

Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church: Is it Not Time to Consider the Science?

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1:0 Introduction

Two events of particular significance to the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality, and by extension on gender and sexually variant behaviour, took place during 2016. One of these was the publication of the final report on the “Synod on the Family” issued by the Catholic Church². That advocated pastoral care for gender and sexually variant people but it also restated the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. The second was the concluding discussion on the Church of England “Shared Conversations” process³. This took place during its General Synod meeting held in July. After it the Church of England issued the following statement: “..... what has been learned through the relationships developed will inform the way the church conducts whatever further formal discussions may be necessary in the future”⁴. Such a modest statement might be expected, since the whole objective of the “Shared Conversations” process was to enable “Good Disagreement” to be obtained.

Fundamental to these conclusions is the refusal of both Churches to consider the possibility of any change to the traditional doctrines they profess. That prohibition was made explicit in the Catholic Church, and it is implicit in the “Shared Conversations” process. The rigidity of this refusal is made clear the concluding statement on the “Synod on the Family” released by Pope Francis in 2016, where this traditional teaching is clearly restated and the total refusal to consider homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family is strongly reinforced⁵.

¹ With some updates to 31 July 2016: This document is available online at:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/226P-ConsiderScience.pdf>

² The Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; popularly referred to as the Synod on the Family, took place from 4 to 25 October 2015 with the theme of “the vocation and mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world.” It was called to “reflect further on the points discussed” at the 2014 Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “so as to formulate appropriate pastoral guidelines” for the pastoral care of the person and the family.

³ Shared Conversations: See: Church of England (2015) Grace and Disagreement article: Grace and Disagreement Shared Conversations on Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality: [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2165248/grace2.pdf> . Also: Church of England (2015) Shared Conversations Website: [Online]. [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <http://www.sharedconversations.org/> A commentary is given in Gilchrist, S. (2014) *Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversyAndCrisis.pdf>

⁴ Church of England. (2016): “Statement following conclusion of Shared Conversations Process”: Church of England Website [Accessed 19 July 2016]

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2016/07/statement-following-conclusion-of-shared-conversations-process.aspx>

⁵ Pope Francis. (2016): “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* Of The Holy Father Francis To Bishops, Priests And Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples And All The Lay Faithful On Love In The Family”: [Accessed: 18 April 2016]

https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf For a general outline of the Catholic Teaching, see: Vatican. (2005): Congregation for catholic education instruction: concerning the criteria of vocational discernment regarding

Refusing to consider any change to the traditional Church teaching prevents meaningful discussions on historical and cultural developments, scientific advances and social changes in society that have occurred. The concluding discussions on the “Shared Conversations” process focussed on the interpretation and traditional understanding of biblical texts. Nothing relating to scientific inputs, the social and cultural changes or the historical contexts which are described in this account were considered⁶. The long history of opposition to the possibility of change has been documented by the author elsewhere⁷. This continued refusal is considered by the author to be destroying the credibility; not just of the Churches, but of all Christian belief.

The social changes of the last sixty years, which include equality legislation and the provision for same-sex marriage that are now enshrined in law in many states, have enabled people to see for themselves the wide variety of moral behaviour that is encountered. Relationships can be established which past criminalisation has prevented. When people are prepared to keep an open mind a moral duality can be readily observed, where gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies may be highly regarded, while those who misuse these relationships should be very severely condemned for their acts. That moral duality is contradicted by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns without exception every expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour as inherently sinful: and it regards all of these as heinous acts

In the past there has not been enough evidence to prove on a scientific basis that this duality in gender and sexually variant behaviour exists. The absence of that evidence has enabled the Christian Church to continue to deny the existence of that duality. By claiming that all such behaviour is due to decadence in society it has been able to impose its condemnation of every gender and sexually variant act. That lack of evidence is addressed in this investigation where a new scientific approach is taken to the development of personality and self-identity in early life. This confirms that the duality exists and that its development is a fundamental consequence of the formation process.

