

## RELIGION AND THE TRANSSEXUAL

### *Can The Church Change?*

By: Sr. Mary Elizabeth n/SSE \*

Recently, a friend showed me a portion of an interview, that took place on the "700 Club". In this interview, Sy Rogers discussed his "transsexual" experience. While I did not see the entire interview, what I did see prompts me to respond.

Mr. Rogers is very much on point when He speaks of God's desire for us, i.e. "God wants our lives to revolve around Him. He wants to be number one in our hearts, over our own wants and desires."

The catch-22, and I believe Mr. Rogers addressed it very well, are the demands placed on us following our surrender to God; a new standard of moral purity, a new kindness, a new service, a new forgiveness, as He invites us into knowledge and receives us into mystery. Our response requires much courage, trust, and commitment to accept newly perceived truths no matter what the cost.

On the other hand, I believe Mr. Rogers may have erred in part when he attempted to address the biological and psycho-social issues related to transsexualism. He described the transsexual as a "man made woman". We are, in fact, all "man made men, or man made women." Also, our assigned birth sex is the result of nothing more than a physician's brief glance at our genitals at birth.

Zoological, as well as cross-cultural studies have shown that gender identification goes far beyond the reproductive function. In fact, our identity as masculine or feminine is the end product of the interaction between many moral, biological and social variables.

Robert Oliver, M.D. pointed out in 1972 that moral sanctioning by the medieval church exalted celibacy and virginity, and meted out cruel penalties to enforce its taboos. Rules of procreativity evolved during this time period about the nature of man and woman, as well as the basic principle that gonadal sex serves as the only valid criterion in determining gender identity.

*Gender assignment based only on sex determining criteria being in accord would be ludicrous. As Oliver points out: "a hermaphrodite's identity would be ambiguous and Joan of Arc would be classified as a transvestite."*

The moral aspects of gender identity came into play because of the radical remedies suggested for treating transsexuals. The threat to transsexuals, as Sister Joanne Madigan SJ points out is that: "sex, sexuality, and the idea of maleness and femaleness become unintelligible, once they are divorced from the idea of reproduction".

The problem for society comes in defining proper or true sex. Father Curren addressed this problem in an early letter to a transsexual. The basic problem from the moral and ethical viewpoint, is the question of determining the proper sex of the individual.

Our confusion in differentiating proper and true sex is based on several factors. First, sex can be defined by several biological factors, i.e. chromosomes, gonads, external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics. Also, there are sociological factors, i.e. sex of rearing vs assumed sex. Gender assignment based only on sex determining criteria being in accord would be ludicrous. As Oliver points out: "a hermaphrodite's identity would be ambiguous and Joan of Arc would be classified as a transvestite. Likewise, a simple majority of agreeing factors would be grossly inaccurate, since this would require each factor to have equal significance. The chromosome test might place a person raised, characterized, and genitalized as a male in a classification of a female (pseudo-hermaphrodite)".

Second, sex and gender have come to mean the same thing. Charles (*Virginia*) Prince has argued, however, that sex and gender are not the same thing. He points out that we are born into a society that is highly polarized and highly stereotyped, not only into male and female, but also into man and woman. Man and male, female and woman are considered synonymous. It is argued that they are inseparable, but this is not so. Sex and gender are not the same thing. Money and Hampson have shown this in their studies of pseudo-hermaphrodites, in that these children tend to grow up in their assigned sex rather than their genetic sex.

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### **Where Are We Now?**

By: Wendi Pierce

Recently, I was both a guest and a speaker at Arizona State University. This was in conjunction with Virginia Prince, who was invited to speak at ASU by the Arizona gender community groups, in conjunction with the ASU sociology department. I, and a number of other members of our Arizona groups, had spoken to the students at ASU many times before, but this time was a little different. We were not directly in the limelight most of the time and this gave me a chance to step back and observe the forest instead of the trees for a change.

Virginia is a forceful speaker, and she has pat answers to almost all the possible comments and questions regarding her now legendary theme, that sex and gender are not the same, and that males and females have both masculine and feminine sides.

