very severely condemned for their acts.

Extended studies on the first century Greek, Jewish and Roman backgrounds have been carried out within this analysis, to discover if this sense of duality exists, and also how it is expressed. It is demonstrated that the same sense of duality occurs in all of the first century Middle Eastern traditions. The results of this research are only

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shamanic role. However because of the violent condemnations of Christianity the awareness of any of the positive aspects of their activities has been lost.

<sup>42</sup> Roller, Lynn E. (1996). In Lane Eugene N (ed.) (1996), *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren. Religions in the Greco-Roman World*, 131. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996. ISBN 90-04-10196-9.

<sup>43</sup> Borgeaud, Philippe. (1996). "Mother of the Gods. From Cybele to the Virgin Mary". Originally published as *La Mère des dieux: De Cybele à la Vierge Marie. Éditions de Seuil, Collection "La Librairie du XXe siècle"*, 1996. Translated from the French by Lysa Hochroth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8018-7985-X.

<sup>44</sup> See Gilchrist S. (2013): Part 3 of "An Unfinished Reformation" where it is shown that this also applied to the early Church



summarised within this document. A more extended analysis is provided in Gilchrist, S. (2013) "An Unfinished Reformation" and in: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See footer for access. However the full account has also been written up in other (unpublished) resource documents and these results have been, or they will be, published elsewhere<sup>45</sup>. Cybele was no meek goddess. As well as this, she was perpetually a virgin because the idea that she could be penetrated by a man or by another male god would have diminished her status<sup>46</sup>. Some studies have suggested that the interactions between Christianity and the cults have mainly led the cults to modify their own religious beliefs to meet the Christian challenge. In relation to the cult of Cybele it is argued that the reverse is the case and that Christianity has taken from the cult the values it needs. When the cult of the Virgin Mary is compared with that of Cybele, what is more seen is not what is gained by the cult of the Virgin Mary, but what is removed from the cult of Cybele itself.<sup>47</sup>

### 3:4. Sexual Moralities

In all of these traditions a common approach to gender and sexual variation is also found. This demanded that full responsibility was exercised in all types of sexual activity. The distinctions which were made between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour were those which separated the sexual acts engaged in for the noble pursuit of love from those which were pursued for the carnal abuse of sex.

The Greeks, Jews and Romans had no separate word for homosexuality and that term would not have been understood within the context of their societies. However different words were used for different types of love; nevertheless these words were not usually applied on a gendered basis, and the moral judgements were made on the motives and the exercise of responsibility, rather than the acts. In contrast to this first century understanding, the present day attitudes to the acceptability of gender and sexual behaviour concentrate their attention more upon the nature of the gender relationships and on condemning the acts. The issues of responsibility are ignored.

In the discussions of the Greek philosophers it was normally assumed that the ideas of love between two people related to love between two men, and it was accepted that this love could be fulfilled through engagement in same-sex acts. The permitted degree of expression varied across and within cultures, and even between the city states. Plato adopted an ascetic approach and he advocated the sublimation of all sexual acts. This was on the grounds that they distracted from the purity of the

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<sup>45</sup> See details at the end of this document.

<sup>46</sup> About half of the Greek and Roman Goddesses were parthenogenic, (that is to be born without the participation of a male partner). These goddesses were required to stand alone, so that each acted as a primordial creatrix who required no male to create the cosmos, the earth, life, matter and even other gods, out of her own essence. The Greek and Roman myths ensured that this took place. As such a goddess, Cybele's own virginity had to remain intact, and it is instead through the death and resurrection of Attis that fertility and renewal takes place. The castration of Attis meant that there could be no threat to Cybele's virginity, just as the castration of the Gallae priests removed any threat to the virginity of the priestesses in the temple, and symbolically to the goddess herself

<sup>47</sup> The status of women may be worse of under a gender transcendent god, since there is no longer an independent goddess who could be invoked to protect their interests.

