

Restorative Justice and Its Back Alley Betrayers

I know a Restorative Justice advocate who has made his mind up: *he wants out of his marriage* of many years. There is another woman. So the divorce will likely proceed imminently and wedding bells may soon be ringing for the new couple. My wife and I know this presently former duo well: they have been fellow church members, the husband several decades friend and colleague in Restorative Justice. After telling his wife he likely wanted out of the marriage, my wife and I heard about 90 minutes of the *why*. He owned nothing. She entirely at fault. Bottom line: she failed to give him the love he deserved and needed. People who work in this area support women in relationships to men like this who are often unknowingly narcissistic with visions of entitlement.

My friend, a former church leader, rejects this suggestion, though admittedly by him is walking away from all he understands about faithfulness in marriage and promises made. He has his needs that she never met that he's determined to assuage. He had already done it once before in a brief affair. Perhaps more than once. It's now to become permanent. It's his right.

This is current dominant cultural narrative: *I have my right to fulfilment*. Whether that's the ideal wife or the perfect kid forming in the womb. In this kind of society we scapegoat weakness of spouse and foetus by pushing the "Abort" button. Liberal society after all according to Hans Reinders assumes that "individuals are free to live their own lives as they prefer provided they allow other people equal freedom to do the same... (cited in [*Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness*](#), Stanley Hauerwas & Jean Vanier, InterVarsity Press 2008)." Provided one is an equal of course. Which my friend's spouse evidently is not. Nor the foetus or any "disabled". Then only one party, the truly "equal" one may do what s/he wants. And *he* wants out of the marriage. This is after all his right.

Stanley Hauerwas says in *Living Gently in a Violent World* cited above that "we live in a time when people believe they have no story except the story they chose when they thought they had no story. That's 'freedom' in a society shaped by liberal political theory... We believe we should be held responsible only for the things we freely chose when we knew what we were doing." My friend is clear: he did not know what he was doing when he said his marriage vows, so he shouldn't be held to them years later. I know a theologian who has done this twice; a former senior pastor who did it along with his associate pastor; a brilliant singer/songwriter who has twice or more bailed on marriage; another musician worship leader whose wife left after his several affairs. I could mention many more. Liberal political theory run amok and rampant. All these in the church.

Likewise amongst church youth. Sex before marriage. Living with boy or girl friend with lifelong commitment remote. Church leaders afraid to touch this secular No story for fear of losing... what? Youth or The Yes Story?

Hauerwas continues: "The problem with this way of thinking is that it makes marriage unintelligible. How do we ever know what we are doing when we promise lifelong monogamous fidelity? Christians are required to marry before witnesses in church so we can hold them to promises they made when they didn't know what they were doing. If marriage

renders this understanding of freedom unintelligible, try having children. You never get the ones you wanted.” (See more on this by Hauerwas: “[The end of American Protestantism](#)”).

So my friend, lots of entitled (usually) male Christian leaders, abort the marriage partner. Of course amicably. That’s the liberal way. He still wants his “family times” at Christmas and whenever... He’ll see to it that she’s well set up. This marriage murder stuff must be surgically antiseptic: no back alley messiness at all, and judge not lest ye be judged. She may be judged not his equal but he wants to be a good ex even if she didn’t give good sex. He wants a friendly abortion with nary a mention of killing – not sanguinary but most sanguine... A proper Christian divorce, no oxymoron intended, with “Me and God” still intact, order of importance too? An abortion made in heaven that reflects in no way on an award-winning Restorative Justice career.

Restorative Justice has no business in the bedrooms of the nation, a great Canadian Liberal once said, slightly paraphrased. So it appears to my liberal friend now decidedly wanting marriage bail. Unless there is a True Story to tell, and a choice made with that Story once embraced.

It was said of Nobel Prize laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn upon expulsion from Communist Russia that *it was not so much about a man without a country, as a country without a man*. In my friend’s recent deliberate choice of wife expulsion, is it not so much about a man without a story as now The True Story without this man? Wife- turned self-expulsion too, Miltonic Story Lost? Possibly Regained?

One can always hope.