This means that in any society, and at any time, where gender and sexually variant relationships are expressed the same type of evidence for this duality will also be found. Therefore everybody in first century Greek, Roman and Jewish societies would have been exposed to these experiences, including Jesus himself. A critique of the history, development and theology of the Christian Church, and of the surrounding Greek, Roman and Jewish societies is therefore conducted which uses the results of the neurophysiological study in combination with the knowledge of the duality that is now shown to exist. By removing the theological presumptions which have existed for most of the last two thousand years, new perspectives on first century Greek, Roman and Jewish societies are obtained, as well as new insights into bible texts.

persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to seminaries and holy orders:
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20051104_istruzione_en.html

⁶ Davies, Madeleine. (2016): Synod members thanked for staying on to talk about their differences”; *Church Times*. Web Posted: 12 Jul 2016 @ 06:28

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/15-july/news/uk/synod-members-thanked-for-staying-on-to-talk-about-their-differences> See also: Anglican Mainstream (2016): “32 Synod delegates publicly express “lack of confidence” in C of E Shared Conversations process” [accessed 20 July 2016]: <http://anglicanmainstream.org/32-evangelicals-publicly-express-lack-of-confidence-in-c-of-e-shared-conversations-process/>

⁷ Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church”; <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversoryAndCrisis.pdf>. Also Gilchrist, S. (2016): “The Perceptions of Gender and Sexual Variation in Present Day Society and in the Modern Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/221P-InfluencesToday.pdf> .

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The only defence that the Church has offered so far is the reliance on its own traditions and its standard interpretations of bible texts. The refusal to consider any possibility of change to the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on homosexuality and gender and sexual variation completely blocks any discussion on the issues that urgently need to be addressed. Instead of facing up to these challenges the Church has been trying to deny them. Such an approach can only convince the already committed. Its determined refusal to listen to the scientific evidence and the experiences of everyday people in modern society continues to destroy the credibility of the Church. That destruction will continue until the Church faces up to these challenges, and it properly addresses the issues they create.

2:0 Focus

A major aim of this investigation is to conduct a neurophysiological and psychological analysis which investigates how the development of personality and self-identity takes place in early life. A further purpose of this investigation is to establish how the results of this scientific study relate to the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. A major constraint in previous studies has arisen because of the relative inability to link the internal, contagious, feed-forward and physiologically driven forces which dominate development in early life to the controlling, feed-back and externally moderated processes of cognitive development which later occur. Because of its early origins gender dysphoria is able to provide the link that is required⁸. This enables this new approach which is able to match the early physiological and identity driven learning processes to the cognitively and reward driven ones that are present in later life.

It is observed that personality and self-identity forms in a series of stages. A rapid transformation which involves a major advancement in neural capabilities occurs at a particular point between the ages of between one and a half to three years. Before this transformation period it is demonstrated that learning and development is dominated by the physiological, internally driven and contagious feed-forward development processes which are described in the pioneering work by Gallese, Dawkins, Girard and others: this analysis takes an impartial approach⁹. After transformation the controlling, feed-back and externally moderated processes of cognitive development come into play¹⁰. Far from being a peaceful experience the development of personality and identity is shown to be driven by intense but hidden struggles between these conflicting demands. The momentum this creates enables the highest peaks of achievement to be gained. It is further demonstrated that the physiological, neurological and psychological aspects of brain development act together to create a finely tuned system in which the maximum amount of individuality, possessiveness,

⁸ Gender dysphoria is a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there's a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity.

⁹ In certain respects the work of Girard and Dawkins are poles apart. Dawkins uses the results of his research to become an apostle for atheism. Girard justifies in sociological terms the human need for religious belief. For that reason Girard's work has become popular amongst some schools of theologians. The author has not found any instance where Dawkins has cited Girard's work, despite much of that work predating his own. Gallese analyses and makes use of Girard's research, but he does not generally refer to Dawkins' work. Sadly this is an area where religious and atheistic dogmas have intruded upon the independence of scientific research. This analysis is very careful to avoid making any conclusions about the correctness or otherwise of any realities presumed in religious or atheistic belief. Only the scientific aspects of this work are considered. This discipline is applied even when Church teaching, theology and history are examined.

¹⁰ Cognitive ability is the capacity to perform higher mental processes of reasoning, remembering, understanding, and problem solving. Cognitive brain functions require the ability to work with information in a meaningful way, to apply new information to that which has already been gained, perform preferential changes, use reasoned procedures to alter opinions, and to search for rewards.

intelligence and inquisitiveness, together with the minimum degree of energy expenditure is formed.

