

**Submission to  
the Lambeth Commission  
from  
The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC)**

*The Church of England Evangelical Council is the democratically constituted voice of Evangelical Anglicanism in England, which last autumn held a major National Evangelical Anglican Congress. CEEC is also part of the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion and EFAC's conference in Kenya last summer made a lengthy statement on the issue before the Commission. Bishops from around the world were present at both conferences. This submission, then, has active knowledge of the thinking of national and international Anglican Evangelicalism behind it.*

1. Our understanding is that this submission should be brief and focussed, and it thus runs the risk of appearing trite, uninformed or uncaring. In particular, we have not rehearsed our position on biblical interpretation, nor of appropriate pastoral guidelines for local congregations. If the Commission sees fit, we would happily expand our arguments.
2. The current crisis has been provoked particularly by the election and consecration of Gene Robinson to the Diocese of New Hampshire, but it is not limited to that. We have in mind the actions of the Diocese of New Westminster, and the decision of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada to "affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same sex relationships." We also most recently have in mind the extraordinary appointment of the Reverend Canon Jeffrey John as Dean of St. Albans. In our own country this highlights the particular concerns because it was made in direct opposition to the Archbishop's request that no controversial appointments be made until the Commission has reported. It becomes another clear example of provocation by a liberal and revisionist elite on an orthodox and unsuspecting Church. It raises the problem of how the solution the Commission arrives at ought to be workable at a Diocesan as well as a Provincial level. Thus every reference to ECUSA and a Province below could and should be read as having relevance to other referents, albeit outside the strict terms of the Commission.
3. In itself this restricts the options open to the Commission, for the issue is not merely Gene Robinson, and will not be resolved by his resignation, or the declaration of his election or consecration as invalid. Whatever the merits of those actions in that case (and while the first is simply improbable, the last two are open to substantial legal challenge), they only provide a temporary solution to one aspect of the crisis. The consecration of Gene Robinson is likely to be a precedent, as the crisis in Oxford Diocese last summer showed.
4. We want the Commission to note, first, that the seriousness of this debate should not be underestimated. We are aware that for both sides the issue is salvation, and that the two understandings of the meaning of salvation are incompatible and mutually exclusive. Our concern on this issue is therefore not fundamentally ecclesiological, sacramental, doctrinal, nor biblical, (critical though all those issues are) but pastoral, for in classic Christian teaching, homosexual actions leave the actors facing God's judgement without Christ's mediating work. Teaching which encourages such behaviour is profoundly cruel, as it encourages people to sin and, in defiance of the gospel, to call that sin an act of grace. Toleration of such teaching is equally cruel, and makes one complicit in the sins of both the actor and the teacher. This issue matters to us because people matter to us, and both heaven and hell are genuine alternative destinies.
5. **A note on questions of Jurisdiction**
  - 5.1 Our starting-point is that the Provinces of the Anglican Communion are part of the one universal apostolic Church whose head is Jesus Christ, and that

accordingly neither the Communion as a whole nor any Province within it has any power or jurisdiction either to ordain or to permit anything contrary to the will of God.

5.2 This entails that any rules, laws or practices amongst the Communion or by its constituent Provinces must be in accordance with the will of God expressed in Holy Scripture.

5.3 As part of the apostolic Church, ECUSA has no jurisdiction or power to institute the practices it has, for God has forbidden this throughout Scripture.

5.4 As part of the apostolic Church, the rest of the Communion not only has no jurisdiction or power to permit these practices, but rather has a positive duty to discipline ECUSA for the purpose of restoring it to a loving obedience her head.

5.5 Some deny that explicit *legal* instruments exist amongst the members of the Communion to regulate the exercise of this disciplinary jurisdiction. However, this must be challenged. First, a *formal* jurisdiction is necessarily implicit in the position given to Holy Scripture by the Lambeth Quadrilateral, even if it is not legally expressed. Further, any legal instruments of the separate Provinces of the Communion are subordinate only, designed to further our common life to the glory of God. They must therefore be set against the background primarily of Holy Scripture and secondly of the traditions of the Church on earth.

5.6 Such *legal* instruments as exist are thus a partial expression of a wider range of *formal* instruments, such as invitations to the Lambeth Conference, and those are in turn an expression of the authority and duty of the Church to govern itself under God's authority.

