

Service wants to normalise sado-masochism

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Carys Moseley discusses the Crown Prosecution Service's recent announcement that it will no longer prosecute the depiction of 'consensual' sado-masochism.

The depiction of 'consensual' sado-masochism and other extreme perversions between adults is no longer to be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. This was announced last week by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in the outcome of the consultation¹ it held last year concerning changes to the prosecution guidelines under the Obscene Publications Act 1959². The CPS has published a summary of the responses³ sent in along with the revised legal guidance for prosecutors.⁴

The truth is that the moral significance of this outcome has gone unnoticed, and society will likely come to regret this. All press articles on the story highlighted the greater emphasis on consent and the removal of prosecution for depiction of perverse sexual acts when they involved consent between adults.

Depiction of 'consent' to sado-masochism compared to male homosexuality

Myles Jackman, a lawyer and sado-masochism⁵ fanatic who campaigned for the changes, had this to say about them⁶:

"In free speech and privacy terms, these changes represent the most significant public changes of attitude by an institution of the state towards consensual adult sexual content since the Wolfenden report⁷ in 1957."

This should warn us of the possible future. Since the Wolfenden Report and the Sexual Offences Act 1967, which decriminalised consensual homosexual relations between men over the age of 21, male homosexuality has been normalised and even celebrated and glorified across all levels of government and society.

Taking this analogy seriously, decriminalising the depiction of sado-masochism and other perversions will likely lead to attacks on those who oppose this – which, in practice, means believing Christians.

CPS pretence of moral neutrality

Pretending to stand for moral neutrality, the Crown Prosecution Service claimed that it was not its role to adjudicate 'taste' in publications. This catchphrase was repeated enthusiastically by nearly all newspapers in a suspicious display of (im)moral unanimity. Material will be allowed if it involves 'consenting adults', there is 'no serious physical or psychological harm', no display of criminal acts, and the 'likely' audience is not under 18. The Mirror finished its article by quoting the CPS words to the effect that any prosecutors not applying the new guidelines properly would be 'dealt with robustly'⁸. This may sound reassuring, but, the real focus has shifted towards prioritising consent as the main criterion of something being morally permissible. Back in 2015, Myles Jackman made this revealing statement⁹ to The Guardian newspaper:

"My fight is broadly against the forces which wish to constrain human sexuality," Jackman continued. "I've always said that the BDSM community is about 20 years behind the LGBTQ community in terms of rights, recognition and visibility." He framed the "struggle" and the "journey" of the BDSM "community" in these terms: from censure and criminalisation to mainstream acceptance.

Given this, for how long can Christians expect to be crown prosecutors without getting into trouble for objecting to the normalisation of sado-masochism?

Sado-masochism is being normalised

There is evidence that the prevalence of interest in and experience of sadism and masochism in western countries has increased in recent years. Data supporting this view comes from two representative samples of the population of men and women in Sweden in 2005¹⁰ and Quebec¹¹ in Canada in 2016. Whereas in Sweden in 2005 2.2% men overall said they had ever been sexually aroused by 'actually using pain', in Quebec in 2016 13.9% of men and 23.7% of women had experience of masochism, and 7.4% of men and 3.9% of women had experience of sadism. In Quebec in 2016, many more people expressed desire to experience sadism and masochism, with 19.2% of men and 27.8% of women saying they desired to experience masochism, and 9.5% of men and 5.1% of women saying they desired to experience sadism.

In the UK in 2015, Vue Cinemas proudly and enthusiastically promoted *Fifty Shades of Grey*¹², a blockbuster film which celebrated sado-masochism between men and women. In 2018 Vue Cinemas caved in to pressure from LGBT news site Pink News to cancel the premiere of *Voices of the Silenced*¹³, a documentary film about men and women who have left behind LGBT identification and behaviour through the help of Christians. *Fifty Shades of Grey* marked a high point in the normalisation of sado-masochism in mass media worldwide. In the wake of this publicity, polling company YouGov found that a quarter of British people under 40 wanted to try out sado-masochism, and nearly 1 in 5 already had done.¹⁴

Will the government ban therapy for unhappiness with sado-masochism?

The UK government wants to ban therapy¹⁵ aimed at changing sexual orientation and gender identity. In this respect it is following on from the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy¹⁶. When the Memorandum was first published it only referred to sexual orientation. Then in October 2017 it was expanded to include 'gender identity'. Although the latter version defined 'sexual orientation' as "the sexual or romantic attraction someone feels to people of the same sex, opposite sex, more than one sex, or to experience no attraction", the fact that the Memorandum has already been amended to include 'gender identity' means those behind it are perfectly capable of amending it again to expand the definitions of either 'sexual orientation' or 'gender identity' to include perversions such as sado-masochism. Here is why:

In all the debates on 'conversion therapy', the topic of sado-masochism has barely been discussed. Perhaps it is time it was, because NHS England appears to be treating BDSM as a 'sexual orientation'. NHS England, which has signed up to the Memorandum of Understanding, cited a large survey of transgender people in the UK in its 2017 consultation on the future of adult Gender Identity Services, 14% of people chose 'BDSM/kink' as their 'sexual orientation'¹⁷. The survey cited was the one published in 2012 by the Scottish Trans Alliance¹⁸.

