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## The Bishop Condescends

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Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of the Episcopal Church USA visited Boston this week and while there granted a noteworthy interview to *The Boston Globe*. In the course of the interview, Bishop Jefferts Schori described her church's election of an openly-homosexual man as Bishop of New Hampshire as "a great blessing" and said, "I don't believe that there is any will in this church to move backward."

We can safely interpret that statement to mean that the Episcopal Church is unlikely to do what the Anglican Communion has asked — to repent of its sin and desist from any further elections of homosexual bishops or blessings of homosexual unions. The Presiding Bishop's comments are in direct contradiction to the solemn demands of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

In the interview with *The Boston Globe*, Jefferts Schori made her point clearly. Consider this section of the paper's report:

*In an interview during a visit to Boston, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori compared the gay rights struggle to battles over slavery and women's rights, and said she believes that it has become a vocation for the Episcopal Church "to keep questions of human sexuality in conversation, and before not just the rest of our own church, but the rest of the world."*

*Jefferts Schori said that it could take 50 years for the debate over homosexuality to be resolved, but that she believes it will happen. She said she hopes that the Anglican Communion, an umbrella organization including the Episcopal Church and the Church of England, will stay together.*

Opposition to the American church's actions has come primarily from churches in the "Global South." In regions such as Africa, leaders like [Bishop Peter Akinola](#), Primate of the Church of Nigeria, now lead a resistance movement against the more liberal churches in North America and Europe.



The Global South churches see the American church as moving in open defiance to the Bible and in open conflict with the tradition of their church. They rightly complain that the American church is celebrating what Scripture condemns and violating the trust of the entire Communion.

Bishop Jefferts Schori, of course, sees something very different. She sees the Global South churches as living in the Dark Ages. Look closely at this statement:

*"Where the protesters are, in some parts of Africa or in other parts of the Anglican Communion today, is where this church and this society we live in was 50 years ago, and for us to assume that people can move that distance in a year or in a relatively instantaneous manner is perhaps faithless," she said. "That kind of movement and development has taken us a good deal of pain and energy over 40 or 50 years, and I think we have to make some space so that others can make that journey as well."*

In other words, Jefferts Schori argues that time is on her side. The African churches will simply have to grow up and learn to play the game. They will have to learn to replace the authority of the Bible with the authority of modern therapeutic ideologies. They will have to learn to jettison biblical morality in favor of modern sexual "lifestyles." They will have to learn to use interpretive techniques in order to make the Bible "mean" the opposite of what it states. They will

have to get over their strange notion that the Creator has a design for human sexuality. They will have to denounce chastity and embrace sexual liberation.

Give these churches time, the Bishop suggests. After all, one can't expect the Global South churches to go through this revolution in a day.

Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori's statement is a classic form of condescension. Allow those backward churches some time, she chides, in order that they will "make that journey as well." In time, she expects the African churches to learn to play the game — relativizing Scripture, redefining biblical morality, and flaunting the moral wisdom the church has known for over 2,000 years.

She may be right. We must pray she is wrong. Time will tell. In the meantime, the Global South churches are not likely to appreciate her condescension.

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*The Boston Globe* offers a video version of Bishop Jefferts Schori's interview [here](#).

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