All of these aspects are examined and the results of this study are used to interrogate the traditional teaching of the Christian Church. It is demonstrated that there is a contradiction between the conclusions of the neurophysiological and psychological study and the approach which is decreed by the theology of the present day Church. The development of Christianity is investigated in the second part of this examination for the purpose of determining how and why this contradiction occurs. The results of this analysis show that the teaching of Jesus conforms to what is determined by the scientific study. This means that the source of this contradiction must come from changes in the theology of the Church. The theological, scientific and historical analyses conducted in this investigation all demonstrate that the present day teaching of the Church is incorrect: therefore the ideal sought for this investigation is to return to the teaching of Christ.

3:0 Science

At birth the parts of the brain responsible for thinking and recognition are very poorly developed. A rapid and pronounced increase in these abilities occurs broadly around the age of two years¹¹. This transformation period is identified as the time when many distal parts of the brain interconnect and the brain can begin to work as a single unit. From that time onwards a cognitive continuum¹² can begin to take effect. Before this transformation, only general precursors which involve the tribal associations of babies with common purposes can be created. No personal concepts of self are formed. One precursor may link babies to a gender but it is not possible for them to identify what this means before the cognitive continuum becomes active. Only after that has happened is it possible for an awareness of the personal self to develop. Gender dysphoria is used to examine this transformation. An analogy sometimes used by the author compares an acorn to its cradle. The cradle represents the early global concepts, which identify the place of the individual in society, while the acorn represents the senses and awareness of the personal identity that later develops. The transformation from a single type of awareness into one which includes the other is delayed until the necessary neural co-ordination has developed¹³. This means that a collective and tribal identity is created before any concepts which distinguish the personal self from the other can be formed.

Although the cradle supports the acorn, each component has different characteristics. In reality the acorn eventually leaves the cradle; but the acorn's characteristics depend on the type of nurture the cradle has brought. In this analogy the acorn and the cradle remain connected, however it is shown that instead of separating, these early elements may be entirely confined to the subconscious mind¹⁴. It is argued in this analysis that the physiology of brain development is such that these cradle based elemental global or core concepts remain fixed for the rest of life. Cognitive development may suppress or override their

¹¹¹¹ Generally from one and a half years onwards

¹² In the cognitive continuum theory, intuition and rational analysis are defined as two modes of cognition or recognition that can be placed at the ends of a continuum, where intuition refers to rapid, unconscious processing and low control, and analysis refers to slow, rational, conscious and controlled thinking. For the latter, sufficient neural co-ordination is required. This investigation demonstrates that the early processes of development, which include intuition and possessive imitation, are physiologically rather than cognitively driven.

¹³ In humans this delay is particularly long. Expert opinion disagrees but it is argued that an extended period is needed to allow the peak human potential to be created. A counter argument against this is that, the more it is delayed, the more it can go wrong.

¹⁴ They may only come into conscious awareness when some conflict or trauma occurs.

demands. However their constancy is shown to create a stability of personality whereby two people can continue to recognise each other even if they have spent years apart.

It is demonstrated that previous attempts to develop a scientific understanding of the early development of personality and self-identity, together with the efforts to reconcile it with the theology of the Christian Church fail or give inadequate answers, because the presumption is made that, in some measure, a cognitive continuum guides the processes of learning and development at all times of life. An extended neurophysiological and psychological analysis has been conducted. By challenging and refuting that assumption this investigation offers a radical new approach.

4:0 Contradiction

Core elements of personality, including basic concepts of gender and sexual identity are shown to form before or during the neural transformation period. This is before the cognitive processes start to become effective, and these early elements are found to be concerned with identity alone. Characteristics which originate after this transformation period have behavioural features which cognitively link desire to reward. Different types of conflict are therefore encountered. It is shown that the failure to recognise the difference between these is the physiological reason which gives rise the contradiction that exists.

