

God, Life, and Everything
An ABC for the ABC

Episcopalians are like the military in one very important way. We like our abbreviations. We don't have MREs or MBTs, but we do have BCPs and the BVM, not to mention the ECUSA, ECW and LEMs.

But it's the ABC that's in the news this week, and not in a good way.

The ABC, that is Archbishop of Canterbury, has broken a lot of hearts this week and seems to need a primer in prophetic action and plain-old priest-craft and compassion.

Here's what happened. In an interview with LBC Radio, the archbishop stated that if the Church of England (with which the Episcopal Church is affiliated), began to perform same-sex marriages, Christians in Africa would be massacred. He used this as a reason for backing away from same-sex marriage.

I feel for him. He has stood at the graves of hundreds of Christians murdered for the actions of Christians in the west. He said that people in Nigeria told him, "If we leave a Christian community here we will all be made to become homosexual and so we will kill all the Christians." Nobody wants massacres to happen, least of all to friends. And I appreciate how fellow Christians in Africa look with dread at news coming from England or the US, fearing what reprisals will come their way.

I remember sitting in a meeting with our own Bishop of New York a couple of years ago as he fretted about the same issue. Others suffer because of how we live.

And yet, even if you oppose same-sex marriage, the archbishop's words should trouble you.

What the archbishop has said is, "Our behavior will now be controlled by murderers who hold innocent people hostage."

The ABCs Bishop Welby should keep in mind are A for Atrocity, B for Blaming the Victim and C for Complicity.

To hold the Church of England responsible for the **Atrocities** of others because they choose to marry a certain type of person is to forget who is responsible. Where is that acceptable behavior? Will Canterbury quit ordaining women because thugs in other parts of the Anglican Communion don't like that? Is he suggesting that all anyone has to do to get their way is threaten to kill a lot of innocent people?

To allow hostage takers to dictate how England (or we, for that matter) treat our own people, is to give up all responsibility for living out the Gospel as we have received it.

This argument that it is somehow England's fault if these African Christians are murdered is just another form of **Blaming the Victim**. It's like in the bad old days of, well very recently, when judges and politicians blamed victims of rape for being too

attractive or dressing provocatively. Blaming the Victim is always a tactic of those who abuse and violate the innocent.

We cannot let them do that. We cannot let them have a pass, especially based on such a vile excuse. Rather, the archbishop as a leader of Christians should stand up and put the blame where it belongs - on those who commit murder. They are not upholding any sort of moral code - they are simply killing the innocent, and that is condemned in virtually every large religion.

Yes, it is heart wrenching to watch brothers and sisters face such horror every time we do something that displeases their hostage-takers. But who seriously thinks that bowing to their demands in this will stop the terror? The best way for us to make life better in the long run is to live as faithfully as we can now, where God has put us.

Because if we seek justice here, then we are showing that life will not come to an end because of same-sex marriage (any more than, say ordaining women). We will show the world that the harm to our society they warned against has not happened. We will take away their excuses for their own homophobia and misogyny.

If we don't move forward, faithfully opening the doors of the many cells we have locked people in over the millennia, then we are truly **Complicit** in the deaths not only of these terrified Christians in Africa but of future generations.

So, I would ask the archbishop - or any Christian leader - to soundly condemn these murders, to stand up and defend those who worship Christ wherever they are in danger. But I would ask them to never let those blackmailers put the blame on us or allow them to dictate our actions.

The Gospel is too important for that.