

# Concern about girls wanting to be 'boys' is a matter of fundamental human dignity

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*Carys Moseley looks into how the issues of transgender and abortion are intrinsically linked and argues that the Church must speak up to protect the dignity of those affected and defend the fact that we are all created in God's image.*

This week, Penny Mordaunt, the Minister for Women and Equalities, ordered an investigation<sup>1</sup> into why so many teenage girls want to undergo gender reassignment to become 'boys'. On one level, this move is welcome and would certainly prove popular given the public outcry over this problem. On a deeper level, it may be too limited a move to properly address the problems. The debate over 'Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria' is inadequate, and a comparison with earlier evidence on gender disassociation is distinctly lacking<sup>2</sup>.

There are two problems here. The first is the desire to ring-fence the notion of 'truly transgender' (previously 'true transsexualism'). The second is to look only at girls who want to be male and ignore boys who want to be female – until very recently, they were the great majority of patients at gender identity clinics. The concept of Rapid-Onset Gender Dysphoria leaves untouched any investigation into the development of gender dysphoria among adolescents before the rise of social media. It also leaves out any consideration of gender dysphoria in children. Merely inquiring about teaching in schools and social media – both topics closely linked to adolescence – conveniently avoids the question of whether there are more parents nowadays who secretly treat their children as members of the opposite sex, out of disappointment at not having a child of the desired sex.

## Does Theresa May care who is a woman?

It is no accident that Mordaunt is said to have asked for investigation into only the education system. Teaching on transgender issues in schools in the UK only dates back to 2010, when Theresa May, as Minister for Women and Equalities, introduced anti-transgender bullying policies into schools<sup>3</sup>. She had been influenced by Lynne Featherstone.

It is very important to note Theresa May's voting record, for she didn't even vote on the

Gender Recognition Bill in 2004<sup>4</sup>. This is truly extraordinary coming from a woman who set up Women2Win<sup>5</sup>, an organisation designed to encourage more women to become Conservative Party politicians. This was in 2005 – the year the Gender Recognition Act became law. **Did she not care that the very definition of 'woman' was being ripped to shreds through the capitulation of every single political party in the passing of this legislation?**

## Social liberals cannot square the circle

Over at the *Spectator*, Ross Clark has perceptively noted the inconsistency in Labour MPs Naz Shah and Dawn Butler's opposition to sex-selective abortion<sup>6</sup>. These are Labour MPs who have a track-record of supporting abortion rights, yet they suddenly backtrack when it comes to sex-selective abortion. Why?

Maybe some women in the Labour Party are having pangs of conscience about the abortion of baby girls precisely because they feel victimised by male-to-female transgender activists pushing them out of the Labour Party and promoting gender self-declaration. It is a little-noticed fact that the 2017 Labour Party manifesto<sup>7</sup> called for a shift in the language of 'gender identity' away from 'transsexual', typically a sign of support for gender self-declaration without medical checks.

The current purge of gender-critical feminists in the Labour Party closely mirrors the purge of pro-life activists from the Labour Party a few decades ago<sup>8</sup>. People – mostly women – who had conscientious objections to socially liberal (indeed libertarian) ideas were aggressively pushed out. Of course, feminists cannot admit this, because their feminist predecessors were precisely the ones who were to blame for pushing pro-life women out. However, this is not just a parallel in terms of behaviour. On a fundamental moral and theological level, transgender politics is like abortion rights politics: both spring from the same source.

## The body as property, disposable at will

Like abortion rights politics, transgender (previously transsexual) rights politics takes the view that the human body is the individual's property. This idea goes back to

the utilitarian and agnostic philosopher John Stuart Mill. It is summed up in the slogan, 'my body, my rights'. (Incidentally, the very same concept was used in the courts to justify decriminalising sadomasochistic behaviour, and it is the same concept that is used to justify euthanasia.)

Treating the body as 'my property' means that it becomes a non-human, non-living object, rather than a living organism that my soul inhabits and mysteriously makes alive, as the Christian view believes. It means that I have the right to cut it up if I want to and to dispose of those parts at will. For most people this is morally repulsive as it comes across very clearly as a justification for self-harm and suicide.

By extension, as is well-known, abortion rights are conceptualised on the basis of denying that the unborn child is a person, and is only a lump of cells or a not yet fully-formed human body. The unborn child, then, is effectively treated as if he or she were the mother's property, to be disposed of at will.

### **A tale of two clinics**

Few commentators and indeed very few ethicists have noticed that gender identity clinics and abortion clinics have both been around for the same amount of time in the UK – just over fifty years. Charing Cross Hospital Gender Identity Clinic was officially opened in 1966, a year before the Abortion Act was passed. Both were very controversial, much like the law on 'sex change operations' and abortion.

Abortion was allowed only on 'therapeutic' grounds, otherwise it would count as criminal assault. Castration was considered criminal assault in the common law unless the effect of it as part of 'sex-change surgery' could be proven as therapeutically beneficial. John Randell, the Physician for Psychological Medicine at Charing Cross who was responsible for the clinic, openly said in his academic papers that he knew he was operating at the edge of the law.

### **The call of conscience regarding our being God's creatures**

Taking these serious reservations into consideration, the announcements by Penny Mordaunt and Naz Shah are very important, and Christians should resolutely pray for them and those who work with them. For it is possible that all this comes from the call of conscience upon them regarding girls being God's creatures. Time will tell if these announcements are merely the result of cynical political calculation.

Most people in the UK do not agree with gender self-declaration and do not want the NHS to fund gender reassignment. Abortion is also less popular than some would like to admit. Sex-selective abortion is opposed by an overwhelming majority of the public. Therefore, the public is open to hearing coherent, well-thought-out, rigorous Christian teaching on these subjects.

### **Why Christians need to speak up**

Transgenderism and abortion are two issues of fundamental importance to society because they deliberately attack the fact that we are all created and loved by God, and that we should treat each other as such. Successive governments have sinned in passing policies and laws that authorise these things. They involve the deliberate destruction of healthy human bodies by staff on the NHS and thus paid for by our taxes. So, we are all implicated in the policy decisions, whether we choose to care or not.

Christians are not at liberty to pretend that these policies do not matter or that these are simply morally legitimate rights and we should not 'impose our views on others'. People who take this view are only scared of being hostile to sexual 'freedom'; this argument has no serious moral reasoning at all. Christians who think otherwise are being inconsistent, as they tend to have no problem voting or supporting the churches on other non-sexual issues such as gambling, welfare benefits and economic policy. It is the God-given responsibility of Christians to articulate the case for the inviolability of the human body from conception to natural death and to contend for the dignity of those affected, including healthcare professionals, patients and their families.

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6172097/Investigation-ordered-number-transitioning-referrals-increase-four-thousand-cent.html>
  - <sup>2</sup> <https://archive.christianconcern.com/our-issues/family-and-sexual-ethics/what-might-cause-rapid-onset-gender-dysphoria>
  - <sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85498/transgender-action-plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85498/transgender-action-plan.pdf)
  - <sup>4</sup> [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmhansrd/vo040223/debtext/40223-30.htm#40223-30\\_div55](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmhansrd/vo040223/debtext/40223-30.htm#40223-30_div55)
  - <sup>5</sup> <https://www.women2win.com/about-us>
  - <sup>6</sup> <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/naz-shah-needs-to-make-up-her-mind-about-abortion>
  - <sup>7</sup> <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/labour-manifesto-2017.pdf>
  - <sup>8</sup> [https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/By\\_Their\\_Fruits.html?id=p9\\_hOy-m4tgC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/By_Their_Fruits.html?id=p9_hOy-m4tgC&redir_esc=y)