

My Inheritance

Latimer's Curate

Latimer's curate is nervous about his inheritance. Not his eternal one, for that has been secured by Jesus Christ through his death. Nor his financial one. He is concerned about his ecclesial inheritance. Permit me to explain why.

Kiwis are a funny bunch. On one hand we're willing to take on the world, standing for justice and truth. Very few of us can remain unmoved on ANZAC day as we remember our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers who were willing to fight courageously and sacrificially against tyranny and oppression and injustice. On the other hand, we also very much like to keep the peace. To try for a middle ground – a *via media* if you will – to avoid conflict wherever possible. Our national mottos – 'she'll be right' and - 'no worries' exist so that we can dismiss concern, conflict or contention with a simple phrase.

Anglicans are also a funny bunch. On the one hand we count amongst our forebears those who were willing to give their lives for the truth of the gospel. Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley in the sixteenth century, the Ugandan Martyrs in the nineteenth century, and the New Guinea Martyrs of last century, to name just a few. Men and women who believed the truth of the gospel so strongly that they were willing to stand against kings and rulers to the point of death. They believed that words and truth and the gospel (and the behaviour that that gospel both commanded and condemned) were so important that they were worth losing everything for. On the other hand, we as a church are the 'big tent', able to accommodate anyone who wants to call themselves Anglican, irrespective, it seems, of what they believe. We seem to be able to defy the law of non-contradiction, declaring that unity can (and does) exist between those who affirm and those who deny the same issue.

Readers of this edition of Focus and those aware of the Anglican 'scene' in New Zealand and indeed around the world know that serious and significant issues are upon us. Our church is facing a decision about the ordination and blessing of people in same-sex relationships. This curate is nervous about how Evangelical Kiwi Anglicans will respond. Will we stand for God's truth – graciously, lovingly, courageously and sacrificially contending for the

faith once for all entrusted to the saints? Will we be willing to lose, maybe not everything, but social standing, prestige, licenses, and friends because we believe that the gospel, and the behaviour that the gospel both commands and condemns, is so important that it demands it? Or will we seek a middle ground, a *via media*, if you will? Will we try and find space for us all in the big tent?

The latter alternative is attractive. It fits with our Anglican big-tentedness, and our kiwi 'no worries, she'll be right' aversion of conflict. The former is fraught with fear, with charges of being fractious, even fundamentalist. The former seems to some to be an over-reaction, a knee-jerk response to something that might very well not be an issue in a few decades (so we're told). The latter seems reasonable, responsible even, a way forward for the future. And maybe it would be. For a while at least. For a few years, maybe.

And yet this curate hopes to be in this Church for more than a few years. He hopes that many women and men will hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus and repent and believe and that this church will be a place that nurtures them in their faith, teaching them both the gospel and the behaviour that that gospel commands and condemns. He hopes that the senior men and women in this Church will stand, contending for that truth, fighting for that faith even if it costs them. That they will serve their Lord first of all, but also serve the Evangelical Kiwi Anglicans who will come after them. That they will not follow the infamous example of Hezekiah in Isaiah 39 who was concerned only with peace and security in his time, but will follow the example of countless courageous evangelical Anglicans, and will themselves be an example for those who come after them. That's his hope, and he will be praying and urging and pleading that they will. That we will. And that through us God might be pleased to save his church and preserve his people; for their sake, for the sake of those who come after them, but mostly for the glory of his Son.