We were her supporting cast so to speak, our presence at the lectures gave her presentation credence to the concept that it is possible, even here in a predominantly conservative and noticeably "red neck" state such as Arizona, people are discovering that there can be a choice as to one's gender identity. We in our groups are proof that gender preference, and an associated lifestyle can be opposite of biological sex.

This concept is what our community is based on. We may be transvestites, transgenderists, or transsexuals but this one common thread brings us all together. For some, the pathway to

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## More on Where Are We .....

gender identity will forever remain cloudy and riddled with pitfalls. For others, it is easier to traverse. Some feel that they were born into the wrong biologic body. For others, entering into the realm of the opposite gender is an escape from pressures and frustrations in the other life. For still others, the "femaphile" syndrome is the reason of choice. Our reasons for pursuing a cross-gender lifestyle, either part time or full time are as many and varied as our numbers.

As many before me have said, at one time we all felt we were alone. We were the only ones. We had no one to turn to. Then one day we found that there were others, even organized groups that shared our secrets and desires. Then we began to learn of national organizations, of conventions, of large numbers of individuals, some very public and open about cross-gender behavior.

Today, it is not uncommon to turn on a nationally broadcast television program and see several cross-gender individuals, in full dress (so to speak), openly discussing their cross-gender desires and lifestyles. Even the United States congress is discussing the rights of cross-gender individuals. Municipalities are starting to recognize the rights of our community, and we are winning some basic respect from law enforcement in general.

*"The battle for our rights to pursue a cross-gender lifestyle has not been won. We merely have made our presence known and society is now aware that we exist."*

Don't get me wrong, the battle for our rights to pursue a cross-gender lifestyle has not been won. We merely have made our presence known and society is now aware that we exist. Uncle Bert and aunt Mary still can be heard saying, "Will you look at that, it's just not natural, there really sick!" We may never be able to make uncle Bert or aunt Mary understand, but they may someday meet one of us, or find out that cousin Frank is one of us. Hopefully, they then may find out that we do not wish to "infect" them or change their lifestyle. We merely are seeking tolerance, and in time, acceptance that we are citizens and deserve the same rights of self expression that they have taken for granted for many years.

The blacks, the gays, and farther back, many ethnic minorities were shunned by society in general. You might say that this is not a fair comparison, but wouldn't you agree that the desires of these groups were initially just to be accepted for what they were, not be ridiculed, shunned, threatened, called derogatory names, and at times, even physically abused. Even if you are a "post-op" TS, ten years down the road, I would imagine that there are people, possibly employers, peers, or customers that you feel, would not look favorably on you if they knew your background. In another light, take the TV that fears for his job, the loss of respect of family and friends, or the breakup of a marriage if found out. These are the pressures we all face as cross-gender individuals.

Now you may ask, "So what, what can I do?" Plenty! First of all, support of local organizations with active outreach

programs should be high on your list. This includes paying dues, providing a helping hand when needed, helping with mailings, providing a meeting place, becoming active in the outreach programs, contacting merchants, all will help. On a larger scale, letter writing to congressmen (or women) in support of gender related legislation, voting for persons who have taken a positive stand in gender related issues, should be on your list. Also, supporting national organizations such as Tri-Ess or IFGE both monetarily and otherwise is desirable. National organizations pack a much larger clout, be it political, educational, or just psychological than individuals ever could hope to have. National organizations or possibly federations of local and regional organizations can make a positive difference in public opinion.

I hope, in our lifetimes, that we will succeed in gaining the capability to express our desired gender as we see fit. However, we should be proud and happy that we have found we are not alone, that others share our cross-gender desires and that there has been progress, possibly in part due to our own efforts.

Until next month, "GO FOR IT".