In the neurophysiological and psychological analysis it is established that the features which create the core gender and sexual identities of every person are physiologically rather than behaviourally or cognitively driven. This means that as wide a range of moral attitudes, beliefs and behaviour are to be found amongst gender and sexually variant people as those which exist in society at large. It is further demonstrated that a moral duality must exist, whereby gender and sexually variant people who express their true attractions and identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies should be highly regarded, while those who misuse these relationships ought to be very severely condemned for their acts.

That moral duality is contradicted by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church which condemns without exception every expression of gender and sexually variant behaviour as inherently sinful: and it regards all of them as heinous acts. The current Church teaching that both sex and gender are solely determined by biology is also shown to be incorrect. Underlying this Christian doctrine is the presumption that all of these learning processes are at all times cognitively driven. Therefore the existence, and the influence, of the early physiologically driven learning processes are denied. This analysis addresses that omission. It also considers what the consequences of this have been for gender and sexually variant people, for the advancement of science, and for the Christian Church.

5:0 Theology

A major challenge to be faced is that of distinguishing the differences between the teaching of Jesus and that of the early Christian Church. That cannot be achieved by confining any examination to the teachings that the Church presents. Therefore five perspectives are employed. The first perspective examines the traditional Church teaching in the light of the understanding developed by this neurophysiological and psychological investigation. The second perspective works backwards within Church history and traditions in an attempt to determine what the earliest doctrines adopted by the Christian Church had been. The third

independently examines the social and the cultural backgrounds of the Greek, Roman and Jewish societies in which Christianity and the early Church had first been formed. In the light of the first three perspectives, the fourth perspective seeks to ascertain the teaching of Jesus himself. The final perspective examines the relevance of these issues to present day life. The second and the third perspectives adopt reverse standpoints to examine the history and the theology of the Christian Church. By removing the armour of theological presumptions which have dominated Church teaching for the last two thousand years new insights can be gained; and this opens up unapplied interpretations of biblical texts.

The first and most obvious difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of the early Church comes from the contrasting attitudes that were taken. The Gospels show that the challenge of Jesus to the social, sexual and gender abuses of first century Jewish society was made without compromise and the strength of his attacks on the authorities led to his death on the Cross. However the Gospel message required people to work within these societies to change them rather than to destroy them. That gave the early Church a difficult choice. Early Christianity had to adapt to the demands of Roman society if it was to overcome the cultural differences between the Jewish and Roman cultures and continue to take the Gospel message to the world. This process of adaptation is clearly evident in the letters and epistles of Peter, Paul and John. It is the nature and the timing of these changes which has been the subject of much theological dispute. It is sometimes assumed that the challenging passages in these documents which refer to the imposition of gender divisions and the submission of women to men did not truly represent the Apostolic teaching, but were instead later additions which the Early Church made to the texts. That presumption is challenged both in this analysis and in the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. Perhaps surprisingly both approaches agree on this issue and the main difference between them is one of purpose and intent.

It is necessary to find out who authorised these adaptations and how and why they were made. That could have happened on an ad-hoc basis or it could be the result of a pragmatic approach. There are good reasons, including those arising from the experience of the Jews at the time of Exile and the degree of continuity with Judaism that was sought by the early Church, for believing that a pragmatic approach was taken. That is discussed in this analysis. Peter and Paul would have been fully aware of the adaptations they were making in adopting this approach.

Nevertheless if Peter and Paul were to be true to the Gospel message they must have believed that the authority to do this came from the teaching of Jesus himself. The requirement of Jesus to work within society to change it would have been one source; however there is another in the passage in Matthew 19 where Jesus discusses the issues of marriage and the place of eunuchs in the Church. This radical teaching is spread throughout the Gospels but some of the most challenging elements to first century society are presented in Matthew 19:12. That was not only because of this society's serious mistrust and condemnation of eunuchs, but also because of the attacks on social order created by the gender disruptive behaviour of the Goddess cults and their self-castrated male priests. The statement which follows this discussion: "He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" is unique in the way that it qualifies the teaching which Jesus presents. This could have been a direct comment on the abhorrence of self-castration in Jewish society, or it could have meant that Jesus was aware of the difficulties that would later be likely to occur, or it could have been added later to deal with the changes that were required. Whatever way it is taken, it allowed the Church to move forward and gain acceptance in the Roman world.

