

153 Changing our minds VII – Beware binary thinking

Only having a grade 9 (= super-fail) in O level history hasn't stopped me writing "A history of the world in 500 words", so today, despite being an almost totally apolitical animal (a terrible admission, sorry) I'm going to talk about politics.

I find politics frustrating because I can see good ideas on both sides, and yet I have to choose one or the other. Why they blazes can't they find a middle ground and work together to help solve society's problems?! But no, each portrays the other's ideas as wrong, full stop. And so if there were some aspect where they thought, "Ah, that's actually a good idea!" they could not, as a matter of principle, run with it: If "they" say it, it must be wrong. Beware binary polarisation!

In the past few years, I have changed my mind on a number of aspects of my belief, and OK, I'm sometimes deliberately provocative (and I've disagreed with myself more than once!) but you've been very gracious and you continue to pray for me and encourage me. Thank you!

Some of you have tried to convince me that my interpretation is mistaken, and in the past few days, have recommended one sermon and one book, on different topics – but both made me very cross. That's not because I disagreed with their view, but because of how they put it across.

As with politics, each set out clearly what "they" say, and then contrasted it with "but the Bible says..."; indeed, the subtitle of the book was "A clear, concise look at what the Bible teaches." The preacher started by saying that he would give us two stories: the story as told by "the sexual revolution" (whatever that is) and the story as told by the Bible.

So what "they" say is wrong, but we know the truth because we have the authority of the Bible.

Neither seemed willing to accept that their view was actually based on an *interpretation* of scripture, but rather presented it almost as fact.

Neither seemed humble enough to accept that it is possible for Christians to *change* their interpretation over time, in the light of new information and new understanding.

Both pictured the opposition as having been influenced by "the world" and as using emotive arguments.

Both told us that some Christians were changing their beliefs because they were not willing to face up to the "difficult truths" of what the Bible teaches – itself an emotive argument!

The sermon was around LGBT issues, and the book (admittedly written in 1988) was trying to convince us that "Leadership is male" (that's its title), and that women should not lead in church.

So let us pray, be humble, and be gentle with one another, especially where we disagree.

Paul Bev. 03.08.21