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Please note: - Bold, underlined items above are current news

Editor's notes

1. All contributions are welcome, and can come as articles, pictures, notes, or letters
2. **Not many responses have come in to my earlier request for reactions to this format.**
Please register your opinion. Negative reactions are useful when thoughtful.
3. Contact details are: Carol Nixon, 01974 821295. carol.nixon2012@btinternet.com
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PLUS = "PEOPLE LIKE US" (From Julia, following on from her piece about the word 'Trans')

"Whenever I make reference, it is always 'people like me or US', therefore a new word for our description - PLUS"

THE FALL

Genesis 3

New International Version



¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this

Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."**

¹⁶To the woman he said

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; With painful labour you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

¹⁷To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

¹⁸**It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.**

¹⁹**By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."**

In what way are we to believe this? A personal reflection by the editor

Is it literal, is it fanciful, or is there a deep truth represented through allegory? The curses, shown in red, show a typical feature of mythology, namely a direct link between the outcome of the story and the facts of contemporary existence. This link is an explication of our everyday experience and as such, makes sense of the world. It is satisfying to us at the deepest level, especially when heard in childhood, and forms for ever a part of our mental furniture. Eve's struggle between God's command and the urges of the serpent reflects *all* people's struggle with temptation. Her failure reflects our failure, and the outcome 'explains' why we find life so imperfect now. It also 'solves' the conundrum of why a good God allows suffering. It is the most powerful poetry.

BUT there is more. The fact that it is the **woman** who falls first reflects the attitude towards women of the society in which the story was first told. 'Women are softer in mind as well as body', runs the underlying assumption, and represent humanity's weak link. This assumption also acts as a 'justification' for the continuation of patriarchy, and forms a part of the misinformation package which female children are fed in patriarchal societies, often successfully, to reconcile them to their second-class status. Sibyls of all people might be expected to react unsympathetically towards this, and happily, so does society at large, increasingly. But it raises problems for the literal believer, and for institutions founded on literal belief. The recent vote in Synod on women bishops has been a long time coming.

'To Autumn' by John Keats

Composed 19th Sept., 1819

By February 1821 Keats was dead.



Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves
run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are
they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river salallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.



Trees dying to be reborn



Waiting for the moment of take-off



Flying away, only to return

The end of Summer, the drawing in of life, the preparation for the trials of Winter, all can so easily be applied to a human existence. No-one used the imagery more richly than Keats - dying of TB, 'half in love with easeful death', yet in love with life.

Do **we** believe that our own personal Autumn leads to death or to life?



Life in death in life in death in life in death in life in death in life in death in life in death in life in death in life in death in life

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death". 1 John 3:14
(New International Version)

"Let each go to his own heart; if he find there love to the brethren, let him feel assured that he has passed from death unto life. Let him not mind that his glory is only hidden; when the Lord shall come, then shall he appear in glory. For he has vital energy, but it is still wintertime; the root has vigour, but the branches are as it were dry; within there is marrow which is vigorous, within are leaves, within fruits, but they must wait for summer" **Augustine.**

"I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life". **John 5:24** (New Living Translation)

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever."
John 6:51

"Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together". **John 4:36**



The Last Post

This was sent on to me. It comes originally from Sally

If any of you have ever been to a military funeral in which The Last Post was played, this brings out a new meaning of it. Here is something everyone should know. Until I read this, I didn't know.

We have all heard the haunting song, 'The Last Post.' It's the song that gives us the lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes. But, do you know the story behind the song? If not, I think you will be interested to find out about its humble beginnings.

Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the American Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moans of a soldier who lay severely wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the Captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the Captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment.

When the Captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead. The Captain lit a lantern and suddenly caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial, despite his enemy status. His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. The request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician.

The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted. The haunting melody, we now know as 'The Last Post' used at military funerals was born. The words are:

Day is done.
Gone the sun.
From the lakes
From the hills.
From the sky.
All is well.
Safely rest.
God is nigh.

Fading light.
Dims the sight.
And a star.
Gems the sky..
Gleaming bright.
From afar..
Drawing nigh.
Falls the night..

