

Thoughts on the Solemn Declaration and a Motion to Change Canon XXI on Marriage

A Supplement to
HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:
EVOLVING REFLECTIONS

KARL FURR

Resolution C003 which formed the basis of this Commission on the Marriage Canon directed, in part, that there be an explanation of how a motion to change Canon XXI on Marriage does not contravene the Solemn Declaration.

The first General Synod for all of the Church of England in Canada was held 1893. That first synod made the Solemn Declaration 1893, which describes how the Church of England in Canada is related to "the Church of England throughout the world" and "the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." It established the independence of the Church of England in Canada from the Church of England while still preserving the bonds of communion.

The Solemn Declaration now is a part of the *Declaration of Principles* in the Handbook of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. According to the Declaration of Principles, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada has authority to define doctrine that is "in harmony with the Solemn Declaration".

The Solemn Declaration states, in part.

"And we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in 'The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England; together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches; and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons'; and in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion; and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity."

It seems to me that the central issue with regard to whether same-sex marriages would contravene the Solemn Declaration's commitment to maintain the "Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same in 'The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England . . .'"

It seems to me that allowing same-sex marriages would change doctrine because the ‘The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England’ only provides for marriage between a man and a woman.

I have a couple of thoughts about this situation.

Firstly, the Anglican Church of Canada has already made changes that contravene the provisions of the “Book of Common Prayer . . . to the use of the Church of England” (i.e., the Book of Common Prayer 1662). The Anglican Church of Canada now allows the ordination of women in contravention of the provisions of the Book of Common Prayer 1662. The Anglican Church of Canada allows remarriage of divorced individuals women in contravention of the provisions of the Book of Common Prayer 1662. Therefore, the Anglican Church of Canada has not used the Solemn Declaration to block other changes that the Anglican Church of Canada has come to believe to be appropriate.

Secondly, to accept a narrow interpretation of the Solemn Declaration’s requirement to maintain the “Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and *as the Church of England* hath received and set forth the same in ‘The *Book of Common Prayer* and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, *according to the use of the Church of England* . . . [emphases mine] would seem to bind us to the Church of England and its processes for amending the Book of Common Prayer. They have not changed the Book of Common Prayer since 1662! The Anglican Church of Canada is an independent body and should not be bound by the decisions or non-decisions of the Church of England.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Church_of_Canada
<http://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/solemn-declaration/>