pursuit of the higher philosophical ideals. However Judaism embraced a different outlook. It encouraged the expression of relationships between two men because of the positive benefits in terms of the stimulation and depth of argument that this could create. It also meant that the rabbis supported ever increasing degrees of intimacy within Chavruta partnerships, irrespective of whether it was committed heterosexual friendships or loving same-sex relationships that were formed<sup>48</sup>. (A Chavruta study involves a didactic learning process in which pairs of students discuss and analyse the biblical texts). This approach was almost directly the opposite of that which was adopted by Plato, since in the Jewish tradition it was considered that the vibrancy and the closeness which was developed within these Chavruta relationships would enable the partners to explore together to even greater depths, the meaning of the biblical texts. From the period of the Exile to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 a Zugot, or "Pairs" culture was dominant within the mainstream of Jewish society, and in this context strong male pair bonding could occur<sup>49</sup>. It is significant that the first century understanding of Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 was that it prohibited only anal penetration. This understanding is also cited in the Babylonian Talmud and it is well attested in other first century texts. The same interpretation was further reaffirmed by the Conservative Judaism's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards in America in December 2006.

It is also significant that no other type of sexual act is prohibited by the bible, and that includes oral sex. The Jewish history is frequented with Rabbinic partnerships where strong same-sex relationships were encountered, but where present day labels of heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual cannot easily be applied. This is far from the background that people would expect from the attitude that the Christian Church has since adopted to gender and sex<sup>50</sup>.

There is no evidence to show that the Christian Church changed traditional Jewish teaching on sex and gender matters in any way. Indeed all of the evidence indicates that these were continued. This also raises questions about the relationship between Jesus and John, and that is discussed in section 5:2 of this article.

## 4:0. Church and Society

### 4:1. Early Fourth Century

It has earlier been demonstrated that early Christianity did not just challenge gender inequality: it also challenged all the moral precepts and the perceptions upon which a patriarchal society is based. The potential for social disturbance was great, however that attitude regrettably did not continue. Because of its search for respectability and its eventual assumption of state authority in the gender segregated Greco/Roman

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<sup>48</sup>The Rabbis were also very concerned about problems of misuse and strong moral boundaries were set.

<sup>49</sup>Zugot refers to the period during the time of the Second Temple (515 BC – 70 AD), in which the spiritual leadership of the Jewish people was in the hands of five successive generations of zugot ("pairs") of religious teachers. The term zugot refers to pairs generally and the Babylonian Talmud (Pesachim 109b-112a) contains an extensive discussion of dangers of zugot and of performing various activities in pairs.

<sup>50</sup>See also: Greenberg, Steven; (2004) "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition" The University of Wisconsin Press, ISBN 10: 0-299-094-3

society, this challenge was lost. Instead of continuing with the challenges involved in following the doctrine of true gender transcendence which is contained in the Gospel message, and is expressed by Jesus and also by Paul in Galatians 3:28, Christianity instead embraced a form of gender complementarity that demanded the submission of women. This was the same as that of the surrounding Greco/Roman cultures and a complete transformation had occurred by the time of Augustine and the early fourth century Church.

In place of the prominent role which had been given to women and the pursuit of gender transcendence which was found in the early Church, women had become second class members<sup>51</sup>. Redemption did still remain available for women on earth, but this now came entirely through the blessings of childbirth, or else it required their total rejection of femininity, together with the refusal of all earthly sexual passions or acts. Any form of sex was perceived as a necessary evil, to be used for procreation alone. Gender equality was still preached, but it was now at the discretion of the male and on the terms that the male decides.

Instead of the celibacy which was the call of duty advocated by Jesus in the Gospels a Neo-Platonic form of celibacy was adopted. This earlier concept of celibacy saw marriage as “Second best”, so it did not prohibit relationships involving sexual and affectionate acts. The second form denied not only the practice of all sexual acts; it condemned every thought of sex. Within Greco/Roman society some eunuchs had become essential members of the state administration<sup>52</sup>. These eunuchs undertook important official roles, but their loyalty was always suspected. This may be because they had not been made to be eunuchs by choice. However by willingly adopting a compulsorily applied Neo-Platonic form of celibacy which denied all sexual activity to those who were the religious or priests, the Christian Church was able to create an equivalent class of people who the Emperor Constantine could more easily trust, and in return for this the Church was able to create an organisation that possessed the stature and the strength to undertake many of the important civil and social functions which society and the Empire required. Therefore the enforcement of this type of Neo-Platonic celibacy locked the Church into that social structure of society, from which there could be no easy escape, but the compact gave Constantine what he needed and the Church the authority it sought.