Thanks and praise.
For our days.
Neath the sun
Neath the stars.
Neath the sky
As we go.
This we know.
God is nigh

I too have felt the chills while listening to 'The Last Post' but I have never seen all the words to the song until now. I didn't even know there was more than one verse. I now have an even deeper respect for the song than I did before.





The Feast of the Holy Cross

September 14th

This feast was first celebrated by Orthodox, and other Eastern branches of the Christian Church. Some 300 years later it entered Western Catholicism, and from thence to the protestant churches. A few churches and religious houses within Anglicanism are named for the Holy Cross. It is called **The Exaltation of the Holy Cross** in the official translation of the Roman Missal, while the 1973 translation called it **The Triumph of the Cross**. In some parts of the Anglican Communion the feast is called **Holy Cross Day**, a name also used by Lutherans. The celebration is also sometimes called **Feast of the Glorious Cross**.

The Feast celebrates three events:

- ♦ the finding of the True Cross in A.D.326 by Saint Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine, buried in a mound with the two thieves' crosses; and identified by its healing powers.
- ♦ the dedication of churches built in 335 by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary;
- ♦ and the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem by the emperor Heraclius II in A.D.628, after the Persians had carried it off in 614. Tradition says that when restoring the cross, Heraclius carried the Cross on his own back, but when he attempted to enter the church on Mount Calvary, a strange force stopped him. Patriarch Zacharias of Jerusalem, seeing the emperor struggling, advised him to take off his royal robes and crown and to dress in a penitential robe instead. As soon as Heraclius took Zacharias' advice, he was able to carry the True Cross into the church. This is the period when the feast entered the Western tradition.

But in a deeper sense, this feast marks God's reversal of the consequences of the Fall. It celebrates the Holy Cross as the instrument of our salvation. This instrument of torture, designed to degrade the worst of criminals, became the life-giving tree that reversed Adam's Original Sin when he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.



The cross is today the universal image of Christian belief. Countless generations of artists have turned it into a thing of beauty to be carried in procession or worn as jewelry.

But to the eyes of the first Christians, it had no beauty. It stood outside too many city walls, decorated only with decaying corpses, as a threat to anyone who defied Rome's authority—including Christians who refused sacrifice to Roman gods. Although believers spoke of the cross as the instrument of salvation, it seldom appeared in Christian art unless disguised as an anchor or the Chi-Rho until after Constantine's edict of toleration.

"How splendid the cross of Christ! It brings life, not death; light, not darkness; Paradise, not its loss. It is the wood on which the Lord, like a great warrior, was wounded in hands and feet and side, but healed thereby our wounds. A tree has destroyed us, a tree now brought us life"

St. Theodore of Studium 759–826)



[Editor's note: I have taken the unusual step of anonymising this piece. I think it needs to be heard, but it seems almost voyeuristic to read such a raw account, and I want the author to have at least a little distance from the reader.]

A Life

For one traversing through a normal infantile life, with doting parents, being dressed in either pink or blue, is not a problem. Parents show off their offspring, creating a pattern set for life within a solid close knit family and supportive friends. Well, that's how it should be.

So much for the normality!

When I was born, I understand my mother called for a glass of champagne and asked the nurse to put me in a crib out of earshot. My father was informed of my arrival on the golf course. I was presented to him the following day. The discussion soon turned to adoption at Barnardo's, but my maternal Grandmother and Grandfather apparently employed a nanny and I was transferred to their rather grand establishment. I presume I was well cared for.

When I was 18 months old my Grandfather went blind through diabetes. There was also an invalided Great Aunt in residence. By now there was also a noisy rummaging crawler that was becoming disrespectful of heirlooms, trinkets and the cook's food. Consequently at the tender age of 18 months I was presented to a Mr and Mrs Clark who ran a co-ed boarding school on the outskirts of Axminster.

When it came to school holidays, I was shipped to my old nanny's house, except at Christmas time when I went to my Grandparents. In 1943 the School was bombed. We were dug out and given shelter in a Czechoslovakian army camp across the road, until parents and relatives of the pupils came to collect.