However this was not just a statement of compromise. It was also the command for the Christian Church to express in full the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sex as soon

as it had the power to do so. There were several significant instances when this could have happened. One was the change in power structure that took place when Ambrose the Bishop of Milan required the emperor Theodosius to do penance for a massacre that took place. A second occurred after the Albigensian Crusade, when the military defeat of the Cathars affirmed the supreme secular authority of the Church. However, instead of returning to the radical teaching which Jesus had presented, the Church used these opportunities to enforce its own power and authority. Today this return has still not happened. If the initial compromises arose because of the needs of a powerless group in a powerful first century Roman Society, they no longer apply. Therefore it is now time to follow in full this commandment of Jesus, and restore the radical teaching of Jesus on gender and sex to the present day Church.

An extended analysis of the relationships between power and sex, including how these were used in the first century world is conducted. In first century societies it is demonstrated that it was the abuses of power which gave permission for the abuses of sex. It is shown that the adoption of the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexual variation was driven by the cultural clashes and the urgent need to combat sexual abuse and gender based coercion in despotic and gender unequal societies. It has already been noted that the teaching of Jesus conforms to the results of the neurophysiological and psychological study. This outcome requires that the same criteria of use and abuse must apply equally to all heterosexual, cross-gender and same-sex acts. There is no toleration of any form of abusive or immoral sex. When the abuses of power are absent it is concluded that all people, transgender, transsexual, lesbian, gay, heterosexual and bisexual people who attempt to live their lives in ways that fulfil the love of Christ, and who seek to express their own identities within roles that are true to themselves; must be fully accepted in their own right. All behaviour is governed by the purity of intention. There is no denigration of personal relationships and family life, and there is no automatic condemnation of any cross-gender or same-sex act.

That raises significant challenges: This is why these issues are discussed in considerable length in the accompanying papers. Great emphasis is placed by GAFCON¹⁵ and others on restoring the "Godly Authority" of bible texts. It is shown that these attempts do not recover the teaching of Jesus when they are based on what is today regarded as the traditional teaching of the Church: they return instead to the compromised Christianity which was presented by the thirteenth century Church. The same is true when literal interpretations are used. If a true recovery is to be done the correct context must be applied. This is not just a matter of identity and sex. It includes restoring the role, ministry and oversight which Jesus gave to women as well. Today's failures of Christian teaching still come from the refusal to restore the original teaching of Jesus. Instead of centuries of making homosexuality the scapegoat for all sexual abuse it is demonstrated in this analysis that the correct issue for the Christian Church should be one of combatting all forms of abusive sex.

It is important to note that the scapegoating of minority groups in society is a social phenomenon. The denial of the existence of identity driven conflicts and characteristics by the traditional teaching of the Christian Church creates the presumption that all gender and sexually variant behaviour comes from reward driven lifestyle choices, it is described as disordered and it is considered to always be in pursuit of immoral or inappropriate sex. Some sections of the Christian Church have given, and still give legitimacy and support to the secular scapegoating of gender and sexually variant people by countries and societies through their collusion with it, and in some countries extreme penalties are applied. However other sections do not; and it is shown how this has led to the schisms in the present day

¹⁵ The "Global Anglican Future Conference", a group, mainly of African churches, representing the conservative elements in the Anglican Communion.

Christian Church. The allegation by the Christian Church that gender and sexually variant conditions are the results of reward driven lifestyle choices is refuted in this investigation, where the neurophysiological and psychological study shows that they are driven by identity instead. Accurately identifying the characteristics of the different conflict types is also very important because the correct methods of managing them are almost opposite to each other¹⁶. For centuries much harm has been done because of the medical misdiagnoses that have been made; and also because the wrong methods and approaches have been applied¹⁷.