## *Transsexuals Continued..*

Third, the controversy that surrounds the term transsexual, Meyer has pointed out, is that the issues become even more confused because the term transsexualism has come to encompass a variety of conditions. Under other circumstances, extremely effeminate homosexuality, transvestism (particularly conscience ridden transvestism), schizoid or border line personality disorders, polymorphous perverse psychopathy, as well as individuals who merely have manifested lifelong cross-gender drives have been diagnosed as transsexual. The point is that the label 'transsexual' has come to cover such a 'multitude of sins' that all one knows when the term appears in the literature is that the patient has presented himself requesting sex reassignment surgery, has labelled himself as transsexual, and the physician has accepted that self diagnosis.

If we cannot separate, nor define, sex and gender, how can we differentiate transsexualism from the multitude of psychopathologies that exist in our complex society? Also, if trained and highly educated medical and scientific personnel cannot agree on how to define sex and gender, how can we expect lay persons such as Mr. Rogers or the show's host to define them?

*They seek out self help groups where untrained, often self diagnosed pseudo-transsexuals, will make them "queen for a day"*

I have spent the past 13 years working with pseudo-transsexuals and transsexuals, and I have met very few transsexuals. I have met thousands of very confused, emotionally disabled pseudo-transsexuals, each seeking to alleviate their pain and suffering through self diagnosis and the fantasy that they are a woman trapped in a man's body. These individuals reject psychotherapy, seeing their problem as physical and the solution as surgical, not psychiatric.

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## More on Transsexuals...

These same individuals often shop for a therapist that will tell them what they want to hear. They seek out self help groups where untrained, often self diagnosed pseudo-transsexuals, will make them "queen for a day", confirming their self diagnosis and overlooking the severe psycho-pathology that often accompanies the self-diagnosed individual.

Who is to blame? I believe that we, the church, are to blame, for we leave the gender conflicted individual few, if any, options. We condemn and reject them, making them uncomfortable and unwelcome in God's house, and we condemn and reject the professionals attempting to treat them. For example, a 1984 letter by Mr. Rogers, reaches out in love, then condemns and rejects by saying, "Please don't feel you need to write back a lengthy rebuttal and justification." Dialog is necessary if we are to help these people resolve their conflicts. Silence and the absence of any open discussion only allows prejudice and unfounded fears to flourish, often leading to serious persecution and injustices, rather than healing.

It is time we the Church individually and corporately, publicly and privately, sit down with these people, and the professionals attempting to treat them, and talk in an atmosphere characterized by enlightenment and compassion, not ignorance and invective.

It's God's will that the church spread His word, guiding the faithful through this life to Him. We should follow through on this concept with all people, this group not being an exception. May the Lord Jesus hold each of you in the palm of His hand, and give you the grace to be faithful, joyful, and at peace.

*\* Sr. Mary Elizabeth is the Executive Director of J2CP Information Services, Director of Administrative Services, Gender Dysphoria Program of Orange County, Inc., and a novice member of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth of Hungary*

## 'LA CAGE' Aux Phoenix

By: Diane Ingram

I may be less impartial than I should if this is to be a critique, but I can't help it. After all, I am who I am, and what I am is a cross-dresser. And, I am a fan of both the musical, "La Cage aux Follies," as well as Phoenix's favorite female impersonator, Penelope Poupee". So, you put these elements together and add a half dozen girls from Alpha Zeta and you have an exciting and memorable experience.

La Cage Aux Follies was performed at the Phoenix Little Theater throughout the month of September and starred Craig Loucks and Jerome Hansen. This was a credible version of the famous musical about a female impersonator and her lover at their St. Tropez show club. The performance I saw drew a standing ovation from the audience which looked typically "Phoenix." In fact, I almost thought I had accidentally stepped into the wrong lobby and entered a church social or a political fund raiser during the intermission.

The performance did not quite equal that of the troupe starring Peter Marshall and Keene Curtis who visited Phoenix a while back. These Cagelles didn't quite have the vitality to carry it off as well, but the performances by Jerome Hansen as Georges and Ramon Pratt as Jacob were excellent. However, I felt that Loucks performance was dynamite, even better than Keene Curtis as Albin. Loucks, also known as Phoenix's prima female impersonator Penelope Poupee", added something special

to the role, an extra touch of sensitivity, humor and magic. As ZaZa, she was beautiful, wearing gowns that would have dazzled royalty.