## 4:2 Reformation Changes

The Protestant Reformation was an attempt to reform the traditional teachings of the Roman Catholic Church which, in the understanding of the Reformers, had come to be governed by its own traditions in preference to those of the bible itself. The Reform movement rejected many of the traditional teachings with the argument that these did not come from the Apostolic Church. However the Reformers were limited by the resources that were available and they relied on Augustine for much of their theology. This investigation takes this one step further and it argues that the doctrines which were adopted by Augustine and the early fourth century Church on

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<sup>51</sup> For information on the degree of gender discrimination that was encountered see: Gilchrist, S. (2013). “An Unfinished Reformation”. See footer for access.

<sup>52</sup> Most had very menial roles.

gender equality, gender role and sexuality did not come from the Gospel Church, and by the time of the early fourth century Church a major disconnection had already occurred. By examining the changes that took place in the Church during the first three centuries of its existence, it is hoped that the Reformation can be made a little more complete.

### **4:3 Present Day Issues**

The consequence of the suppression of all types of same-sex relationships by the Christian Church for over one thousand years has meant that the ability to make these key distinctions between love and lust has vanished. Therefore the belief that lust is always the driving force for these actions has been written into the doctrines of the Church. The outcome is that the principle that homosexuality is exclusively about promiscuity and sexual immorality would become universally accepted and that any engagement in homosexual acts has been made the scapegoat for abusive sex. For as long as the Christian church was able to retain its social monopoly there was no possibility of any change in these attitudes. The social changes of the last fifty years mean that the true nature of the situation can no longer be hidden. There is nothing in this account that condones immorality in any way. In this analysis it is shown how faithful and committed same-sex relationships could be celebrated within Christianity at the time of the Gospel Church and how and why the Christian Church during the first three centuries of its existence came to vehemently condemn all such acts.

## **5:0. Christian Relationships**

### **5:1. Early Church**

There is no evidence that the early Christian Church attempted in any way to change the traditional Jewish teachings on the attitudes to sex or to gender. Indeed Paul in the epistles makes use of the first century interpretations of Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13 as the foundation for his arguments on illicit sex. The main question to be asked and answered is about how these attitudes came to be translated into the present day Christian Church. There are eight major passages which people have used to condemn homosexual acts<sup>53</sup>. However to regard any of these bible texts, particularly the writings of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, and Romans 1:21-31, to condemn homosexuality is a gross trivialisation of their meaning and of their intent. What Paul was writing about was the cultural clashes between the two very different societies. It has already been demonstrated that the dominant Greco/Roman society had a culture which used anal penetration to subjugate and control inferior people or groups. These were societies in which only the penetrated was condemned, and the penetrator was not. In complete contrast to this the subject Jewish society had a fear of the humiliation of anal penetration being inflicted on

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<sup>53</sup> There are eight references in the bible that have been used to condemn homosexuality. Four of these (Genesis 19:1-5, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 23:17) are found in the Old Testament while the other four (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Romans 1:21-31 and Jude 1:6-7) are located in the New Testament. The passages from Leviticus are fully discussed in this account. Deuteronomy 23:17 is essentially about what is called cult prostitution. Genesis 19:1-5 is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and Jude 1:6-7 states that Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion.

them as a consequence of sexual misuse or the outcome of defeat<sup>54</sup>. What Paul was discussing was what Judaism would have regarded as same-sex rape. The idea that these passages were specifically concerned with homosexuality and consensual same-sex relationships is incorrect and Paul's own need to define a new word for the activities he was condemning suggests that he was taking care to ensure that these consensual relationships were not the targets for his attack<sup>55</sup>. An extended analysis of the biblical texts and of early church history has been conducted as part of this investigation and the results demonstrate that these Jewish understandings were also represented in the ministry of Jesus and were indeed carried forward into the Christian Church<sup>56</sup>. However an area of major concern is how translation drift and re-interpretation of bible passages have been used to impose the traditional doctrines of the Church<sup>57</sup>.

