

## Questions of Sexuality: responding to the shifting moral landscape.

Where are we and how did we get here? (Week 1)

### Change has been driven by what society regrets.

Attitudes to homosexuality have been transformed.

Past attitudes have been 'shamed'

See the film: *The Imitation Game*, Alan Turing, the Bletchley Park mathematician's 1950 experience

1980's and the AIDS epidemic.

Andrew Sullivan, a gay journalist living and working in the States wrote:

*AIDS dramatically altered the cultural strength of homophobia. By visiting young death on so many it ripped apart the notion of subterranean inviolability that forms such a powerful part of the fear of homosexuals.....what had once been a strong fear of homosexual difference, disguising mostly silent awareness of homosexual humanity became reversed. The humanity soon trumped the difference. Death it turned out was a powerful universalising experience. Suddenly, acquiescence in gay baiting and gay bashing became in appropriate at a moment of tragedy*

The same article drew a parallel with the holocaust and its impact on anti-Semitism.

### Change has been driven by the way we determine what is good.

American psychologist Jonathan Haidt as written: *The Righteous Mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion.*

The factors which shape our thinking on what is right and wrong have changed.

His matrix:

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Care      | Harm        |
| 2. Liberty   | Oppression  |
| 3. Fairness  | Cheating    |
| 4. Loyalty   | Betrayal    |
| 5. Authority | Subversion  |
| 6. Sanctity  | Degradation |

The numbers matter. The top three things are the most influential in determining the morality of a belief or behaviour for an American or (British) liberal. The bottom 3 shape Christian morality.

### Change has been driven by appealing to our emotions.

We tend to respond by thinking what we need is better teaching. In fact what is going on in our hearts is much more decisive for our decision making. Good talks are trumped by You Tube clips, soap operas and films. They contradict the teaching and do so in a very beautiful and appealing way. See for instance: Mike Buonaiuto's *Homecoming*. (Made to support the campaign for same sex marriage)

## **Change has come about because we are obsessed with sex.**

Today both inside the church and outside we are preoccupied with sex. One Christian anthropologist has described it in this way: *When I was growing up sex was all stick and no carrot; we were told to abstain from premarital sex because of the parental and divine punishment that would ensue. Today the stick is still there but there is a carrot - the less you sin before marriage, the hotter the sex after marriage.*

Sex remains our idol. Society's obsession is simply re-located in the right context. It becomes hard to exclude certain people from such a pleasure.

## **The Transgender Question.**

The transgender question has largely been obscured by gay rights issues. It has though come to the fore more recently.

### **What is transgenderism?**

The Department of Health funded a 2007 booklet which made this statement: *Before we start it is important to understand that sex is between your legs and gender is between your ears. Sex is to do with your chromosomes, genitalia, hormones etc. Gender is to do with your internal sense of self and how you choose to express yourself.*

The transgendered are those who claim a gender that is different from their biological sex. *I am a girl in a boy's body*

Gender dysphoria is the latest diagnostic label for the psychological distress arising from the experience of there being a disconnect between a person's biological sex and their gender identity.

### **What is today's response?**

Not all transgender people are happy with this idea of gender fluidity. They want alignment.

Since 1980 there has been a shift in medical practice. Distress over gender identity was regarded as a psychiatric illness and treated from that perspective. Now its regarded as a 'condition' and the aim is to change someone's appearance through hormones and anatomy.

Children are being diagnosed with gender dysphoria at a younger and younger age. In the past year, 3 pre-school children and a total of 167 children under the age of 10 were referred to the Tavistock and Portman Clinics in London and Leeds.

There is huge debate around what is appropriate. Some children are prescribed puberty suppression drugs as a means of making sex reassignment less traumatic in later adolescence.

It is though reckoned that 84% of children who experience gender identity issues resolve those issues prior to adulthood.

Others will go down the surgical route (SRS) Sadly the instance of sex change regret is disturbingly high and it seems to do little to address the high suicide rate among transgender people. (over 40%)

## What of our concern?

We ought to feel compassion towards those struggling with gender dysphoria. This is a real and highly distressing disorder.

The real danger of all this is the way it affects the youngest and most vulnerable. Gender identity theory is being promoted in schools

- 38,000 pupils took part in UK diversity week, organised by the charity 'Just Like Us' with the aim of making schools better places for LGBTQ+ pupils
- Stonewall has been given government funding to promote tolerance in schools.
- Educate and Celebrate another LGBT support and advocacy organisation delivers LGBT+ inclusive training to staff, support staff, departments, leadership teams and governors (in all kinds of educational establishments) Birmingham City council have arranged for Educate and Celebrate to make their training available in all their schools