

GRACE & LACE LETTER

AN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN PUBLICATION FOR THE TRANSGENDERED
Postoffice Box 31253 Jackson MS 39286-1253. JULY 1995

WHY ME, LORD ?

Why did you have to make me a crossdresser? I , and most of us have asked that question of God too many times to recall and got no answer.

St. Paul sought the Lord 3 times for deliverance . . .well, here, "to keep me from becoming conceited there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of satan to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me but He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in weakness'". (2 Cor. 12:7) Would you settle for an answer such as that? "Yet O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay and you are the potter, we are the work of your hand". Isaiah said that in Isaiah 64:8. Again St. Paul. This time in Romans 9:20-21. But who are you O man to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, why did you make me like this?" "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" Again Isaiah in Chapter 29 verse 16, "shall the potter be considered of no more account than the clay? Shall the thing that is made say of it's maker, he did not make me; or the thing that is formed say of him who formed it, he has no understanding?"

Is one of our Transgendered Rights the right to question God? Yes. God has patience with us but that doesn't alter the fact of how He made us nor will it change that fact. We can pray for God to deliver us from how He made us or we can go to a Holy Spirit conference or meeting and have some sizzling Evangelist press on our forehead and give us a Spiritual jolt but all we will do when we get up off our knees is stand there a jolted transgenderist. A well meaning Christian worker will then ask if you have been delivered and not wanting to be subjected to any more, you answer, "yes". and go on your way wondering why God didn't deliver you from the way He made you. You may as well ask Him to make you 5'2" and 95 lbs. thereby delivering you from your present 5'10" and 250 lbs. (my dimensions--Ed.).

"A person who believes he is a victim of life's circumstances sits pouting in self pity, childishly asking why things (transgendered state in our case--Ed.) have to be this way. They ride an endless merry-go-round of, "if only things were different" (Borrowed quote from a friend's book.) To put an end to this merry-go-round ride we must get off of the ride and sit down and rest to dispell the dizziness of our past thinking and self-pity. We have to start thinking about acceptance of ourselves as God has made us. The first thing is to realize He actually did make us transgendered. That's the fact of the matter. and from which there is no escape. Face it head-on, "I am a crossdresser or transgendered person or transsexual for the rest of my life." Face it! There is no escape from it. These are hard things to say and I know I will

probably lose some friends before I end this article. To take away hope from those who live in hope of the day they will be completely delivered from TGism is not a very nice thing to do but I would be less than honest if I fed that misleading and baseless hope. I could never face you if I did that. However I do thank God there are Therapists who can help you to cope with your life situation. It's not as dark as one might think it is. Therapists will work with you on accepting yourself as you were made. They can't answer the "why me?" question.

Accepting yourself??? Yes. Actually accepting myself as God made me?? Yup. Of course that's a big order right now. Most are mad, put out or disappointed with God. Many have had discouraging experiences at the hands of well meaning people who call themselves Christians and are Church members. Some have been forced out of fellowship and had to leave the Church they were attending. Some are just plain afraid to go to Church in the fear of being exposed. There are others who feel God is mad at them and therefore against them. At this point let me suggest you send for a new Scripture portion the American Bible Society is distributing titled, "God Is Not Mad At You". I have 100 copies. Write and I'll send one to you free & postage paid. God is not against us nor is He mad at us. Even though I was a missionary to skid-row for 20 years it still took until I was 68 years old for the Holy Spirit to crack my cranium and holler into it's vast network, "God loves you exactly as you are", and when that happened I put down my weapons and accepted that love in what I thought was my disgraceful condition and in yeilding to His love I fully accepted myself and swore to be the purveyor of that love to the TG Community, There is no way we can accept ourselves as we are without realizing God does truly LOVE us exactly as we are. Exactly as He made us. We are His creation and God makes no mistakes.

It looks like I have tackled another book-length subject and treated it in just a few words but I'll be back to the self acceptance as-you-are theme a few more times. It's far from exhausted.