## 5:2. Early Relationships

The relationship between Jesus and John has always been the subject of a great deal of debate. This analysis does not attempt to determine if Jesus and John were involved in any form of homosexual relationship. This is not least because the moral approaches which were embraced by first century Jewish society destroy the validity of these terms. However it does suggest that Jesus and John were in a relationship which had an intimacy that was at least the equivalent of a rabbinic partnership. This further implies that the same degrees of sexual expression which were permitted within these rabbinic partnerships could also be enacted, and John is singled out as the disciple who Jesus loved. The nature of their relationship is more fully discussed elsewhere<sup>58</sup>. There is no way of knowing what did happen in private, but when the bible is read from these perspectives it no longer seems to be coy on the subject and if these arguments are accepted they also have the additional effect of affirming and validating the authenticity of the Gospel texts<sup>59 60</sup>.

During many centuries the Christian Church had conducted services of what were called "Brother making" or in Greek, Adelphopoiesis. These united same-sex couples and liturgies for the services survive in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church<sup>61 62</sup>. Many of the religious symbols and declarations used in the services mirrored those of a marriage, and the full social and legal commitments of marriage were also embraced. However anal penetration was prohibited. The sexual elements of these also appear to be identical to the rabbinic partnerships. Therefore instead of

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<sup>54</sup> In the dominant Greco/Roman society it was the submissive, penetrated partner who was condemned because of the debasement of the status of citizenship. In a subjugated society, such as Judaism it was the penetrator who was condemned because of the humiliation it enforced.

<sup>55</sup> The word "arsenokoitai" has been variously interpreted as "Abusers of themselves with Mankind". It was coined by Paul. If he had wished to refer to homosexuality there were different words he could have used.

<sup>56</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:2:2 and 4:2. See footer for access.

<sup>57</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:6. See footer for access.

<sup>58</sup> Gilchrist, S. (2013). "From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church". See also: Gilchrist, S. (2013). "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships". See footer for access.

<sup>59</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:4:1. See footer for access.

<sup>60</sup> For a full account see Gilchrist, S. (2011). "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships"

<sup>61</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 3:2:2 and 4:2. See footer for access.

<sup>62</sup> For a full account see also Gilchrist, S. (2011). "Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships"

being regarded as proto-marriages<sup>63</sup>, these same-sex relationships seem to be the equivalent of the first century Jewish rabbinic partnerships which have been carried over into the Christian Church.

### 5:3. Present Day Marriage

This conclusion has implications for the controversies about marriage in the present day. The Church of England study document on “Men and Women in Marriage”<sup>64</sup> has provided a useful indication of the current Church of England thinking. However this document fails to take a proper account of how the social and legal attitudes to gender equality and to marriage have changed over the centuries. Thus paragraph 19 of the document declares: “There have been cultures (the patriarchal period of the Old Testament among them) in which compromises have been accepted especially over exogamy and monogamy, but these compromises have tended to be of limited scope. It is possible to exaggerate the cultural relativity of marriage-forms. Many differences there have been, but they hardly amount to a significant challenge to these structural foundations.” This statement should be strongly challenged for it ignores the profound changes in the social and legal outlooks which have taken place<sup>65</sup>. The understanding that a marriage is an equal relationship for men and women is a modern idea and it is necessary to look again at what the relationship of Adelpoiesis involved.

Paradoxically within the gender equal societies of the present day these services of fraternisation appear closer to the present day attitudes to marriage than first century views. The major area of difference would seem to be that of anal penetration<sup>66</sup>. In the Western societies of today, where all men and women are treated equally, and when loving, committed, responsible and faithful same-sex relationships can fully be entered into without any humiliation being involved, all of the arguments used in the bible for the prohibition of anal penetration within these relationships disappear. Therefore in all same-sex relationships, which are given in love and commitment in a gender equal society, there should be no prohibition of any type of loving act which

