

The Church has to move beyond privilege

Published: January 13, 2026, 6:05 am

The resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury might be unprecedented in the history of that post, but it does not, somehow, come as a shock. Yet another old Etonian figure of the Establishment has been revealed to have failed to ask appropriate questions when made aware of the abuse of children in the care of the Church. Whatever the supposed requirements of their office and faith, the old boy network appeared to be more important, and so the abuser ended his life unchallenged and without justice being done.

I do, as a result, and as a confirmed member of the Anglican community (although a decided non-attender), feel no great loss at Welby's departure. He never felt like an appropriate fit for a 21st-century Archbishop of Canterbury, and yet, in some ways, he proved to be exactly that, matching the stereotype of those with privilege who assume power and then fail to exercise it with proper judgement.

I only know one diocesan Bishop well enough to have an opinion on their suitability to hold this office, and I very much doubt that they would want it. What I do, however, know is that the Church does need to provide a very clear indication of change. Another white male is unlikely to suggest that is happening. They need to be a great deal more broad-minded if they are to face the challenges that the Church, society and those

with power are being presented with.

In particular, someone who knows what it is like to live without innate privilege, including assuming a right to govern, might be good. It seems that ex-Etonians have a problem comprehending life as it is lived by most people.