

Lust – and Infantilism

Recently I've been reading David Wilbourne's *The Hemsley Chronicles* ("A Diary Celebrating Rural and Church Life, 1997-8") (2012), and in it, Helmsley (now an Assistant Bishop) describes the slightly-embarrassing situation in which he once found himself, without warning, reading a lesson in a church service, from the Song of Songs, that explicit Bible book in which lovers frankly declare their passion for one another. Not knowing quite how the reading might be followed up, in the service, the president (who happened to be Helmsley's archbishop, Dr. John Habgood) added thanks, in his prayers, "for the marvellous gift of erotic love" (p. 73). Habgood was of course right, we *should* thank God for erotic love, indeed, we should always remember, as often we don't, that the Lord, and the Church, wish (in my view) spouses to *desire* one another (I'm trying to avoid reference to our "Christian duty" – for desire can never be caused by sense of duty, although *will*, *intention*, is needed in creating any true marriage). Indeed, there is some Christian thinking which strays into the error (as I see it) of thinking that a person's sexual desire for their spouse – I fancy I've said this before, here – can be *lust*; if I desire someone else's wife, now that *is* lust, but anyone who ceases to desire their own spouse is within a marriage which is in trouble.

But no Christian, surely, would wish to thank God for the appalling situation, current in our society whereby the obsession with sex rules almost everything (in Mary Whitehouse's day, there was too much sex on television; now there is simply endless, excessive sex with everything, particularly as regards the media). No one aspect of human existence (more than sex) – I think I've said this before, as well – demonstrates, so clearly, the fact that this present kind of world/existence is not what God originally planned and designed us for; the human inability to handle sex – to keep it in a balance whereby it never becomes too large, in our existence, nor too small – is a sure sign of our present disordered – fallen - state. And sexual disorder takes the form, these days, of producing a society where most are reduced to a state of infantilism, ineluctably regarding sex as a kind of plaything, toy, either that or a desperate necessity which must rule *all*.

August 2012