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<sup>63</sup> There is little reference to same-sex marriage within the Jewish literature, however the Talmud teaches against same-sex marriage in Chullin 92a, saying that the nations of the world, however sinful, corrupt or perverse, still have the merit of at least three behaviours, one of which is “they do not write a ketubah (marriage contract) for two males.” In a commentary on Genesis Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Joseph, “The generation of the Flood was not wiped out until they wrote marriage documents for the union of a man to a male or to an animal.” (Genesis Rabbah 26:5; Leviticus Rabbah 23:9). Same-sex marriage was anathema to the first Century Jewish Rabbis, but it is also notable that their real objection is to the writing of a marriage contract, for that would have the consequence of diminishing the status of at least one of the partners to that of a woman. According to English Common Law which developed from the 12th century onward, all property which a wife held at the time of a marriage became a possession of her husband. The idea that a woman is a legally equal partner in a marriage is a modern perception for women only obtained suffrage and equality in property rights after 1928 and the requirement to enact the Gender Equality act in 2010, (with the special exemption for religious organisations!), indicates that this is still a live issue. Such major changes in the legal standing of women must have had a profound effect on married relationships, yet these are changes to which the Church did not object.

<sup>64</sup> “Men and Women in Marriage”. A document from the Faith and Order Commission published with the agreement of the House of Bishops of the Church of England and approved for study GS Misc 1046. Church House Publishing April 2013

<sup>65</sup> For a more detailed analysis see: Hensman, Savitri (2013). “Men and Women in Marriage; Renewal in Christ”. Ekklesia. In press <http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/>

<sup>66</sup> See: Gilchrist, S. (2013). “From Gender Transcendence to Gender Complementarity: the Development of Attitudes to Gender and Sexuality in the Early and the Modern Church”. See footer for access.

involves anal penetrative sex. Neither should there be any condemnation of this activity by the Church.

The question of the social changes which are now likely to occur after the passing of the United Kingdom Equal Marriage act are addressed in Paragraph 50 of the report on “Men and Women in Marriage”<sup>67</sup>. This states that: “It has seemed to some that the disagreement over same-sex marriage is a disagreement over mere names. But names govern how we think, and how we think governs what we learn to appreciate. When marriage is spoken of unclearly or misleadingly, it distorts the way couples try to conduct their relationship and makes for frustration and disappointment. The reality of marriage between one man and one woman will not disappear as the result of any legislative change, for God has given this gift, and it will remain part of our created human endowment. But the disciplines of living in it may become more difficult to acquire, and the path to fulfilment, in marriage and in other relationships, more difficult to find.” With the great changes in the social and legal structures of marriage that have taken place over the centuries this would appear to be a weak argument to make. Given that the Gender Equality Act 2010 exempts the religious bodies from its provisions, and that people are perfectly entitled to continue to treat marriage in the traditional ways, it is difficult to see any significant justification for the argument that it presents.

The weakness of the argument in Paragraph 50 may then lead to the reverse of what it intends. There could indeed be a case for describing one of these relationships as a “Marriage” and the other “Adelphopoiesis”, or employ some other word to what must be a totally equal but a complementary relationship. However the previous and continued opposition of the church to recognise or to endorse the legitimacy of civil partnerships, despite the well-established social attitudes of many people in society has removed any possibility of this happening<sup>68</sup>. It can now be argued that society would no longer recognise this distinction. Through this opposition the Church has lost the initiative, and the case is thereby made that the same word “Marriage” for both should be used.

## **6:0 Worldwide and Modern Church**

### **6:1. Cultural Differences in the Worldwide Church**

Through its attempt to gain respectability within a gender unequal society it might be argued that the early Christian Church had adopted the most practical option. By maintaining the segregated roles which were associated with a gender unequal society, but by claiming that these roles are divinely ordained and that they must be

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<sup>67</sup> The English Equal Marriage Act passed into law on June 17<sup>th</sup> 2013.