For me, a taxi, not a relative in sight. I was taken to a school near my aged paternal Grandmother and her youngest son, my very loving Uncle. He at least did try to visit me as much as his employment would allow.

1945, war's end, I was summarily despatched to Mrs Clark's new school in Bradninch. When it came to holidays I went to another school. In 1947 I was sent to a single sex boys' preparatory. I was 8 years old.

Within a few days of being in this all male environment I knew I was not in the right place and the majority of my thought processes bore no resemblance to those around me. My first report from this school to my Grandparents stated that I was a problem child. I think that 'disagreeable' would have been more accurate. I knew at this time with absolute certainty that I should have been sent to a girls' school. During the summer holidays I was shipped off to Mrs. Clark's again, and was so pleased to be there - nearly all the holiday children this time were girls.

Not having parental guidance or love, nor anyone to turn to, was a constant frustration and not knowing the cause of my feelings and thoughts was creating an introvert nature until one Sunday when attending compulsory church Matins service a lady came up to me and asked where I came from. This was a question that I could not answer, but her kindness in talking to me every week from then on led me to attending church from then to the present. The love and fellowship of the Christian fraternity gave me strength. I prayed to be normal. I admitted to friends that I needed their prayers. Most of them said that marriage would be the cure and this I came to believe; putting to the back of my brain the disgust I had for my body.

In 1966 I married a truly wonderful and beautiful girl in a Roman Catholic church and took my vows before God, accepting them all in the belief that our love for each other and our faith was so strong that I would be able to accept who I was and maybe, just maybe, have a little love for myself.

Four months later we were told to expect a baby in December 1967. Happiness yes, but with a tinge of sadness, for the truth was dawning. I was going to be a father, but I was in all but appearance, a woman. I had chosen this path before God and could not retreat. In August 1967 I told my lovely and blooming wife (her skin was just so beautiful), who I really was. Her response was, "I love you anyway and we will work this out together". But it was very hard for my wife and she said if I did change she would have to leave me for the sake of the children. I could not and would not be the cause of a marriage breakdown even though we were talking about separation. Her strength came to the fore and she wanted to know all about my feelings. When I told her that the growth between my legs disgusted me, her comment was, "Well I like it."

In 2002, breast cancer was diagnosed. On returning home we prayed. Afterwards she said, "If I beat this thing I will live with you as you." In 2007, two days before she passed away, she said these words which I shall never forget: "I never doubted your love for me in all our married life." After 40 years 8 months, I lost my soul mate, I was alone.

DOES THE CHURCH ACCEPT INCLUSIVITY?

Rt Revd Dr Robert A Gillies - Bishop, Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

This is the sort of question which is rather like 'Does the church believe in peace?' The obvious answer is, 'Yes, of course it does.' But then the reality of everyday life is that sometimes even the church has to accept the inevitability (even if undesirable) of war in certain circumstances. The same is true of inclusivity.

Whilst most people are welcome, and therefore inclusive, in churches most of the time, sometimes some are not. For example, and this is an extreme example, I have had to require some individuals to leave church during services because they were bent on causing trouble and disturbance to others in the congregation. On two occasions I had to call the police. On two other occasions I've had people practising satanic incantations during holy communion. These are extreme examples but they highlight the point I'm making.

Another example of the difficult territory of inclusivity is where someone has had an history of, let us say, convictions for abuse. Yes, they'd be welcome in a congregation but limits regarding their access to others who might be at risk would necessarily have to be put in place. The same would apply to those convicted of, say, theft. They would be unlikely to be allowed to visit others in the church's name or as representatives of the church.

The thorny issue, of course, at the moment is whether people in same-sex relationships should be ordained. The church has a number (perhaps not as many as is sometimes portrayed) of such priests and they function every bit as well as do other (ie 'straight') priests. The problem is that for a number of others their ministry is compromised by the perception of their sexual activity. I make no judgment on this except to note that this is the case even if one were to wish the situation were otherwise.

Such arguments are based on biblical arguments in the main, though a long-standing natural law argument is also applicable. In last year's House of Lords debate on same-sex marriage the speech by Simon, Lord Glenarthur, articulated one such position. These aren't simply human rules, or merely social prejudices, they are deeply held religious convictions and, even if disagreed with, they need to be respected.

