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Transsexualism – wanting to change physical sex because you feel you are ‘in the wrong body’ – has become an increasingly high-profile issue. People in the public eye have ‘changed their sex’, and the media normalises transsexualism. There has been a corresponding push for greater transsexual rights, helped by the introduction of same-sex marriage and gay rights group Stonewall deciding in 2015 to make transsexualism a new focus of its work.

Underlying the transsexual movement is a radical form of self-determination. The assumption is that a person's subjective feeling overrides objective, biological reality.

This exalts human emotion and will above God's design as our Creator.

The drive for transsexual rights is characterised by intolerance of dissent: everyone is expected to endorse a person's self-identification. Some of those campaigning for transsexual rights are motivated by the ideology that we should all be able to choose our own gender from a whole range of possibilities, without reference to biology.

In this climate, Christians need to be clear on the Bible's teaching and on how they should respond at both a personal and a public policy level. This briefing introduces some of the issues at stake.



CALLS FOR MORE TRANSEXUAL RIGHTS

Under the 2004 Gender Recognition Act, an adult who has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria (discontent with their biological sex because they believe it is different to their ‘real gender’) and lived for two years as a person of the opposite sex, can apply for a gender recognition certificate. This means that their legal sex can be changed, including on their birth certificate.¹ Now activists are seeking to *further* liberalise the law.

Proposed changes to the law:

- **Allowing ‘self-declaration’**, so that people can change their legal sex without any need for a medical diagnosis or to have lived as a member of the opposite sex
- **Lowering the age for changing legal sex from 18 to 16**
- Giving legal recognition to those who identify as **neither male nor female**

In January 2016 the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee released a report calling on the Government to address three points (left).

The report also recommended amendments to the Equality Act 2010 to prohibit discrimination against a broader spectrum of people because of their ‘gender identity’.

Other recommendations included extending hate crime legislation to cover crimes committed against transsexuals and putting greater emphasis on ‘trans issues’ in schools, particularly in sex education.²



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COMMENT

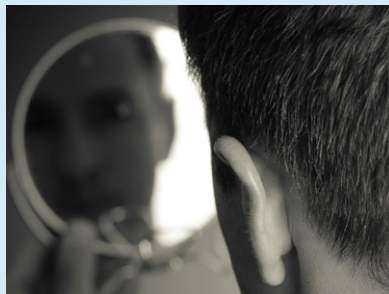
TRANS PEOPLE NEED KINDNESS, NOT ENDORSEMENT

Transsexual people are made in the image of God. People who believe they are trapped in the wrong body should have our respect and our friendship. But this is not the same as endorsing transsexualism itself.

A man cannot become a woman. A woman cannot become a man. For transsexual people, their sex is a fixed reality, proved by their biology and declared by every cell in their bodies.

Transsexual people need patient help to come to terms with reality. It is neither helpful nor loving to affirm them in their confusion. As Christians we are to speak the truth in love, applying biblical principles without compromise but with compassion.

We should be utterly opposed to gratuitous insults or denigration of transsexual people. And we can sympathise: Christians face insults too. But being insulted does not automatically mean that you are right.



'Sex change' surgery does not resolve the underlying conflicts felt by people with gender dysphoria. It is cruel to make them believe that surgery, or the 'non-gendering' of official records, will solve all their problems. It will not. This is borne out by the tragically high suicide rate of people who have had a 'sex change' operation.

Therapy should not be aimed at changing healthy bodies to match people's wishes, but rather at helping people accept the body they were born with.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When a person is living as a member of the opposite sex, it is often obvious when meeting them. We are confronted by their sin straight away. This distinguishes transsexualism from many other sinful lifestyle choices, which are not as instantly visible. Just meeting a transsexual puts a Christian on the spot in a similar way to being asked, "what do you think of adultery?" A Christian is immediately presented with a decision to make about how to respond. The guiding principle is to speak the truth in love.

This applies when deciding what name or pronoun to use. Using a female pronoun for a man living as a woman is both untrue and likely to be perceived by him as an endorsement. Christians must be gracious in their interaction with transsexuals but must not compromise on the truth. We should treat an individual as someone of their biological sex, not their assumed sex.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TRANSEXUALISM?

The Bible states that people are made in the image of God as male or female (Genesis 1:27). Christians believe that a person's sex is determined by God from conception. A transsexual is living in defiance of their Creator and 'sex change' surgery desecrates a God-given body.