I hope you enjoy this issue. It has been long enough getting to you but I'll keep trying to get it out on time. Never give up hope in anything. I have finally worked out a program whereby I feel just fine every morning and can do things, including writing, until noon and after that tiredness sets in but at least progress is being made. I get up between 4-5 AM so that gives me a few productive hours. I do, sincerely, thank you for your prayers. I really believe in the power of collective prayer and it helps even if you only say, "God bless Lee Frances today." I have many of you on my prayer list.

Thanks to Cissy Conley for paying the postage bill for this issue and thanks to an anonymous benefactor for picking up the tab for the copying cost of this issue.

God bless every reader. Let's together look to Him who created us and then created Jesus Christ in a miracle birth and who, subsequently, died for our sins, was buried, rose again in 3 days, ascended into heaven and today sits at the right hand of God. Open your life and heart to Him.

In His Love, Lee Frances

The Cross & The Crossdresser

By Vanessa S.

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Part III - The Church's Response To The Crossdresser

Like many of you who read these words, I was raised to believe that there was a definitive and certain way to do things in life. One acted a certain way, one dressed and carried oneself a certain way, one believed a certain way, and one never, ever was to question or alter the prescribed conception of what one was taught by society's various institutions (e.g., family, school, church, etc.). There was a code of thought and conduct that was to be followed at all times, and the penalty for deviating from the established norm was usually instantaneous social, cultural, ecclesiastical reproof and/or reprisal. I have learned, as I have grown older and hopefully wiser, that quite possibly I may have been (somewhat deliberately?) misinformed by those aforementioned institutions concerning many, many aspects of life in general.

I questioned my faith in God at various periods of my life, only to have the evidence of God's existence and movement in that life presented more and more clearly as time went on. It is now quite obvious to me and I am totally convinced that God is acting in, and on behalf of, each of us as human beings. We are not here by accident, and we can know the infinite joy of a personal relationship with our Creator through the blood of our Redeemer, Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit of God can live in and through us on a daily basis as we seek to know and understand God, notwithstanding our finite capacity for such understanding and comprehension.

The love of God, extended toward God's people, knows no boundaries either in Heaven or on this earth. That fact has been amply illustrated for me throughout the circumstances of my own life, and I can write these words secure in the knowledge of God's all-encompassing love for and grace

toward me. It is my fervent prayer that you, the reader, may also possess the security of that knowledge for yourself.

The God that I know, love, and serve does not discriminate against *anyone*⁶. Therefore, a crossdresser should certainly be able to accept God's free gift of salvation regardless of what society or even the institutionalized Church may try to tell her/him. If a person should attempt to oppress, reject, or ostracize a crossdresser strictly on the basis of crossdressing behavior, then that person has little or no knowledge of or regard/appreciation for the overwhelming inclusivity of God's love, grace, and acceptance for all people on earth. It is my contention that such a person is more concerned with appearance, legalism, or their own internalized bigotry and prejudice than with the essence of Jesus Christ's Gospel that is, by far, the most inclusive concept in the universe.

Why would a supposedly sincere, honest, "God-fearing" Church member discriminate against or oppress a crossdresser? I believe there are several possible reasons:

- The internalized homophobia that is rampant in our sexually repressed culture, particularly within entrenched institutions like the Church, creates a force almost of its own that causes a backlash against anyone who is considered "different"; from a traditionally patriarchal (meaning white Christian male) perspective this generally includes women, children, the economically disadvantaged, people of color, gays/lesbians/bisexuals, the physically or mentally disadvantaged, other ethnic groups,

⁶ Please see the chapter entitled *Inclusivity* for further discussion on the matter of discrimination.

and - of course - persons who crossdress. If you believe my thesis to be incorrect, I invite you to spend some time visiting, talking with, and (most importantly) listening to persons from the above-mentioned groups. If you take a valid sample from the various demographic groups, and if your sample populations answer honestly, you will be amazed at the depth of conviction concerning the reality of such systemic and institutionalized oppression. From such a perspective, it becomes a relatively simple matter to see the impact of "liberation theology" on such populations. Liberation theology's primary tenet is that, rather than being neutral, God is always on the side of the oppressed rather than the oppressor. God is the liberator of the oppressed; ergo, the term "liberation theology". Consequently, oppression (in whatever form) becomes the primary definition of "sin". The resistance of oppression, then, becomes God's will for our lives, and the triumph of justice over oppression becomes God's victory over sin. Whenever someone is freed from oppression or subjugation, God is glorified because sin has been overcome. In the interim, however, we are forced to confront the very real oppression of the patriarchal backlash against those who are "different" and who are not in positions of power - and so the struggle continues.

