



Editorial

Is Sex Going to Kill the Anglican Communion?

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In one sense it is not surprising that relations between the sexes should prove to be so contentious. After all, sex is a fundamental distinction within the human condition. Throughout history it has proved to be a distinction of almost infinite complexity with a capacity to involve all the virtues and vices of the children of Adam and Eve. The questions of whether women should be ordained as priests or bishops or whether people in same-sex relationships should be ordained, or acknowledged to be ordained, have become lightning rods for other matters. Differences exist between Anglicans on these questions for a wide variety of reasons, many of which have to do with the way in which Anglicans relate to their social and cultural circumstances.

This issue of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* reflects the current pre-occupations of the Anglican Communion. Anthony Baker addresses the presenting issue of unity in the light of recent contributions and Mary Donovan describes a fascinating initiative that is affecting the place of women in the evolving organizational structures of the Communion. Alan Cadwallader provides an episode from nineteenth-century England and Clive Field a social study from the twentieth century. While in a different vein Andrew Lord points us further back for some inspiration for wisdom.

This mix of the historical and the contemporary should help us take a broader view of current disputes. Theological scholarship often has the role of placing contemporary things in a broader and longer perspective. The theologian sets such things in a context of the kingdom of God. In 1984 Michael Ramsey said, 'To be a theologian is to be exposed to the vision of heaven and to the tragedies of mankind'.¹

So in such a context, will sex kill the Anglican Communion? The disagreements could if they hindered us from loving one another. It could be that some of the current Anglican Communion institutions will be

1. A. Ramsey, 'Looking to the Future', in A. Vogel (ed.), *Theology in Anglicanism* (Wilton: Morehouse Barlow, 1984), pp. 159-62 (162).

fractured somewhat. But that should be kept in perspective. Most of the existing institutions of the Anglican Communion are recent creations and may need to be seen as experiments along the way towards better or other arrangements. There have been a number of institutional experiments in the last hundred years and there is no good reason to think there will not be more experiments in the future.

However, the reality of the situation facing Anglicans worldwide at the moment is not just politics or institution building. It has to do with the nature of our tradition of faith. The institutional arrangements at the provincial level for sustaining catholicity are well developed. In a shrinking world community that same principle of catholicity becomes significant for Anglicans. The creation and maintenance of institutions to foster catholicity are therefore critical matters of faith for Anglicans in their provincial situations. Without that wider catholicity of mutual learning and inter-dependence provinces will suffer. They will be in danger of becoming caricatures of their own strengths, whether that be evangelical conservatism or liberal radicalism. Some may think that is already to be seen, but without some kinds of connecting arrangements that serve catholicity it will be a lot worse for the Provinces and for Anglicans in local churches than it is at the present time.

One of the dynamics in future experiments in the formation and sustaining of the identity and vitality of Anglican Christianity in the next century will be the place of theological scholarship among Anglicans. The development of TEAC described by Rowan Williams in this journal is thus of great potential significance.² The *Journal of Anglican Studies* exists to foster scholarly study of every aspect of Anglicanism. It is possible that in the years ahead we may see new and different organizational configurations and loyalties emerging and some fracturing of the present structures. In such an eventuality the *JAS* will continue in the commitment we made when we began.

In our first issue the *JAS* vision was set out in the following terms:

It will be important, therefore, for the *Journal of Anglican Studies* to encourage contributions that reflect the full range of contexts in which Anglican scholars work.

The *Journal of Anglican Studies* therefore sets out to be:

- a serious conversation across particular contexts;
- a focus on a shared tradition;
- an openness to all aspects of this tradition including history, theology, worship, ethics, Scripture, canon law, aesthetics, education, indeed any aspect that has a place in the tradition of Anglican faith and practice.

2. R. Williams, 'Theological Education in the Anglican Communion', *Journal of Anglican Studies* 3.2 (2005), pp. 237-40.

In this sense then the *Journal of Anglican Studies* offers a distinctive contribution to the understanding of Anglicanism and by implication as well our present global environment because of its:

- focus on Anglicanism as a distinct tradition of Christian faith;
- determinedly global scope and range;
- attention to the multi-faceted challenge of creating a global community.

The *Journal of Anglican Studies* will therefore welcome contributions from every corner of the globe and from all disciplines, but especially from theology, to contribute to the clarification and renewal of this Anglican tradition of Christian faith. The Journal represents no particular or party point of view and is open to all who wish to contribute to this scholarly endeavour.

That will continue to be the vision of the *JAS*.