The Bible presents people as a coherent whole: mind, body, soul and spirit. The Church of England's 2003 discussion document noted the traditional

view that: "We are not simply people who inhabit bodies, rather our bodies are part of who we are."

It also equated transsexualism with the ancient heresy of Gnosticism, suggesting that transsexualism was "moving to a new form of gnostic dualism in which the body is seen as separate from the self".²¹ Both Gnosticism and the heresy denying that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2)

see the mind as more important and decisive than the body.

Living a transsexual lifestyle is wrong, although to feel tempted in this way is not. There are many pastoral issues in caring for a transsexual, for which we should seek God's wisdom (James 1:5). Ultimately, showing a transsexual Christ's love must include – as for all of us – pointing them to the need for radical repentance and to turn to the truth in Christ.

TERMINOLOGY

Transgender

Now used as a vague umbrella term that includes a broad range of people, from those who reject 'strong stereotypes' of biological sex to those with an intersex condition.

Transsexual

Someone who is biologically normal but lives as someone of the opposite sex, regardless of whether they have undergone surgery.

Sex/gender reassignment

The surgical removal or alteration of body parts to make external sexual characteristics resemble those of the opposite sex, also called a 'sex change' or 'sex reassignment surgery'.

Gender recognition certificate

Obtained after living as a member of the opposite sex for two years, allows a person to change legal sex, even on their birth certificate.

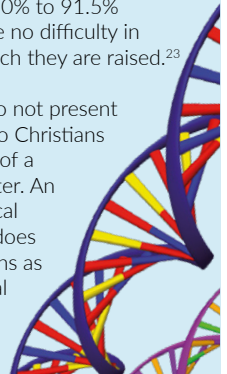
Transvestite

Someone who cross-dresses for sexual pleasure.

Intersex is different

A transsexual has a completely normal body. So-called 'intersex' conditions, or 'disorders of sex development', involve a physical anomaly or other difference to normal development. There are a number of different chromosomal and hormonal conditions and it is difficult to determine exactly how often such issues occur, though they are all rare.²² Most do not result in any ambiguity about a person's sex: depending on the type of disorder, in 80% to 91.5% of cases patients experience no difficulty in identifying as the sex in which they are raised.²³

Crucially, such conditions do not present the same ethical concerns to Christians as transsexualism. They are of a completely different character. An intersex person has a physical problem, but a transsexual does not. Using intersex conditions as a justification for transsexual rights is therefore a red herring.



WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENING IN UK SCHOOLS?



Gendered Intelligence

A group which delivers presentations in schools for children from age four upwards.³ Its founder Jay Stewart says: "It's so important to be teaching children in schools that they can be anything that they want regardless of the gender that they have been given at birth."⁴ Gendered Intelligence makes clear this encompasses a range of options.⁵



Educate & Celebrate

Promotes the book and film animation *Jamie*.⁶ In this reworking of Cinderella aimed at small children, Jamie is a girl with skills in engineering ("she was great at fixing things and could make almost anything from the little that she had"; she fixes motorbikes and cars) who decides she is really a boy and goes off with the princess at the ball in the pumpkin car she has made.⁷



Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council & Durham County Council

Birmingham local authority arranged for Ofsted-endorsed Educate & Celebrate staff training and resources to be available to all its schools.⁸ Gender identity is presented as a combination of masculinity, femininity and other genders, each on a spectrum, independent of the 'sex assigned at birth'.⁹ At least one Birmingham school is not allowing parents to withdraw their children.¹⁰ Educate & Celebrate's CEO is also adviser to Durham County Council.¹¹



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Brighton & Hove City Council

Said children as young as four should select which sex they most identify with before starting school. A letter, sent to thousands of parents, stated: "We recognise that not all children and young people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth or may identify as a gender other than male or female".¹² Separately, teenagers at schools in Brighton were given a survey, produced by the Children's Commissioner for England, which asked: "How do you define your gender?" The question itself gave over 20 possible responses, including "gender fluid", "agender" and "tri-gender".¹³



US state schools

The Obama administration directed state schools on 13 May 2016 to let transsexual pupils use the toilets, changing rooms and showers of their choice, or face serious cuts in funding. The White House said that public schools must respect a child's 'gender identity', even if records indicate a different sex.¹⁴ A group of eleven states and some school districts are suing the Obama administration, asking a judge to declare the directive unlawful.¹⁵