- The commonly perceived threat to the "established order" is one that many people take very seriously. Crossdressers shake up the Church's often-preconceived notions concerning what is and what is not considered to be acceptable appearance and behavior. What people do not understand, they tend to fear; fear breeds prejudice, bigotry, and oppression. It jars the consciousness of many Church members to think that a crossdresser (one of those "different" types) might enjoy the same status before God as they. This could be considered an example of "Christian piety" getting in the way of true Christianity.

- The rationale most utilized by the anti-crossdresser forces within the Church is the Biblical passage of Deuteronomy 22:5. The inclusion of this verse in the Canon of Scripture has been a thorn in the side of many a crossdresser over the centuries. It has led to various incidents of expulsion and/or rejection from the Church, loss of faith by many crossdressers, and occasionally, tragically, drastic action (including suicide) by those who were taught that they were immoral, sinful, or evil because of their inner need to crossdress. Remember, Jean of Arc was burned at the stake, by agents of the Church, because she was a crossdresser. My prayer is that every person could have the knowledge of the freedom that God's salvation, through Christ, from the Old Testament Law offers to all who will accept it. It may be helpful for us to remember that Christ Jesus took every opportunity to state and to demonstrate that God's grace, as expressed through compassion, superseded the socially and theologically oppressive laws of religious tradition.

I believe that some discussion of Deuteronomy 22:5 is called for at this point, in order to help clarify the context of intent of this particular Mosaic injunction. I have found that, in attempting to discern meaning and truth from Scriptural passages, it is imperative to consider the chronological and socio-cultural aspects of the writing and of the writers themselves. Let us examine first the actual verse that is Deuteronomy 22:5, and then apply some additional information in order to better understand the verse's context, meaning, and intent.

Deuteronomy 22:5 says that "a woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God." Strong words, these, and on the surface they appear relatively concrete and indisputable. However, let us take a closer look at what is really being said and at what is implied by this verse. Initially, I find it interesting that

women are ordered not to wear anything that pertains to a man. If one takes this verse literally, then women should never wear pants or trousers of any kind. Many good Christian women would, I am sure, be discomfited to learn that their apparel is an "abomination".

Fortunately for everyone concerned, particularly crossdressers, Biblical scholar David F. Payne's commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that "there is good reason to suppose that the law of verse 5 is not concerned with the mild sexual aberration known as transvestism⁷, but is a repudiation of certain pagan religious practices of that era; so this law is no more a fashion guide for today than is the law about tassels in verse 12. These tassels, whatever their origin, were intended as a visible reminder to every Israelite of his duty to obey God's laws (cf. Numbers 15:37-41). In effect, they made Israelites distinctive in their dress."⁸

Payne goes on to say that "the distinctive characteristics of a Christian should be internal rather than external. There is something wrong, however, if such inward characteristics are not visible to other people."⁹ It would appear, based on Payne's studied observations, that the behavior of crossdressing is condemned only when done as an adjunct to paganistic activity, I feel it safe to assert that crossdressing for emotional, psychological, or Christ-centered spiritual reasons cannot and should not be considered an "abomination". Motivation, rather than the actual behavior itself, seems to be the mitigating factor in this particular equation.

Further substance is added to this viewpoint by the *Concordia Self-Study*

⁷ Author's note: Despite the unfortunate choice of terminology, i.e., "mild sexual aberration" and "transvestism", keep the overall message that Payne presents uppermost in your thoughts at this point.

⁸ Payne, David F., *Deuteronomy*, The Westminster Press, Phila., Pa., 1985; p. 125.

⁹ Ibid.