Normalising BDSM could lead to trivialising slavery

In 2016 three people in Minnesota in the USA were sentenced to imprisonment for the

beating and murder of a woman with whom they shared a house to facilitate their joint BDSM 'lifestyle'.¹⁹ They considered her their 'house slave'.

Given that BDSM plays around with notions of people being 'sexual slaves' to others, and because its alleged 'games' so often seem to be behind murder convictions, it is reasonable to ask whether it is not at times linked more concretely to the problems of modern slavery as well.

Normalising sado-masochism could lead to more deaths

There have been numerous recent cases of people being accidentally killed by their sexual partners in BDSM. We will never know whether any of these people had previously sought help to get out of this perversion.

At present there exists no study of murders by people of whichever sexual orientation who were into BDSM, or of their victims. In spiritual terms it is highly relevant that some murderers involved in BDSM also had interests in Satanism. Graham Dwyer, a man married to a woman, was a sadomasochist with a history of stabbing women for sexual gratification, who was found guilty of murdering a mentally ill social worker in Ireland in 2016. Some victims have been in same-sex relationships.

Spreading the perverse psychology of sadism

This move to amend prosecution guidelines is a clever one because it skirts around the fact that the CPS has no power to change the criminal law, which lies with Parliament. It is forcing prosecutors to turn a blind eye to depiction of sado-masochism and extreme pornography as if by involving 'consenting adults' (or those who can be deemed to appear to consent), all other moral misgivings ought to be quashed.

Psychologically, a situation has been created where the law in this area is no longer a terror

to bad conduct but is allowing it. This should provoke profound disquiet because of the fact that women who are masochists are more likely to have been victims of sexual abuse growing up. It is impossible to look at this without also asking questions about sexualised bullying, but also the horror of so-called 'grooming gangs', whose members clearly harboured sadistic attitudes towards girls and women.

Threat of hate crimes being deemed 'obscene' averted

There is one very important positive result of the consultation, which is that the CPS rejected its own suggestion that other crimes such as hate crimes should also be prosecuted under the category of obscenity. (Actually, it is odd that hate crimes were the only type of crime suggested in the consultation document in this respect.) This was partly because we and several of our supporters wrote in to object to this. However, no press report of the consultation outcome discusses this proposed conflation. We issued a strong warning that in countries where Islamist extremism is the norm, due to Islamic law being the law of the land that which is considered blasphemous under Islam is also considered obscene.

In England and Wales, a hate crime is a crime which has 'hatred' against one of the groups protected by hate crime legislation as an aggravating factor. However, in practice, the police will investigate so-called 'hate incidents': incidents reported by members of the public where someone is deemed to have said something 'hateful' about one of these groups, but not committed a crime. The reasoning behind this is that such 'hate speech' is 'pre-criminal' and could lead to an actual crime being committed. Thus, had the prosecution guidelines allowed for hate crimes to be tried as 'obscenity', this would have led to an increase in police pursuit of people for 'hate speech' deemed Islamophobic being classified as 'obscene' and therefore 'blasphemous' in the eyes of Islamist extremists.

Thankfully, the Crown Prosecution Service considered the arguments made against deeming hate crime as obscenity, and that

with specific reference to the risk of an offence of blasphemy being created. The question remains, however – why was the suggestion that hate crimes should be prosecuted as obscenity introduced into this consultation in the first place?

Help us respond to the mainstreaming of sado-masochism

Given these changes in the prosecution guidelines, and how their supporters are viewing this development, we need your help to monitor the mainstreaming of sado-masochism and extreme pornography in British society from now on. Christians have a unique calling to shed the light of the Gospel on this problem, and to provide a witness to redemption in a society that has completely lost its way regarding sexual ethics.

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- ¹ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/public-consultation-obscene-publications-prosecution-guidance>
 - ² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/7-8/66>
 - ³ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2019-01/CPS%20statement%20on%20Consultation%20Response%20to%20Proposed%20Guidance%20relating%20to%20the%20Obscene%20Publications%20Act%201959.pdf>
 - ⁴ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/obscene-publications>
 - ⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/sep/09/one-lawyers-crusade-defend-extreme-pornography>
 - ⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jan/31/pornography-of-adult-consensual-sex-no-longer-taboo-says-cps>
 - ⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2009/sep/05/wolfenden-report-archive>
 - ⁸ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/rules-obscene-porn-including-torture-13936709>
 - ⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/sep/09/one-lawyers-crusade-defend-extreme-pornography>
 - ¹⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7879474_Transvestic_Fetishism_in_the_General_Population
 - ¹¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00224499.2016.1139034>
 - ¹² <https://archive.christianconcern.com/our-issues/freedom/why-vue-cinemas-is-muddled-in-saying-ex-gay-film-contradicted-its-values>
 - ¹³ <https://www.voicesofthesilenced.com/>
 - ¹⁴ <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2015/02/13/1-4-under-40s-want-try-bdsm>
 - ¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-action-plan-pledges-to-improve-the-lives-of-lgbt-people--2>
 - ¹⁶ https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/media/cptnc5qm/mou2-reva_0421_web.pdf
 - ¹⁷ https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/survey/gender-identity-services-for-adults/user_uploads/gender-identity-consultation-guide-1.pdf
 - ¹⁸ https://www.scottishtrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/trans_mh_study.pdf
 - ¹⁹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3620537/3-sentenced-fatal-beating-woman-called-house-slave.html>