A further qualification on inclusivity relates to the role of the bishop. A bishop must function as a condition of unity in the church, both in his or her own diocese as well as in the wider church. Therefore no bishop should be elected or consecrated if he or she undermines that unity. Sadly some episcopal elections have been the cause of serious disquiet and the occasion for disunity. I won't name any but all are on the international stage. Some represent liberal perspectives, some more conservative stances, some quite objectionable political alliances.

So then, does the church accept inclusivity? The answer (with Thomas Aquinas) has to be in the form, 'yes, of course it does, but there again not without qualification'. It is in the nuances of the qualification where the truth of the everyday realities are to be found.

**"TO HAVE AND TO HOLD - THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE".
SATURDAY 27th SEPTEMBER
AT ST JOHN'S WATERLOO**



**A one-day conference on the theology of marriage in the light of
equal marriage**

St John's Church, Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY
Saturday 27th September, 2014, 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Hosted by the LGBTI Anglican Coalition

***Tina and Susan will be leading a workshop at this Conference.
Further details on back cover***

THE LGBTI ANGLICAN COALITION

By Susan Gilchrist



The LGBTI Anglican Coalition works to provide UK- based Christian LGBTI organisations with opportunities to create resources for the Anglican community and to develop a shared voice for the full acceptance of LGBTI people in the Anglican Communion

The Sibyls Representatives on the Coalition are Susan Gilchrist, Debbie Hayton and Mercia McMahon. Sibyls members; Tina Beardsley, Susan Gilchrist and Elaine Sommers are past chairs of the Coalition. Susan runs the website for the Coalition and has been nominated to represent the LGBTI Coalition on the Church of England working party set up to organise the shared discussions that are recommended in the Pilling Report.

For full details of the Coalition activities see the website www.lgbtac.org.uk

The Coalition Group Members are as follows:

Accepting Evangelicals is an open network of Evangelical Christians who believe the time has come to move towards the acceptance of faithful, loving same-sex partnerships at every level of church life, and the development of a positive Christian ethic for gay and lesbian people.

<http://www.acceptingevangelicals.org/>

Changing Attitude is a campaigning group drawn by God's love to work for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the Anglican Communion.

<http://www.changingattitude.org.uk/home/home.asp>

The Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians (EFLGC), formed in 1979, is a group of women and men, most of whom are lesbian, gay or bisexual and come from an evangelical Christian background. The Evangelical Fellowship gives the opportunity: to meet and share experiences with other lesbian, gay and bisexual Christians; to support and be supported in times of difficulty or stress; to encourage one another in the Christian faith; to think through issues relating both to faith and sexuality.

<http://www.eflgc.org.uk/default.asp>

Inclusive Church is a network of individuals and organisations whose make-up reflects the breadth and scope of the Church of England and beyond. We are working to break down the barriers to full inclusion at all levels of the Anglican Communion. www.inclusive-church.org.uk

The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement is a UK-based international Charity which challenges homophobia and transphobia, especially within the Church and faith based organisations, as well as working to create and praying for an inclusive church. <http://lgcm.org.uk/>

The Sibyls is a UK-based confidential Christian spirituality group for transgender people, and their supporters, offering companionship along the journey, and information/advocacy to churches.

<http://www.sibyls.co.uk/>

The United Kingdom Intersex Association (UKIA) is an education, advocacy, campaigning and support organisation which works on behalf of Intersex people. <http://www.ukia.co.uk/>

General Synod Human Sexuality Group works in General Synod for deeper understanding on issues of sexuality.



Sibyls business matters

Future weekends:

- There is a proposed weekend at **St Deiniol's** in Autumn **2015** (September or October). No date has been fixed yet.
- **Windermere** has been booked for 13-15 May 2016

Euroforum 2015: - (Forum of LGBT Christian Groups annual conference in the Baltic at the end of May) - There will be more details about Euroforum in our next issue.

