

# What the Sex-Change Industry Doesn't Tell You

The story from Belgium was absolutely tragic. A 44-year-old woman disappointed by her female-to-male surgery decided to die by euthanasia, feeling that the surgery had left her a monster. But the story behind the story is even more tragic.

Of course, if we simply believed the glowing reports in the media, you would think that everyone who has sex-change surgery is perfectly happy with the results. In keeping with that mentality, there's a new term we are supposed to use—namely, gender-realignment surgery. This replaces the previous new term, sex-reassignment surgery, which replaced the more graphic term, sex-change surgery.

And make no mistake about it: This is a radical surgery involving removing and changing perfectly healthy organs and body parts simply because the person is convinced in his or her mind that the parts shouldn't be there.

In the case of Belgian Nathan Verhelst, born Nancy Verhelst, she was allowed to die by lethal injection on the grounds of “unbearable psychological suffering.” (It should be noted that one in 50 deaths in Belgium today is the result of euthanasia, but that's yet another tragic story.)

As reported in Belgian news, Verhelst said after the surgery, “I was ready to celebrate my new birth. But when I looked in the mirror, I was disgusted with myself.

“My new breasts did not match my expectations and my new penis had symptoms of rejection. I do not want to be ... a monster.”

All that is sad enough to read, but the story behind the story is worse still, pointing to the deeper issues involved in Verhelst's life. Her mother rejected her from birth, having

this to say after she received news of her daughter's death: "When I first saw 'Nancy,' my dream was shattered. She was so ugly. I had a ghost birth. Her death does not bother me."

Have you read anything more cruel from a child's own mother?

She continues, "For me, this chapter closed. Her death does not bother me. I feel no sorrow, no doubt or remorse. We never had a bond which could therefore not be broken."

And Nancy/Nathan struggled with this pain of rejection right until the time of her death, as the article reports: "Hours before his [sic] death Mr. Verhelst had spoken of how, as a child, he 'was the girl that nobody wanted,' describing how his mother had complained that she'd wished he'd been born a boy."

Does it take a psychologist to recognize that this was the real root of Verhelst's problems? That being rejected from birth by her own mother as "so ugly" and as a "ghost birth" and as not being the son her mother wanted was the real cause of her gender confusion? (I'm not saying this is always the case, but it was obviously the case here.)

Walt Heyer is a man who lived through this himself, first with his grandmother dressing him up as girl when he was just a few years old (and praising him for his looks after dressing him up), then some years later suffering repeated sexual abuse at the hands of another man.

As a married man with children, Heyer concluded he really was a woman, going through years of hormone therapy and then having sex-change surgery and becoming Laura, an identity he kept for years, only to realize his deeper problems were never resolved. Not surprisingly, the sex-change doctor he saw also failed to explore Heyer's other issues.

Eventually Heyer got off hormones, reversed what he could surgically and married another woman, launching the website .

A report on the website today states, "The Belgrade Center for Genital Reconstructive Surgery says that they have received 1,500 requests for reversal surgery." Why is that?

Heyer's website also links to a story from England last October, which says, "'I was born a boy, became a girl, and now I want to be a boy again': Britain's youngest sex swap patient to reverse her sex change treatment."

It's for reasons like these that the John Hopkins University hospital, under the leadership of the famed psychiatrist Dr. Paul McHugh, discontinued sex-change surgery years ago.

As McHugh observed (speaking of male-to-female surgery), "It is not obvious how this patient's feeling that he is a woman trapped in a man's body differs from the feeling of a patient with anorexia nervosa that she is obese despite her emaciated, cachectic state. We don't do liposuction on anorexics. Why amputate the genitals of these poor men? Surely, the fault is in the mind not the member."

Yet whenever I and others suggest that we should invest our energies in getting into the deeper issues troubling these individuals—whatever their age, helping them from the inside out—we are reviled as being hateful and insensitive.

As for McHugh, the university distinguished service professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins who also served on President George W. Bush's presidential council on bioethics, he is reviled on transgender websites as being out of step with the times.

And if you wonder where all this is going, then just look at this news from Argentina: "A six-year-old girl, who was born a boy, has become the first transgender child in Argentina to have her new name officially changed on her identity documents."

Six years old! That's a time when children can barely tell the

difference between reality and fantasy, and yet this little boy, who identified as a girl since he started talking, is now legally (but, of course, not biologically) a girl.

What's next?

For believers, this much is clear: While having compassion on those who are struggling and pursuing divine strategies for their wholeness, we must celebrate male-female gender distinctions, recognizing the beauty and wisdom of Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

**Michael Brown** is author of *The Real Kosher Jesus* and host of the nationally syndicated talk radio show *The Line of Fire* on the Salem Radio Network. He is also president of FIRE School of Ministry and director of the Coalition of Conscience. Follow him at AskDrBrown on Facebook or at @drmichaellbrown on Twitter.