

For the Church of England's Future – Look to America

Learning from America

“Only God can save it now!” These words were spoken (of the Church of England) when faced with one of its perennial crises, in the 19th century; nothing could be further than the truth today, when (mid-July 2008) the Lambeth Conference (of Anglican bishops from throughout the world) prepares to convene, amidst intense acrimony over issues of homosexuality and (to a lesser extent) the consecration of women as bishops (following the recent decision at the General Synod meeting in York). Of course, the media presents this as simply being about those narrow-minded traditionalists’ un-Christian attitude to homosexuals; but it really is not (as I have argued) about homosexuality (and even less about women bishops).

Various Anglican papers and websites are, of course, buzzing with articles about these matters – and this present one may not ignore it. One article suggests that England is about 30 years behind north America (in terms of Anglican beliefs and practices), so that English Anglicans would be wise to look across the Atlantic, to see what is coming up, and where our present decisions and tendencies will lead. The prospect is very grim indeed.

There, there are “churches” which have renounced authentic/orthodox Christianity in any form which it has ever taken, in which Jesus’s incarnation, resurrection, and unique source of salvation have all been denied (not even quietly dropped); also sin and the need for forgiveness/redemption; and even the historic creeds, apparently, are soon to be removed from liturgical recitation (it is no longer sufficient for participants – including Bishops, for goodness sake! - to speak only those parts which they feel “comfortable” with).

The fate of the Bible, in this post-Christian climate, takes little imagination to conceive of, but one can be sure that it involves using it very selectively in order to buttress interpretations of reality which secular materialist concerns actually determine. It is these losses – the development of real Christianity into a kind of post-Christian “spirituality” - which, like new Ageism, is ultimately materialist – which disturbs real Christians; attitudes to sexual morality are inevitable products of this post-Christianity. The validation of sexual relationships necessarily involves same-sex partnerships – but up-and-coming in America, also, is the “acceptance” of *polyamorous* ménages (where several people, of different gender, live together with sexual liaison).

The Episcopal Church (US) will surely recognise the “validity” of such “lifestyles”, and perform blessings for them, before long; and not far away are those advocating “freedom” for other sexual lifestyles (involving animals and children), who claim to be as discriminated against as, not long ago, homosexuals were. Once a “church” has rejected the whole idea that eternal/objective truth (objectively-existing deity) might have created us with one particular sexuality in mind, then all kinds of sexualities are relative.

The church of do-as-you-please is not so very far away. Worst perhaps is the scene we have witnessed recently, where Jesus’s supposed-tolerance is touted as justifying the claimed sanctity of people (yes, bishops, church leaders) who wilfully set their private inclinations to overturn thousands of years of the divinely-appointed Judeo-Christian understanding of marriage and valid sexuality. No, it is not about homosexuality, but revisionist ideas about homosexuality certainly serve as a clear forecast of the post-Christian future of the Church of England; and, for orthodox believers, the question now is only of when, and by what route, they must leave it, not if.