Future of Sibyls as an organisation

The Sibyls is going through a period of great change. There has been a marked downturn in the demand for some of the services and events which Sibyls has provided since it was founded, while there are a developing number of *new* tasks and opportunities. To address these challenges, the committee has been radically strengthened. Some developments in train are:-

- ⇒ Discussion of new formats for Sibyls events, for example a couples weekend
- ⇒ Improved web presence
- ⇒ Active consideration of becoming a company limited by guarantee, and a charity
- ⇒ We continue to engage and network with other organisations, (churches, LGBTI organisations, Government, Police, and NHS etc.) though much of the work falls on a few individuals.
- ⇒ Weekends, smaller events, mentoring etc., will continue *as long as there is demand*
- ⇒ The committee has noted that the Sibyls Yahoo group is now underused and are currently considering replacing it with a Members Only Facebook Page
- ⇒ To function well, we need to attract enthusiastic, committed members
- ⇒ We need a much greater representation of transmen

PLEASE MAKE YOUR OPINIONS KNOWN !

GIRES on-line resources

GIRES (Gender Identity Research and Education Society) goes from strength to strength. They have recently completed **e-learning resources** for public authorities and private sector organisations to use free of charge. There are 3 modules:

1. a general introduction to gender variance
2. the creation of trans-inclusive workplaces; how to support an employee who transitions at work
3. how to provide trans-inclusive services to the general public.

www.gires.org.uk/local_authorities.php#elearning

See also www.gires.org.uk/elearning/new/player.html

GIRES also maintains a directory of local and national support groups that has been accessed 1.8 million times since its launch in 2010: www.TranzWiki.net

SIBYLS LONDON EVENING MEETINGS
9 OCTOBER 2014 AND 11 DECEMBER 2014
5:30 p.m. at St Anne's Church, Dean Street, Soho.

Meet on the Second Thursday of every second month for a Service at St Anne's Church, followed by a meal together

**THESE SERVICES ARE OPEN TO ALL TRANS PEOPLE,
TO THEIR FRIENDS, SPOUSES AND SUPPORTERS**

Come in whatever role is convenient at the time

The next dates are the **9 October 2014 and the 11 December 2014**

During the intercessions we normally pray for those we know and also on behalf of others who would like our prayers.

If you would like your name, or the name of someone you know to be included on the prayer list, please email me. Include any details you think appropriate. You can email me privately at sgen4144@gmail.com. (If you would like your request for prayers to be made available to the whole group, the Sibyls members can of course email the Sibyls email group instead)

These meetings are very good; gentle lovely evenings with a service which is always thoughtful, peaceful and healing, followed by a good meal in congenial surroundings

Details: 5.30 service at St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, Soho W1D 6AF, 50 yards up on the left from Shaftesbury Avenue (it doesn't look like a church but it is), and from about 6.30 a gathering at a Soho restaurant.

You can just turn up on the evening, however it would also be helpful to get some idea of numbers in advance. If you do know you are coming, please email me at sgen4144@gmail.com. We normally decide on the restaurant to go to at the end of the service. If you are late please ring 07546 213 971.

The planned dates for 2015 are February 12; April 9; June 11; August 13; October 8; December 10.

Susan Gilchrist

Banks explained

Young Fred bought a donkey from a farmer for £100. The farmer agreed to deliver the donkey the next day. The next day he drove up and said, 'Sorry son, but I have some bad news. The donkey's died.' Fred replied, 'Well then just give me my money back.' The farmer said, 'Can't do that. I've already spent it.' Fred said, 'OK, then, just bring me the dead donkey.' The farmer asked, 'What are you going to do with him?' Fred said, 'I'm going to raffle him off.' The farmer said, 'You can't raffle a dead donkey!' Fred said, 'Sure I can. Watch me. I just won't tell anybody he's dead.' A month later, the farmer met up with Fred and asked, 'What happened with that dead donkey?' Fred said, 'I raffled him off. I sold 500 tickets at £2 each and made a profit of £898' The farmer said, 'Didn't anyone complain?' Fred said, 'Just the guy who won. So I gave him his £2 back.' Fred went on to work for RBS.