5.7 Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church on earth alike testify to a residual jurisdiction to discipline those in error even without any explicit subordinate legal mechanism. In the case of Holy Scripture, St. Paul both rebukes his fellow apostle, and also corrects churches of which he is no longer a member. In the case of the tradition of the Church on earth, discipline has been consistently exercised even against erring bishops by those outside their sees. This is evidenced in the case of Paul of Samosata, Origen's role in the Dialogue with Heraclides, the Arian controversy, but most strikingly in Cyprian's Letter 67. Cyprian is frequently cited as upholding Diocesan or Provincial autonomy, but there he and others subordinate that consideration to the need for a wider discipline.

5.8 This residual jurisdiction cannot be revoked by desuetude, for the Church has no authority to revoke it at all. Nor can it be repudiated by the Provinces of the Communion without an implicit repudiation of their apostolic inheritance. If the objection that there are no secondary legal mechanisms for the exercise of this jurisdiction be accepted, this only entails that a range of mechanisms be forthwith be created for the purpose of the proper pastoral care of ECUSA by discipline. These may or may not include legal mechanisms.

5.9 The objection that this amounts to retrospective legislation is fallacious since the Scriptural prohibition on homosexual genital practice is clear and express, as is the historical submission of Christ's church on earth to this injunction. Similarly the existence of both Scriptural and traditional residual jurisdictions for the exercise of discipline is well-attested. Both substantive law and residual jurisdiction are therefore not being retrospectively created. ECUSA can only claim to have been either ignorant of these things, or to have disregarded them. Neither ignorance nor disregard abolish either law or jurisdiction, but go only to challenge ECUSA's claim to be authentically part of the Communion.

## **Unworkable solutions**

6. Following from point 4, those churches that have broken or suspended communion with ECUSA are therefore simply insisting on the maintenance of Biblical standards of discipline that they would apply equally to any individual within their dioceses, or to any church seeking communion with them. This is done for the eternal security of the individuals concerned.
7. We submit that tensions on this subject are running so strong internationally that either ECUSA will split further, or the Communion will split entire. Indeed we can see no alternative to that choice, and foresee that any solution which fails to take the seriousness of the charge made against ECUSA with full force, will be anything other than temporary.
8. Furthermore, we question any model which seeks to resolve the problem of two Provinces being in impaired or non-Communion by means of seeing them as only being indirectly related via their primary Communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. It would be appealing, but the logic of the orthodox means it will fail. They will be out of Communion with anyone who is in Communion with Gene Robinson, and that must include the Archbishop of Canterbury himself if the logic of Communion is followed. The only route out of that dilemma is for the Archbishop to declare himself in at least impaired Communion with ECUSA.
9. We are in frequent contact with a range of traditionalists in ECUSA, and they report considerable irritation with the rhetorical technique of being provided with a form of words to which a number of (mutually contradictory) meanings can be given or where loopholes can be found. The Commission must take pains to express itself unambiguously if it is to win the traditionalists' confidence. This is not a case where a quasi-balanced attempt to hold everyone together will succeed
10. The rhetoric of liberalisation needs careful unpacking as well, for too often it implies that the traditionalist case is of its essence thoughtless and unreflective, a product of naïve and inadequate theological depth. A good example here is the comments made by the Bishop of St Alban's in his Presidential address to his Diocesan Synod, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2004. Commenting on the response to the appointment of Jeffrey John he said, "One of the saddening features of my postbag, over the past few weeks, has been the way in which biblical texts have been used. It is not that they are quoted - that is not the issue - but it is as though all the thinking and study that has gone on in the Church during the twentieth century concerning the Bible has simply not been recognised". Granted that there are thoughtless and unreflective people on all sides of this argument, and we cannot comment on the Bishop's postbag, it is matter of record that at its best, the traditionalist case has been made, on numerous occasions, with considerable academic rigour and theological sophistication.
11. Similarly, traditionalists in ECUSA - and we - are familiar with committees which claim a theologically neutral (or theologically superior) stance from which it can see that both sides are equally at fault. We strongly repudiate that this double and equivalent fault is the case, and deny the claimed theological superiority that sees it.
12. Evidence of that technique already being in place is the equivalence being placed on (alleged) toleration of polygamy in some African Provinces, and homosexual expression in (some) Western Provinces. We urge the Commission to study the Constitutions of those African Provinces with great care before such toleration of polygamy is assumed or described. The Anglican Church of Kenya, for instance, has a lengthy description of the disciplinary procedures to be followed for a polygamist, and they are deeply offended to see their pastorally nuanced discipline wrongly described as toleration.
13. This is itself evidence of the continued bureaucratic domination in the Communion by the white West and North, despite the numerical domination of the global South. So high are feelings running over this, that we fear many think that if the Communion will not adhere to orthodoxy, and discipline members in line with its stated position, then its *raison d'être* has ceased beyond being a remnant of the British Empire, and will be sloughed off with as little concern.