6:0 Changes

Little change could take place for as long as these attitudes continued. However in the eyes of many, the social and cultural transformations in Western societies over the last fifty years have demolished the presumptions upon which the traditional teaching of the Christian Church on gender and sexually variant behaviour has been based¹⁸. There are many people in the world today who are honestly, faithfully and assiduously following from different viewpoints what they believe to be the correct Christian teaching, who all are concerned about what is happening in the Christian Church. Evidence for that concern is seen in the establishment of the “Shared Conversations” process in the Church of England¹⁹ and in the “Synod on the Family”²⁰ called by Pope Francis in 2014. However preconditions were set by the Church hierarchies²¹. These preconditions demand that there must be no change to the traditional teaching of the Church and this also means that neither the real needs nor their urgency have been addressed. The “Shared Conversations” process in the Church of England only asks that “Good Disagreement” is achieved. The final report on the “Synod on the Family” issued in 2016 advocates pastoral concern, but restates the traditional teaching of the Church²². If any discussions are to succeed; this is a great hurdle that has still to be overcome.

¹⁶ In the same way that treatment for depression or addiction differs from other types of treatment.

¹⁷ For full descriptions see: Gilchrist, S. (2015): “*Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf> and Gilchrist, S. (2016): “*Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>

¹⁸ These prohibitions can still have considerable weight in societies where gender discrimination occurs or where gender differentiation in terms of required behaviour is legally or socially enforced.

¹⁹ Shared Conversations: See: Church of England (2015) Grace and Disagreement article: Grace and Disagreement Shared Conversations on Scripture, Mission and Human Sexuality: [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <https://churchofengland.org/media/2165248/grace2.pdf>. Also: Church of England (2015) Shared Conversations Website: [Online]. [Accessed 15/10/2015]: <http://www.sharedconversations.org/> Gilchrist, S. (2014) *Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversyAndCrisis.pdf>

²⁰ Vatican (2013): Synod on the Family: Preparatory Document: “*Pastoral Challenges To The Family In The Context Of Evangelization*” [Accessed 6/11/2015]: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html

²¹ The Pilling Report did leave open the door to the possibility of a change, but urged great caution. Pilling Report. (2013): “*Report of the House of Bishops Working Group on Human Sexuality*” (The Pilling Report) Published: 28/11/2013: Church House Publishing ISBN-13: 9780715144374 ISBN-10: 0715144375 [Accessed 20 November 2014] http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1891063/pilling_report_gs_1929_web.pdf

²² Pope Francis. (2016): “*Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Lætitia Of The Holy Father Francis To Bishops, Priests And Deacons Consecrated Persons Christian Married Couples And All The Lay Faithful On Love In The Family*”: [Accessed: 18 April 2016] https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

This investigation is based on the principle that the presumptions made in the traditional teaching of the Church on homosexuality and gender and sexual variation can be scientifically tested. That is acknowledged in article 2357 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it declares that these scientific principles are not well understood²³. Even in terms of its own traditions there is no justification for any embargo which prevents a reassessment of the traditional teaching of the Church. This analysis performs that scientific test. It shows that there is a contradiction between the results of the neurophysiological and scientific study and the traditional teaching of the Church. Theology and history may be used to understand how and why this contradiction has happened but they cannot remove the contradiction itself. The concluding discussions on the “Shared Conversations” process which took place during the Church of England General Synod in July 2016 focussed on the interpretation and traditional understanding of biblical texts. Nothing relating to scientific inputs or the historical contexts, such as those which are described in this account were considered²⁴. The long history of opposition to the possibility of change has been documented by the author elsewhere²⁵. This continued refusal is considered by the author to be destroying the credibility; not just of the Churches, but of all Christian belief.

In the concluding statement at the end of the July 2016 General Synod of the Church of England it was stated: “.... what has been learned through the relationships developed will inform the way the church conducts whatever further formal discussions may be necessary in the future”²⁶. No further commitments were made. Despite all current evidence many Christian Churches continue to stick rigidly to the traditional doctrines. That rigidity is shown the Apostolic Exhortation on “The Synod and the Family” released by Pope Francis in 2016. In this the total refusal to consider homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family is restated and enforced. This denies the moral duality that is shown by the analysis: it discounts the nature of first century Jewish relationships and it ignores the social changes in societies which demonstrate that in some respects the relationships of Adelphopoiesis had more in common with the present day understanding of marriage than any first century understanding of marriage could present²⁷. These are serious concerns. The author continues to work within the Church by

²³Catechism 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 the 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.”