As for me, I was left with a couple tickets just prior to show time and actually tried to sell them outside the door. Ever try to scalp tickets in drag? Anyway, the program was great and it receives a rating of three and a half stockings, with only one run!

## Virginia Prince Visits The Valley

By Diane Ingram

On Monday, October 3rd, members of Alpha Zeta and A Rose welcomed Virginia Prince to the Valley to speak at Arizona State University and meet with local cross-dressers. Virginia presented her theory of the differences between sex and gender to members of the A.S.U. Sociology Department in the afternoon and to students in the evening. According to Virginia, one must understand the fundamental differences between sex, sexuality and gender before understanding what a cross-dresser really is. She explained how it is possible for a person of the male sex to be a woman in terms of gender. The presentations were well taken, although there were some exceptions at the evening session. Also, at the evening session, Terri F., Cindy, Wendi and Diane helped Virginia by answering general questions about cross-dressers. And, as always, following the class we adjourned to join a number of the students and the Professor at Long Wongs for famous wings, drinks and more talk.

Special thanks go to Wendi for sharing her home and being hostess to Virginia.

## The First Lady's Notebook

By: Terri F.

I recently attended the Phoenix Little Theater's production of "La Cage aux Follies", a play I have seen twice before, but would never get tired of viewing again and again. I am particularly impressed by the musical score and the lyrics, which are so thoughtfully chosen and powerfully expressive. They seem to echo some of my own innermost feelings and stir emotion in my soul. The best known of the songs, "I am What I am," is a particularly poignant, self affirming declaration of being. I am going to take several lines from the song, for those unfamiliar with the lyrics, and add my own interpretations to the statements already made.

"I am what I am, and I am my own special creation." There is only one you in this world, and only you can decide who that person is or is going to be. You do not follow a set blueprint, or pattern yourself after anyone else. You can become anything or anyone you want to become.

"It's my world, and it's not a place to hide in." Don't ever be ashamed of who you are. You have just as much right to be here as the next person, and just as much right to express yourself.

"I am what I am, I don't want praise, I don't want pity." You should not have to, nor need to get the "green light" to pursue something which makes you happy. Don't expect special treatment, but do demand an equal chance.

"I bang my own drum, some think it's noise, I think it's pretty." You will never get everyone to agree with you and opinions will differ, but you have to believe in yourself and do what is best for you.

"Why not try to see things from a different angle?" Accept the differences. Oftentimes there is more than one way to get the same job done. In this case the job is getting through the life the happiest way you can.

"Your life is a sham till you can say...I am what I am." Don't deny yourself your chance and your freedom to live the way you want to.

"I am what I am, and what I am needs no excuses." Don't apologize for who you are if you love who you are. Just because you may be different, if you are comfortable with yourself be proud and show it.

"I deal my own deck, sometimes the ace, sometimes the deuces." You control your own life, make decisions, and live with the changes you've made. No one is perfect, we all make mistakes. Ultimately though, the only one who can decide what is best for you is you.

"It's one life, and there's no return and no deposit." We are not here on this earth very long, so why not enjoy the time we do have and not waste those precious moments? When the chance comes, don't let it pass you by, so that you find yourself looking backward in unfulfilled regret.

"Life's not worth a damn till you can say, "Hey world, I am what I am". Finding out who you are, getting in touch with all aspects of your being brings that inner peace and self contentment that we all need. Your life will have been significant indeed when you become comfortable with yourself.

The words of this song and of the others in "La Cage" have application to everyone, and I think this is one of the reasons for its immense popularity. If you listen to them, they cannot help but affect you, stimulate you, and fortify you.

### Alpha Zeta Monthly Meeting

By: Terri F.

Alpha Zeta will hold its monthly meeting on Saturday, October 15, at 8:00 P.M. at a location to be announced. Maps will be provided for members. As usual, this meeting will be a BYOB.

### Alpha Zeta Update

By: Terri F.