14. We also suggest that the technique of dealing with the two views as equivalents, imparts a spurious equality between two views which are disparate in the strength of their claims to tradition, catholicity, unity, and Scriptural interpretation. The novelty and self-consciously communion-breaking nature of the consecration of Gene Robinson must be recorded, as must its distortion of the Lambeth Quadrilateral in pitting one element, episcopacy, against the others. We note the disdain with which the Diocese of New Westminster treated the Primates' Statement. Equally, the Bishop of St Alban's has shown similar contempt for the Archbishop of Canterbury's call for calm. It is breathtaking that the Bishop can make this appointment and simultaneously expect those who oppose it to submit to his Episcopal authority as a mark of authentic Anglicanism.
15. In that some people have manipulated rightful authority to their own ends, and are enforcing those ends on others, the consecration of Gene Robinson was also an abuse of power, albeit under a democratic form, and therefore an act of ecclesiastical tyranny. By the same token, however, the refusal to offer adequate oversight for orthodox Christians thus marginalized is equally an abuse of power by the non-exercising of rightful authority.
16. The matter of justifiable Scriptural interpretation is especially critical at this point, because, as the recent report *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* from the English House of Bishops notes, and notwithstanding the few caveats the Report itself lists, 'the consensus of biblical scholarship still points us in the direction of the traditional reading of the biblical material' (4.4.71).
17. There is therefore no parallel with the debate over women's ordination where there are significant texts which can be used by both sides. The liberalizing case has consistently been judged a misinterpretation, by General Synod, the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' meeting in Brazil, to name but three. Therefore the means to resolve, or at least to live with the tensions caused by, women's ordination cannot be used to solve our crisis. We therefore reject any model based on a process of reception, development, emergence, or of the provision of a Second Province, and the Commission should think beyond such suggestions.
18. For all that the traditionalist case has been on occasion overstated, misstated, or expressed unlovingly or untheologically, such should not be confused with the case in itself, nor have such occasions been the normal or desired self-expression of the case. We ask the Commission to avoid caricaturing both sides by their worst expressions (or by the other side's caricatures), but instead deal with them in their most consistent and authentic forms. This will inevitably mean that the traditionalist case is described as the overwhelmingly majority voice of Anglicanism, past and present, and indeed the overwhelmingly majority voice of Christianity, past and present. We do not discern the need for a new Word from God on this subject, as we do not find any theological confusion or pastoral inadequacy in the scriptural provision.
19. Finally, we submit that a proposal based on the loosening of provincial ties and giving greater autonomy will not work. It is necessary to recognize the theological and ecclesial maturity of churches across the communion, and that they are no longer client states, but the problem is too complex for that alone to be adequate. On one level, it is simply the issue of one Province or Diocese flouting of the mind of the Communion, but it is simultaneously the question of the responsibility of the wider Communion for those within that Province or Diocese who repudiate that flouting.

## **Proposal**

20. Our suggestion is that there be a reversible suspension of representatives of ECUSA from being invited to the Lambeth Conference, the Primates meeting, ACC or indeed any event where the Archbishop of Canterbury is acting in the chair. A clear exception should be made for all those who have publicly distanced themselves from the consecration of Gene Robinson, and who can rightly claim to be in communion with the majority mind of the most recent Lambeth Conference.

21. At the same moment, there should be provision of sanctioned oversight for the marginalised orthodox, and it is necessary that such oversight should be provided without the primates feeling the necessity of obtaining the permission of the Province or Diocese in question. This action is legitimate precisely because the abuse of power that has led to this crisis is illegitimate, and Provincial or Diocesan consent is unnecessary, and to a great extent undesirable, because it serves to legitimate the abusers.
22. These sanctions should come from the Primates' meeting rather than residing in the office or person of the Archbishop, since mutual discipline is a collegial matter.
23. The Primates who meet to enact this should simultaneously discuss whether there are other Provinces or Dioceses where such oversight must also be needed, with particular reference to ACC, the Diocese of New Westminster and the Diocese of St Alban's.
24. The essentially reversible nature of this is a reflection of the theology of the discipline exercised in 2 Corinthians, where the final goal is neither marginalisation nor exclusion but reconciliation. The proximate means to full reconciliation, however, is neither dialogue nor creative tension but reversible expulsion. This is consistent with Paul's expressed goal of love (2 Cor 2:8) and avoids the divisive consequences either of disobediently refusing to confront error or of denying the salvific and reconciling goal of discipline.