

287 *Baby and bathwater*

In a brief email exchange with my theological hero, Tom Wright, he used the terms ‘traditionalist’ and ‘revisionist’, confirming that he was still of the former persuasion. That’s what I had guessed because, in two passages where sex was mentioned, he had used the phrase, ‘one woman and one man’.

My email asked if he had changed his view, but it was a stupid question, really. Can you imagine just how difficult it would be for such a high profile Christian to admit to having changed his mind on such a high-tension issue? My admiration for the high-profile Christian ethicist, David Gushee, therefore increased further.^[265] Tom revealed that he had faced an extremely unpleasant reaction for publicly supporting the traditionalist view, as David had for admitting having changed his mind.

I’ll admit now that I found it difficult to change my mind on this topic, because of my feelings about what one traditionalist friend delicately called the ‘plumbing issue’, and I’ll admit to feeling less negative towards female gay sex. Sorry, but I’m just being honest. And while I’m being way too frank, please be assured that sex doesn’t have to be penetrative to be extremely satisfying.

Anyway, when I asked last time about the purpose of the church, one response centred on ‘salt and light’. I asked for clarification, and was reassured that the idea was *not* to try to stop the moral slide by telling people what God’s standard is – but I fear that this *is* what is in many Christian minds, e.g. the vicar I mentioned.^[255]

Context, context: I went back to Matthew 5, and the context of salt/light is the beatitudes, a very uncomfortable passage if one self-tests on each beatitude – I tried to apply it to my own attitudes in my writings. Ouch!

But I’m not daft enough to think that I can persuade anyone (especially those of my sort of age) to change their minds. More realistic is for those of us who have become revisionists to help our younger colleagues – those who are more willing to question the traditionalist view – to think through these issues.

So where’s the baby? Sorry, yes. The beatitudes, and salt and light, tell us that what really, really matters is how we treat one another, and sex (because it’s such a powerful force) is definitely an area where we can *mistreat* others. So when a husband says that he no longer loves his wife and has fallen in love with someone else, it’s his decision – I can’t judge – but if he’s a Christian husband, he needs to take very, very great care because relationships are paramount.

So the bathwater is society’s low view of sex, as a commodity, and for me the baby is the committed gay relationship through which (against societal pressures) God can give the couple love, fulfilment, stability, mutual support, etc, etc, just as for straight couples, and can make them a real blessing to others. May it be so.

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