The September meeting was held at Cindy's house. In attendance were Terri, Erika, Monica, Angela, Shelly, Cindy, Rosalind and Phyllis, Dee and Sandy. We were joined by Christine, attending her first meeting on a look-see basis and adding a new accent to our group.

Terri's announcements included the Phoenix Little Theater's performance of "La Cage Aux Follies" during the last week of the month and an announcement of Virginia Prince's coming. She also discussed the Holiday En Femme, which will be held November 16-20 in Chicago. All members interested in attending should watch their mailboxes for further information and registration forms. The group also voted to have a Halloween party at the next Alpha Zeta meeting on Saturday, October 15. Erika was delegated the task of finding a suitable location. Albeit sixteen days premature, we can have a lot of fun with this if we all cooperate.

The theme of our program was "Making a Better You," and featured a masterful makeover of our own Cindy by Francisco from Hair in Motion. Alas, no cameras were rolling to capture this transformation, but Cindy will always remember the experience. Francisco also shared many makeup tips such as contouring and shading, picking appropriate colors, and

differences in daytime/night time makeup. At the same time, in another room, we were given a demonstration in electrolysis by Pat from Hair Free, who allowed us to experience mini treatments for ourselves. We wish to thank both Pat and Francisco for their time and expertise.

### Transsexualism In The Court

Dear Editor, "Alpha Zeta & A Rose News",

Recently, the issue of my being a cross-dresser and pre-op transsexual arose in the Arizona Supreme Court. The case was in regard to custody and visitation rights which I had with my children. The court ruled that my crossdressing and transsexual lifestyle were not an issue significant enough to cancel either custody or visitation as defined by a previous ruling. This previous ruling was the dissolution of the marriage. In part, the court said, "this Court fails to find the existence of continuing and/or significant changes in the circumstances present at the date of the last order" Some key factors in this decision as discussed during the court proceedings were:

- 1)"anticipation of the other side", i.e. the fears and phobias of my ex-wife were not a significant issue in this case.
- 2)"unknown circumstances", i.e. the judge said that surgery at this time is only speculation.
- 3)"a history of crossdressing prior to dissolution". My crossdressing was not a secret and known to my ex-wife throughout our marriage.

Although I won this ruling, two things should be remembered:

- 1) having surgery could bring this issue back up in court.
- 2) this decision was in the lower court system.

I hope that this information might be helpful to others who are in the same situation as I am, and I was happy that the court felt that my lifestyle and gender preference was not a determining issue with respect to my relationship with my children.

Yours truly,

Cindy Mackenzie

### JoAnn Roberts Replies \*

During the month, this newsletter received a response from JoAnn Roberts, to last month's editorial view by Diane Ingram. Diane's editorial was titled "Another Soapbox", and was a response to an editorial that JoAnn had placed on an east coast computer bulletin board. In the letter it was obvious JoAnn wanted to have a last word of sorts. She denied attacking any specific groups, and she stated that she is not attempting to build a platform.

Her comments then could be summarized by saying that she was surprised at the controversy that had evolved and that she felt that the issues were obviously very sensitive. She then called for an open discussion of the Tri-Ess policies in question.

Her closing comments were: "let me say that regardless of my philosophical difference of opinion with this particular Tri-Ess policy, I have the highest regard for the Tri-Ess members I have met personally and at no time have I made disparaging blanket statements about Tri-Ess members in general"

*\* It is the feeling by both Alpha Zeta and A Rose that this episode of friction between members of our community be ended. Therefore, this newsletter does not choose to print JoAnn's response, but will attempt to convey to our readers around the country the main points JoAnn was attempting to make, without the additional emotional comments.*

**Alpha Zeta Treasury Report**

Balance as of 8/31/88	99.59
Paid Out	.00
Income	.00
Interest	.85
Ending Balance as of 9/30/88	100.34