Commentary, which tells us that the reason for the Deuteronomy warning against "wearing apparel of the opposite sex was ... because it was the vogue among Canaanite fertility worshippers."¹⁰ Apparently the Canaanites had a unique sense of fashion but were lacking theological accuracy and propriety. At any rate, since almost none of us are Canaanite fertility worshipers today, it should seem rather obvious to any reasonable person that this Scriptural passage is concerned with faithfulness and obedience to God rather than one's choice of clothing. It is my opinion that God is overwhelmingly interested in the condition of our hearts, minds, and souls rather than what we wear on the outside of our bodies. The Bible itself corroborates that opinion, because I Samuel 16:7 says that "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Deuteronomy 22:5, as we said earlier, is often quoted as an argument against crossdressing. My response to this argument is that, since the passage is part of the Old Testament Law (from which Jesus came to free us), and since no one but Orthodox Jews still endeavor to follow all these laws, why should the Christian Church selectively pick out this particular passage to enforce against those of us who crossdress? Do Christians eat pork or seafood? Those foods are forbidden by the law, but I do not see many Christians following that particular Levitical tenet. Do Christians keep kosher? Not many, I can assure you - yet this, too, is part of the law. Do Christians wear clothing made of various fibers (cotton and flax, etc.)? Of course they do - but this is also forbidden in the law. The point is this: crossdressers are often made scapegoats through the selective enforcement of the Old Testament laws, while other injunctions are conveniently bypassed and/or ignored completely by those who would use the law as their tool of oppression. I feel that is

¹⁰ Roehrs, Walter F. and Franzmann, Martin H., *Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1979; p. 134

behooves those who would oppress crossdressers solely on the basis of Deuteronomy 22:5 to closely monitor their own behavior in order to determine whether it is in complete compliance with the law. If it is not, then I suggest that perhaps their application of the law is hardly consistent and thus somewhat suspect.

At this juncture, I believe it is necessary to briefly address the concepts of crossdressing as pleasure and the Church's traditional view of pleasure as sin. The institutionalized Church generally condemns crossdressing because it views this activity as a sexual perversion of some sort (despite the fact that crossdressing is technically a form of gender, not sexual, expression). The vast majority of crossdressers begin their crossdressing behavior in their early years, and the activity usually becomes somewhat intertwined with their new-found and highly active erotic feelings and emotions (most of us have gone through puberty, and I'm sure we can relate to this concept of grappling with eroticism, at least to some extent). It is the pleasure associated with these erotic feelings that serves as a "hook" into the psyche so that this pleasure becomes an aspect of the crossdresser's sexuality and personality.

JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D., a leader in the transgender community, has said that "Crossdressing has *nothing* to do with my sexual orientation, and *everything* to do with my sexuality." She has also said that if crossdressing was not a stimulating and rewarding experience, a crossdresser would never continue with the behavior. The question thus becomes: How does one deal with being both spiritual and sexual, particularly in the light of crossdressing behavior? The answer is, I believe, found in the transcendent mystery of life that God offers to us as human beings. We are sexual creatures, unique in our status as persons made in the image of God. If we can accept the idea that God has created us specifically in and for uniqueness (and since there is no one else in this world quite like you or like

me, I believe this concept to be valid), then it becomes a relatively simple matter to further accept the idea that we can not only be sexual, but that we are to embrace and celebrate this aspect of our humanity in concert with our spirituality. This is not always an easy thing to achieve, particularly in the light of our sex-negative culture, but it is certainly a goal worth striving toward.

It should be noted, as well, that crossdressing often becomes a source of deep emotional fulfillment and great reward that can, and often does, move far beyond a sexual motivation, especially as the crossdresser ages. This change in motivational emphasis can enable a crossdresser to experience other, more varied, aspects of the gender shift such as personality development, spiritual growth, philosophical and ideological changes in life perspectives, etc. I view this as a healthy thing, and would urge the Church to accept, respect, and love any person who is making the attempt to improve her/himself in this manner.

Traditionally, Christians who crossdress have read Deuteronomy 22:5 and have often experienced great distress and real spiritual agony as a result. I personally, dealt with such trauma for many years as I struggled with the theological implications and the resulting inner turmoil concerning this aspect of my life. Finally, however, I began to comprehend the truth and the reality of my own personal relationship to God and learned of the wonderful freedom to be found in such a relationship. Would that the Church as an institution come to that same realization, in order to end the confusion, spiritual suffering, isolation, and alienation felt by so many crossdressers.