<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to note the transformation that has occurred. From the outright and total condemnation at the time they were introduced, the Church has now come to accept the secular value of these relationships. The possibility of services of blessing for civil partnerships is now more actively being considered. The Church of England Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality, or the Pilling Report was commissioned by the House of Bishops of the Church of England in January 2012, and was published on the 28 November 2013.

considered to be equivalent in value, it then could argue that full gender equality is achieved. The cult of the Virgin Mary indeed places women on a pedestal, but this veneration of Mary as a divine mediator and redemptrix also acts to reinforce gender discrimination and the segregation of roles<sup>69</sup>. Such a doctrine of segregated equality did not come from the Gospel Church. The challenges of early Christianity to the sex and gender orthodoxy of a male dominated society threatened to disrupt the whole structure of that society, and in this analysis it has been demonstrated that gender transcendence and absolute equality was the goal which was sought. This is not purely a matter of gender alone since the same arguments also apply to same-sex relationships, where the search for respectability within a gender unequal society has resulted in the condemnation of every gender or sexually variant act, irrespective of the purity of the motives that are involved.

The situation which is encountered by the Christian Churches in Africa and in any society where institutionalised gender inequality exists is the same as that faced by the Christian Church during the first three centuries of its existence<sup>70</sup>. A view has been expressed which declares that "The Church will commit Gospel suicide if it preaches tolerance of homosexuality in Africa and in most of the third world, and that the Church will commit Gospel suicide in the developed countries of the West if it does not". The dilemma that the Church faces in Africa and the third world is the same as the one which was faced by the first Century Church. Does the Church try to obtain respectability by endorsing the traditions of a gender unequal society? Or does challenge these traditions by seeking to truly express the Gospel of Christ? Will these present day churches do the same as their predecessor church? Will these churches seek to preserve their institutions and endorse a gender complementarity that demands the submission of women, and attitudes which pass life sentences on all people who engage in same-sex acts<sup>71</sup> <sup>72</sup>, or can stand against and condemn these attitudes, and can they become the Resurrection Church?

## 6:2. Church and Present Day Society

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<sup>69</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 4:4. See footer for access.

<sup>70</sup> Gilchrist S. (2013): "An Unfinished Reformation". Section 4:4. See footer for access.

<sup>71</sup> Homosexuality is taboo in many African countries and it is illegal in 37. On the 20th December 2013 Uganda passed legislation which imposed life sentences on those who engaged in the offence of "Aggravated homosexuality" and it extended the existing penalty of life imprisonment for same-sex intercourse to all other same-sex behaviour, including the mere touching of another person with the intent to have homosexual relations.

<sup>72</sup> Guardian Newspaper article 20 December 2013: Ugandan MPs rush through draconian laws against homosexuality. "Same-sex couples face life behind bars for touching amid jail threat for not reporting gay people to authorities. Gay rights activists have reacted angrily to the Ugandan parliament's abrupt decision to pass anti-homosexuality laws that would condemn same-sex couples to life in jail for mere touching, urging president Yoweri Museveni to veto them. The bill, rushed through by MPs on Friday, also bans the promotion of homosexuality and makes it a crime punishable by prison not to report gay people to the authorities or to conduct a marriage ceremony for same-sex couples. The law was first introduced in 2009, when it advocated the death penalty, but after a worldwide outcry, that was removed from the final version. "This is victory for Uganda," David Bahati, the MP who proposed the bill, was quoted as saying in media reports. "I am glad the parliament has voted against evil. Because we are a God-fearing nation, we value life in a holistic way. It is because of those values that members of parliament passed this bill regardless of what the outside world thinks." Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, who was excommunicated from the Church of Uganda for his opposition to homophobia, said: "I condemn it (the bill) in very strong terms because it shows there's a lot of misinformation, misunderstanding, I could say ignorance about homosexuality. I still hope that with education people will understand. It takes time, but I believe things will change." See:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/20/uganda-mps-laws-homosexuality>



For as long as the Christian Church held the power to maintain its secular authority these traditional views on sexual and gender variance, with the traditional teaching about homosexuality could not be challenged. 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 social developments have included the disappearance of Church authority, the rejection of religious belief, the widespread introduction and use of contraception, the acceptance the enacting of anti-discrimination legislation, the 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 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 in loving same-sex partnerships as there are in heterosexual marriages. It is also easy for them to distinguish between the behaviour of any two people who are involved in any heterosexual friendship and that of an equivalent couple who are involved in a 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 traditional doctrines which is destroying the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the world.

