

233 *Mind change motivation*

We've rehearsed here that thinking of repentance (metanoia) as 'feeling sorry for our sins' is a pale reflection of Jesus' saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand'.^[215-219] Repentance, rather, as a fundamental change of mind.

So we have to repent (change our minds) to enter God's kingdom in the first place, but how good are Christians at changing our minds (repenting), especially publicly?

Let me give you two (well, three) real-life examples of public repentance (mind-changing).

I've mentioned^[229] my friend's uncle, an Anglican vicar, who wrote a strong letter to his brother (i.e. Dad) when proto-Dad publicly converted to Catholicism in order to marry proto-Mum. Then, a number of years later, the uncle publicly converted to Catholicism because the Anglican church had allowed women to become clergy. (I count this as two examples of public repenting.)

Now, how many academics do you know of who have publicly stated that what they had been teaching for the whole of their academic lives, they now believe was in error? And I'm not thinking of scientific academics where some new experiments had given new evidence. I'm talking about a Christian academic who decided that an alternative interpretation of the Bible, which he had rejected as wrong, he now felt was a valid interpretation. That takes some guts!

You can no doubt imagine the response that David Gushee got in the USA when he published *Changing our mind* in 2014. You have to be very highly motivated to repent, publicly, like that.

I hope no-one was offended by the comments at the end of my last article^[232] – none was intended. I was referring to the pain that could be caused, especially in Christian families, when family members come out as gay (but also the pain they feel *before* they come out).

It was seeing people suffer this pain that motivated David Gushee to revisit his life-long teaching of the traditional Christian teaching of gay sex as sinful; and I assume that he didn't have any 'vested interest' in his change of mind, as the internet suggests he's happily married to his wife.

I know and understand (and have in the past shared) some of the thoughts and feelings you may have on this issue, dear reader, so thank you for bearing with me. Following David Gushee, I have changed my mind, as I register that the Bible texts have to be taken in their cultural context (the same principle that we happily apply to less contentious issues), and that the Hebrew and Greek texts have been translated by people who hold the traditional interpretation of those texts. And that's not a criticism of the translators – they have to choose (English) words for individual passages on the basis of their understanding and interpretation of the rest of Scripture.

I'm not asking that you agree with me, but simply that you accept that fellow believers see this as a valid interpretation of Scripture.

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