Many of us know, all too well, about the Church's usual response to the crossdressing community. What can we, as Christians who crossdress, do to help and empower ourselves in the struggle we face?

The German philosopher Goethe once said "There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action," to which I add a

wholehearted "Amen." The effects of "ignorance in action" are a constant reminder of the crossdresser's marginalized status in society as a whole and within the Church as a microcosm of that society and its institutions, including the Church, but we are indeed one of the most misunderstood, ostracized, and stigmatized groups. We need to do something to counterbalance the oppression, and I believe the answer is twofold:

- First, we must actively seek God's face in prayer for our lives and the direction and purpose of those lives as we struggle with the complexities of our spiritual issues in the context of our Christianity.

- Second, and of equal importance in the struggle, we must do everything in our power to educate our sisters and brothers in the Church about issues of sex and gender as they pertain to our marginalized status with the Body of Christ. Knowledge of a thing creates stability and lessens anxiety, while ignorance generates fear, bigotry, and prejudice. It is my earnest and heartfelt desire to see the Church become more knowledgeable concerning matters that pertain to crossdressers and our struggles for self-esteem and acceptance within our culture and its institutions. I might suggest that you give a copy of this book, anonymously if necessary, to your pastor or other Church leaders as a method of providing information on this issue. Your efforts may be rejected or ignored. However, God's Holy Spirit may begin to move in someone's heart and mind so that they are able to begin learning about respect and acceptance for crossdressers as viable, capable members of the Church. I pray that will be the result in many cases.

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Do not let the consciousness of your unworthiness keep you from believing what God has said concerning you. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, then the precious privilege of being in partnership with the Father and the Son is yours.

—George Müller



The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us ... but that we will finally hear Him.

—William McGill



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I had a social phone call from Ariadne Kane this month, Ari was instrumental in getting me out of the doldrums in 1986 when I was trying to form Beta Chi Chapter of Tri Ess and was ready to throw in the sponge. As Elmer Fudd would say, "Cwosswessers are a screwy wot" (and I'm proud to be one of 'em) Anyhow, Ari mentioned the fact that her Outreach Institute of Gender Studies is sponsoring their well known Fantasia Fair in Provincetown, MA Oct. 15-23 1995 (207-621-0858) and asked me if I would promote the Fanfair in G&LL. Inasmuch as I owe her a real big one; it hurt me to say G&LL cannot promote anything but the love God has for us and I had to let it rest there. God bless you and FanFair, Ari.

"LETTERS-----

"I am really getting tired of this depression and many times have asked the Lord to take me home. I'm sure HE still has things for me to do but it's really hard. Publications like yours really have helped me continue down the road and that hope does live in the form of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ------(USA)

"Thanks again for your blessed Newsletter".----- (FL)

"It's very important for me to know that G&LL publishes the simple truth of God's love for us and how that love is expressed to us through Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. I hope G&LL will continue after the retirement of it's present editor. " ---- (KS). THANKS KS. G&ll will continue. The arrangements have been made for that. However, it will not be upon my retirement. but will be upon my demise when I will go to be with the Lord in His heavenly glories forever. (ed.)

Your G&LL you started and have maintained is a very important peice of work. I also think it's the only one of it's kind. You are witnessing for the Lord by letting all transvestites, transsexuals and transgendered individuals know that God cares for, and loves us all. We are not damned or doomed to hell. Your Grace and Lace Letter has helped and continues to help bring the triad of mind, body and spirit together again."----- (WA)

"I received G&LL today and really welcomed the breath of iresh air. Just when things get confusing your 'breath-of-fresh-air appears!------(MO)

That's a good note to close on. Here it is July 6 and it will be at least 4 more days before I can get this into the mail. I have to put some fillers in yet then take the issue to the Office Depot for copying . I still have 47 new name and address labels to do and then my helper, Marge F. (Joan's mother) and I will stuff the Envelopes and finally we mail to you. It seems that our 4 double sided pages will work fine. I gave an excess of space in this issue to V.Sims book installment as I didn't want to interrupt the train of thought. It is an excellent chapter. OH YES!!! THANK YOU to all who have sent in stamps. I have 100 towards the next issue already. You are very generous. Bye now . Let's keep praising the Lord with thanksgiving in our hearts!