**A Rose Events**

Our November gathering will be at Cindy's home. It will be a last chance to show off those unique if not outrageous costumes you wore at all those other parties, it's the LAST HALLOWEEN PARTY of the year so let's end the Halloween season with one more "Command" appearance people. The date is **Saturday 11/5** and the evening will begin at **8:00pm**. Call our hot-line if you need directions. As usual, an early **RSVP at 860-9056** will be greatly appreciated. Also, the **\$3 per person or \$5 per couple** event charge will be collected. In addition, here's the current schedule for future gatherings:

Date	Location	Theme/Activity
11/5	Cindy's	The Last Halloween Party
12/3	Wendi's	Holiday Pot Luck
12/17	open	Christmas With Alpha Zeta
1/7	open	After New Year's Party
2/4	Jackie's	Valentines Day Party
3/4	Charlotte's	Roman Toga party
4/1	Wendi's	Who's an April Fool Party

If you would like to host one of the open dates please contact us.

**Special Note:**

We are now looking for ideas and locations for our special Christmas party in December with Alpha Zeta. It looks like our treasury will support a real blowout with a buffet, gifts, and possibly a meeting room. A committee to decide what, where and how is now forming and needs your help.

**A Rose Treasury Report**

Balance as of 8/31/88	533.23
Paid Out	0.00
Income	0.00
Interest.*	6.77
Balance as of 9/30/88	540.00

\* Due to a bank policy, interest is only posted quarterly.

**A Rose Update**

By: Wendi Pierce

We knew you were out there all summer but we were very pleasantly surprised that so many members, guests, and associates were able to make our first gathering of the fall season. Before the evening was over we counted 28 in attendance.

The evening was cool, the hospitality was fantastic, the company was excellent, and all had a great time. Three new members were present to meet our group. We welcomed Ricki, Diane J. and Cheri on this evening.

One of the highlights of the evening was a very enjoyable and educational demonstration of makeup application and techniques by Bob, a friend of one of our newer members, Marie. She also brought Diane J., a former female impersonator to the party.

Charlotte and Tasha's hospitality was excellent. Their home is a very large and beautiful residence located on the northern side of the valley. Some commented that if we were any farther north we'd be in Prescott, but the trip was well worth it. Charlotte has a rather large D&D (Dungeons & Dragon's girls) collection, as well as a library filled to capacity with books and magazines. A few of the members were lost to the stacks for hours.

The evening did have a sad note though. Gwen was descending the basement stairs and a disastrous event occurred. She took a slight turn and both heels (I'd guess they were 5 inches) collapsed. Goes to show you, that you shouldn't attempt a quick pivot while going down to the basement in heels. (By the way I didn't know that basements existed in Arizona!)

We also had a brief business meeting, where the revisions to the constitution and by-laws were discussed and approved. The minor changes approved were geared toward some requirements and statements that will assist us in getting a non-profit educational status with the IRS, should we decide to pursue this course.

**NATIONAL EVENTS****Holiday En Femme**

Chi Chapter / Tri-Ess will host the 1988 Holiday En Femme. The weekend will be held in Chicago on Wednesday, Nov. 16th through Sunday, Nov. 20th. For further information contact:

Naomi Owen

Chi Chapter / Tri-Ess

Po Box 342

Chicago, Ill. 60690

Chi Chapter "hot-line" (312) 364-9514

**First Annual Texas T Party**

The Boulton & Park Society wishes to announce this event, a three day weekend "En Femme" to be held February 24th to the 26th 1989 at the beautiful Sheraton Seven Oaks Resort & Conference center in San Antonio, Texas. The event will have a full program of fun, self improvement, outings and just visiting and being a girl. Registration is \$75, The hotel should be contacted direct at 800-346-5866. For more information contact:

Boulton & Park Society

Atten: Janice Rupard

Po Box 169652 (T)

San Antonio, Texas 78280

**S F '89**

The I.F.G.E wishes to announce it's Third annual "Come Together" convention. This event will be held April 4th to the 9th, 1989 in San Francisco. Activities include bay tours, dining at fine restaurants, a new and expanded convention program, west coast hospitality, and a beautiful city to explore. For more information contact:

IFGE

Convention Chairman

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