

234 *What is sin? Part II*

In an earlier version of my last article,^[233] I included a mention of another public repentance: a clergy friend of ours had an affair, and he had to resign. He stayed with his wife and they are again very happy together, but in their new town and new church, when my friend was asked to be a part of the lay ministry team, he had to publicly confess his sin at a church service.

Having left that article to marinade overnight, I realised that this didn't add to the article; rather, I mentioned it because I was cross that my friend had been put in that position – telling the whole church what he had done. (Actually, I'm guessing it was just as hard, if not harder, for his wife!) 'A symptom of the church's obsession with sexual sin', I was thinking. 'Would they have forced a public confession if he'd been fiddling the collection money?!'

I then started thinking again about the putative Adam and Brian,^[231] a married couple (and Clare and Diane, who shared a flat) who all came to faith at an Alpha course. They grew in their faith and were keen to serve in the church.

But as I explained, in one local church here, the declared policy is that people in an active gay relationship are welcome in the church but they can't have an 'up-front role'. Think about the implications for that church if A, B, C and D had been on their Alpha course.

One interesting issue is, would the church leaders have to ask Clare and Diane about 'the nature of their relationship' before allowing them to lead worship or be welcomers? Clearly, they are very good friends, but was it more than that? And for all we know, while Adam and Brian are clearly committed and loving, they may be totally celibate. Some interesting pastoral issues!

But back to my title, 'What is sin?'^[230] and let's face it, we do like to know, 'Is it a sin or isn't it?' That's what, at one level, we're asking: is gay sex a sin or not?

My reaction about my clergy friend's public confession illustrates how sloppy my own thinking can be, sorry. But my friend knows he did something very wrong: he (they) jeopardised two marriages, breaking those trusting relationships – and it's relationships that really matter in life.

That situation is very different from the putative Adam and Brian. They are deeply committed, and their sexual intimacy is an expression of the love they have for one another.

But if I'm honest, I find it difficult to feel positively about the whole idea of gay sex, and so it would be all too easy for me to allow that negative *feeling* to affect my *thinking* on the issue. How can something that 'feels wrong' be right?

For the sake of our gay friends, we do need to put our feelings to one side and look clearly, carefully and biblically at this issue.