This analysis has demonstrated that the present day attitudes to gender and sexual variation which have been adopted by much of society are the ones which are, and were, much closer to the teaching of Jesus. Therefore it is the people who hold to the traditional teachings of the Church who are out of step with the Gospel message and a rediscovery of the first century values is urgently required. The consequences of transforming dogma into a doctrine were condemned by Jesus in Mark 7:1-23, and the words in this passage speak for themselves:

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

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

Mark 7: 6-8

The resulting gender discrimination which came through the misapplication of gender complementarity and centuries of persecution, condemnation murder and rejection of all gender and sexually variant people whose most earnest aims and intentions were to live totally moral, faithful, committed and honest lives in ways that were true to the Christian gospel, brings shame on the Church.

## 6:3 Making the Choice

The present position of the Christian church is not sustainable and it is essential for it to change its approach. However any change must always be to affirm the Gospel of Christ. There are a number of impediments that have to be overcome. One of these is found in the way that reinterpretation and translation drift has been used and is still being used today to reinforce the traditional doctrines of the Church. This is examined in detail elsewhere<sup>73</sup>. A further concern which fuels the opposition to any change comes through the fear that any liberalisation of the traditional teachings on homosexuality and on gender and sexual variation will destroy the moral authority of Christianity and the Church. However there is nothing contained within this analysis which can justify these fears or reduce the moral expectations in any way, for it only requires that all people, irrespective of their sense of gender identity or their sexual orientation, are treated alike.

In the moral compass of all religions there is the freedom to choose between actions of good and evil. This can sometimes be described as the difference between “The way of darkness and the way of light”. That equivalent duality is shown to exist within the first century Judean and Greco/Roman traditions, where those people who attempt to live to the highest moral standards that their society expects can live according to the way of light. Those who do the reverse follow a way of darkness instead, and they are strongly condemned for their actions. Through its search for authority and for respectability in a gender unequal society the Christian Church has condemned every type of gender and sexually variant behaviour to the way of darkness instead. The result of this has been that the traditions of the later church do not represent those that belonged to the Gospel Church. A major disconnection has occurred and its correction is a reform that must now be made.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> 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 way in which gay and lesbian people have been treated in the past. In a speech to the Evangelical Alliance<sup>74</sup> he said that the vast majority of people under 35 think that the Christian attitude to gay people is “wicked” and “incomprehensible”, and that most young people considered Christians to be no better than racists on the issue. Because of this reactionary attitude the Christian Church has taken Christianity into exile from society. This analysis gives the reasons for the Church to return from that exile. The contribution of the Church to the good of mankind has been, it still is, and it always should be enormous, for the Christian message rises above every label and restriction, it is about a God of Love with whom and in whom, everyone can be truly become who they are in the unconditional Love of Christ.

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<sup>73</sup>Gilchrist S. (2013): “An Unfinished Reformation”. Section 3:5:1. See footer for access.

<sup>74</sup>On 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>

## 8:0. The Author

Susan Gilchrist, now retired, has taught in higher education for over forty years. She has also been involved in the work of reconciliation in tribal conflict situations for approximately the same length of time. In 1976 she was responsible for setting up an organisation which co-ordinated this work throughout mainland Britain. She has been involved in research into the driving forces behind tribal conflict, identity formation and the interactions that are encountered. She has undertaken similar research on gender dysphoria and she is currently preparing this work for publication. Susan writes poetry and she has documented her journey through an anthology of poems. Through her counselling involvement she aims to help others who may learn from her experiences. She has served on Government and NHS Advisory panels. Susan is actively involved in Church of England activities and in ecumenical work. She is currently a committee member of the Sibyls, which is a Christian Spirituality group for transgendered people, their friends, families and supporters. Together with members of the clergy and with others she was involved in the organisation of a conference in Birmingham in 2010 on "Sexuality and Human Flourishing", the proceedings of which can be accessed on the LGB&T Anglican Coalition Website at [www.lgbtac.org.uk](http://www.lgbtac.org.uk). She created and continues to manage the LGB&T Anglican Coalition website. She also serves on the executive committee of the LGB&T Anglican Coalition and she is a past co-chair of the Coalition.

## 8:0. Documents

References are given in the footnotes.

For information on access and the current status of other documents check the website: <http://www.gndr.org.uk/transgender/index.htm>

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