US Government

A US Government agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, supported a man in his claim of discrimination against his employers after they refused to let him use the female toilets in the workplace. The man claimed he was transitioning to become a woman and sued his employers under the Civil Rights Act. He won \$115,000 in compensation in January 2016.¹⁶



Michigan gym

In 2015 the gym chain Planet Fitness revoked a Michigan woman's membership after she complained about the presence of a transsexual man in the female changing rooms. A spokesman for the company said that their members "may use all gym facilities based on their sincere self-reported gender identity".¹⁷



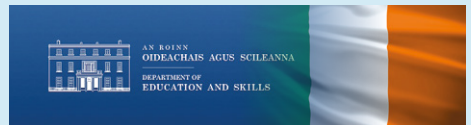
Washington businesses

Schools and businesses throughout the US state of Washington were told in December 2015 to allow people to use the toilets that are consistent with their 'gender expression' or 'gender identity'. The rule was issued by the state's Human Rights Commission, which is responsible for administering and upholding state law on discrimination.¹⁸



New York City

The Mayor of New York City issued an executive order in March 2016 giving transsexual people access to the public toilets and changing rooms that fit with their chosen identity. The order applies to all city-owned buildings such as schools, offices and leisure centres, forcing them to permit transsexuals to use whichever facilities they choose.¹⁹



Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland introduced liberal transsexual laws in 2015. Guidelines published by the Department for Education and Skills say that secondary schools should let transsexual students use toilets and changing rooms that match their chosen 'gender identity'. The guidance also recommends allowing students to wear a uniform according to their chosen sex.²⁰

HOW COMMON IS TRANSSEXUALISM?

It is unclear how many transsexuals there are in the UK. Gender recognition certificates are the mechanism under the 2004 Act for someone changing their legal sex. Fewer than 4,500 have been granted.

A parliamentary committee claims, based on surveys, that 650,000 people are “likely

to be gender incongruent to some degree”.²⁴ This is totally misleading. These studies asked leading questions that assumed a scale of ‘gender identity’ and/or used samples that were completely inappropriate for extrapolating results generally.

<4,500

Gender recognition certificates have been granted in the UK

There has been an increase in children with gender dysphoria or associated issues. The Tavistock and Portman clinic has 1,000 young people ‘on its books’ and the service has expanded by “50% every year for the last five years”.²⁵ In 2015 the clinic received 1,398 referrals, twice as many as the year before. The number of referrals has risen by more than

1,000% since records began in 2009/10.²⁶

Children as young as three have been referred to the clinic. 167 children aged ten or younger received transgender treatment on the NHS in the past year, a



number which nearly doubled from the 87 in the previous twelve months.²⁷

These figures are only likely to increase as transsexualism receives promotion and focus in schools, confusing children.

REGRETTING THE IRREVERSIBLE

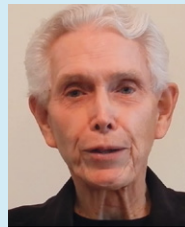
A significant minority of transsexuals express their regret after irreversible surgery and some choose to revert to living in their biological sex.²⁸ A review of more than 100 international medical studies in 2004 found no proof that gender reassignment surgery is “clinically effective”, with many remaining distressed and even suicidal after the operation.²⁹

The Johns Hopkins Hospital, where ‘sex change’ surgery was pioneered, stopped carrying out the procedures in 1979 because it found that post-operative individuals were just as troubled as those who did not have surgery.³⁰

Britain’s youngest sex change patient, aged 18, changed his mind within a year of beginning medical treatment.³¹

Walt Heyer

Walt Heyer felt as though he was ‘born into the wrong body’ from childhood, and was diagnosed with gender dysphoria. He took hormones and had irreversible sex reassignment surgery over 30 years ago, but this did not solve his problems. He says:



“My perfectly good body parts had been amputated. Years of looking like and living as a woman did not bring the promised treatment or relief. I still suffered from psychological issues which needed to be properly diagnosed and treated.”³²

It was only after coming to Christ that Walt received proper treatment for dissociative disorder, returning to living as a man. He is now a husband, and father to two children born before his surgery.

REFERENCES: christian.org.uk/trans-ref



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