²⁴ Davies, Madeleine. (2016): Synod members thanked for staying on to talk about their differences”; *Church Times*. Web Posted: 12 Jul 2016 @ 06:28 <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/15-july/news/uk/synod-members-thanked-for-staying-on-to-talk-about-their-differences> See also: Anglican Mainstream (2016): “32 Synod delegates publicly express “lack of confidence” in C of E Shared Conversations process” [accessed 20 July 2016]: <http://anglicanmainstream.org/32-evangelicals-publicly-express-lack-of-confidence-in-c-of-e-shared-conversations-process/>

²⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2014): “Controversy and Challenge: Issues of Gender and Sexuality in the Present Day Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/018B-ControversyAndCrisis.pdf>. Also Gilchrist, S. (2016): “The Perceptions of Gender and Sexual Variation in Present Day Society and in the Modern Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/221P-InfluencesToday.pdf>.

²⁶ Church of England. (2016): “Statement following conclusion of Shared Conversations Process”: Church of England Website [Accessed 19 July 2016] <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2016/07/statement-following-conclusion-of-shared-conversations-process.aspx>

²⁷ Gilchrist, S. (2013): “Reform and the Christian Church”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/008B-ReformChristianChurchArticle.pdf>. Also Section 10 of Gilchrist, S. (2011): “Issues on the Sanctity of Same-Sex Relationships”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/014B-IssuesOnTheSanctityOfSame-SexRelationships.pdf>

seeking to change it; for there is much more to Christianity than just these matters of gender and sex. The issues for the Christian Churches today should not be those of defending their own traditions and institutions. As with the command of Jesus in Matthew 19:12: they should be those of restoring the radical teaching of Jesus through its return to the Gospel of Christ.

There are five papers in this series²⁸. Paper 1 provides an overall introduction. Paper 2 describes a new approach to identity and personality formation in early life. Paper 3 considers the influences of gender and sexual variation on the life and teaching of Jesus. Paper 4 examines the influences of gender and sexual variation in the history and traditions of the Christian Church. Paper 5 investigates the perceptions of gender and sexual variation in present day society and in the modern Christian Church. Each paper may be read separately or in combined form in the compendium: *"Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church"*²⁹.

Additional information is available in other papers^{30 31}. These include *"Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church"*. This paper examines the theological issues from the Old Testament background. It includes a consideration of the approach to gender complementarity from a Judean perspective.

More detailed analyses of the neurophysiological and psychological investigations are given in the papers on: *"A Reassessment of the Traditional Christian Teaching on Homosexuality, Transsexuality and on Gender and Sexual Variation Using a New Neurophysiological and Psychological Approach"*, and: *"Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process"*. Access to all papers is via: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm> and also, where provided, through the specific links. A full personal bibliography is available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>.

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²⁸ Paper 1 is: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"An Introduction to the Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/211P-IntroFoundationsSexGender.pdf>. Paper 2 is: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"A New Approach to Identity and Personality Formation in Early Life"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/218P-InfluencesPersonality.pdf>. Paper 3 is: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation on the Life and Teaching of Jesus"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/219P-InfluencesJesus.pdf>. Paper 4 is: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"Influences of Gender and Sexual Variation in the History and Traditions of the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/220P-InfluencesChurch.pdf>. Paper 5 is: Gilchrist, S. (2016): *"The Perceptions of Gender and Sexual Variation in Present Day Society and in the Modern Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/221P-InfluencesToday.pdf>. Each paper may be read separately or combined in the compendium: Gilchrist, S (2016): *"Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>

²⁹ Gilchrist, S. (2016) *Foundations of Science, Sex and Gender Variation in the Christian Church*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/217P-FoundationsSexGender.pdf>

³⁰ For a general introduction see: Gilchrist, S. (2016) *"Taking a Different Path"*: Chapter 10 in: *"This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians"*, Ed: Beardsley, T. and O'Brien, M: Darton Longman and Todd. May 2016. ISBN 978-0-232-53206-7

³¹ Gilchrist, S. (2015): *"Deuteronomy 22:5 and its Impact on Gender and Sexual Variation in the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/022B-Deuteronomy22-5.pdf>. 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"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/207P-ReassessmentPsychologyExtended.pdf>. Gilchrist, S. (2015): *"Personality Development and Gender: Why We Should Re-think the Process"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/209P-RethinkPaperFull.pdf>