1940 Tour de France

In a Tokyo hotel:

Is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not a person to do such thing is please not to read notis.

At the office of a Rome doctor:

Specialist in women and other diseases.

In a Tokyo bar:

Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts.



Hell explained by a chemistry student

(The following is an actual question given in a University of Arizona chemistry mid-term exam, and an actual answer turned in by a student. The answer was so 'profound' that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well:)

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving, which is unlikely. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today.

Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added.

This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, 'It will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you,' and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number two must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct..... leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting 'Oh my God.'

This student received an A+.



It gets to seem as if way back in the Garden of Eden after the Fall, Adam and Eve had begged the Lord to forgive them and He, in his boundless exasperation, had said, All right, then. Stay. Stay in the Garden. Get civilized. Procreate. Muck it up. And they did.

(Diane Arbus)



TO HAVE AND TO HOLD THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE ON THE THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE
IN THE LIGHT OF EQUAL MARRIAGE

St John's Church, Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY

Saturday 27th September, 2014, 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

WITH:

PROFESSOR ADRIAN THATCHER, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
REV DR CHARLOTTE METHUEN, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
DR SCOT PETERSON, OXFORD UNIVERSITY
RT REVD DR ALAN WILSON, BISHOP OF BUCKINGHAM

HOSTED BY



Recognising current unease in the Church of England over same-sex marriage, the conference will ask whether there is a theological basis for expanding the definition of marriage. If so, what might a theology of equal marriage include?

£25/£10 CONCESSIONS INCLUDING LUNCH

QUERIES: CONFERENCES@LGBTAC.ORG.UK

BOOKINGS: TOHAVEANDTOHOLDTHETHEOLOGYOFMARRIAGE.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

First draft of Workshops programme for above conference: 12 noon to 1pm

1. Marriage Law and the Church of England – Scot Peterson 'Most of the Equal Marriage Act is about the Church of England.' Is this true? What's the real position of the Church of England vis-à-vis equal marriage? Scot Peterson is co-author of *Legally Married: Love and Law in the UK and the US*

2. It's all about Patriarchy - Bishop Alan Wilson (Bishop of Buckingham) and Canon Rosie Harper

What's the relationship between marriage as traditionally understood and patriarchy? How much has this affected theological understandings of equal marriage? Is there a way to understand marriage which isn't patriarchal? Bishop Alan and Canon Rosie Harper are well known advocates for greater inclusion in the C of E.

3. Scripture and same-sex marriage - ?

4. Sexuality and Africa - Davis Mac-Iyalla

Homosexuality is illegal in 38 African countries. In Nigeria displays of affection between homosexual couples in public are illegal and punishable by a maximum of 10 years imprisonment. The workshop will explain that cultural varieties of same-sex relationships have long been part of traditional African life. Davis Mac-Iyalla is Nigerian, now resident in the UK, and has campaigned for LGBT rights in Nigeria for many years.

5. Love's constancy & legal niceties: transgender theological perspectives on marriage— Revd. Tina Beardsley and Susan Gilchrist

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 has eliminated the need for a couple to divorce when one of them transitions, but has raised other problems, particularly the requirement of spousal consent to Gender Recognition, and the backdating of pension rights. This experiential workshop will reflect theologically on marriage in the light of these and other realities of trans people's lives and relationships. It is led by two trans people, Susan Gilchrist and Tina Beardsley, who are both members of the Sibyls, and have each been with their partner for over four decades. Both are married to their partner: one for the whole of that time, the other following transition.

6. Liturgies for same-sex blessings and marriages - Colin Coward Blessings of same-sex relationships have been held in Church of England churches for decades, and now it is likely that services will be held following marriage. What liturgies are available? Should we be preparing more? Colin Coward is director of Changing Attitude and has campaigned for full inclusion for three decades.

7. Free to vote in favour of equal marriage -Amy Willshire

Why an East London Church belonging to both the Baptist Union of GB and United Reformed Church denominations voted in favour of conducting services of Equal Marriage. Amy Willshire, a deacon in the church will share some of the discussions, reflections and prayers that Leytonstone United Free Church considered in the lead up to and following a church meeting