

An Open Letter from the House of Bishops of IEAB to His Grace the Most Revd and Right Honourable Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Translated by the Revd. Joabe Cavalcante



Câmara dos Bispos da IEAB em frente à Catedral da Ressurreição, Brasília - DF

Brasília, 14th November 2005.

Dear Archbishop Rowan,

We, the **House of Bishop of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil – IEAB**, want to express our solidarity to our bishop primate of IEAB concerning all that has been happening which has caused great damage to our Anglican Communion.

1. We would like again to point out that the case involving Mr Robinson Cavalcanti went through a long process of disciplinary hearing by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court of the Brazilian province. This Ecclesiastical Court examined and took into consideration the then bishop Robinson Cavalcanti's numerous acts of disrespect against his fellow bishops, including the bishop primate, and against other segments of IEAB. It was also considered the fact that Robinson Cavalcanti irregularly interfered in the jurisdiction of other provinces taking part in clandestine confirmations. We have evidence of many cases in which it becomes clear that he has breached his ordination vows. There are also several accusations against that refer to his moral behaviour but we decided not to take them further them in order to not expose further Robinson's private life and the image of IEAB. The House of Bishops after several meetings and with a spirit of discernment and prayer accepted and ratified by unanimous consensus the decision made against Robinson Cavalcanti by the Ecclesiastical Court, which had acted according to the Canons and General constitutions of our province.

This is the first time in our history that it has happened. We deeply regret the result of this disciplinary process and reaffirm that the backdrop of this process has never been of ideological or theological character, but solely of disciplinary nature. Thanks to God, we have in our province clergy and lay people of all

ideological and theological tendencies. It should also be noted that all the conditions for the right of defence by Robinson Cavalcanti was secured during the disciplinary hearing.

Concerning the 32 clergy who have now allege to have been condemned without a trial, we draw that the attention to the fact that our Canons are clear about the abandonment of Communion with the Church, and that is what happen as they publicly broke the institutional ties with IEAB. There were many attempts of dialogue and the clergy concerned were called to talk with the provincial authorities. All of them received a letter from the ecclesiastical authority requesting from them a position concerning the acceptance of the doctrine, worship and discipline of IEAB according to their ordination vows. Finally, it was given to them a legal deadline for them to make their response known to the provincial authorities. We did receive a collective reply, a signed letter, in which, all of them expressed total solidarity with the attitudes of Robinson Cavalcanti in his determination to leave IEAB.

2. Concerning the primate of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, Gregory Venables, we came to know about his interference, in a unilateral way, in the province of Brazil as he received Robinson Cavalcanti and his 32 dissenting clergy. This clearly goes against the Catholic principle of territoriality of the provinces. It is an attempt to structure the Anglican Communion on an ideological basis and not territorially. Again, this violates an Anglican principle, as worked out by Richard Hooker, of the sovereignty each Anglican Church (province).

3. Concerning the South American Mission Society, SAMS-GB, we received an official letter whereby that organisation tries to interfere in the life of our province, wishing to impose on us the reinstatement of Robinson Cavalcanti as bishop of IEAB. This is not the role of a missionary agency, and that reminds us of certain facts of recent history when the European powers interfered in the life of their former colonies.

4. The South to South Encounter happened in Egypt, October of this year. This was an event suggested by the Anglican Conference on Mission in 1986, Brisbane. Approved by the highest instances of the Anglican Communion, the Encounter has been happening since early 1990s, with funds and resources from the Anglican Consultative Council – ACC. In August 2005 the archbishop Peter Akinola sent a letter to IEAB excluding us from taking part in this event. The Archbishop of Canterbury went to the Encounter as an official guest, and surely must have met there Robinson Cavalcanti e Miguel Uchôa, on behalf of IEAB. Here we think that we have found the reason for our exclusion from the South to South encounter, even though we are members of the South, and participants of the setting up of the first Encounter in Limuro, Kenya, and of the second Encounter in Kuala Lumpur, Malasia. We cannot understand though why our Archbishop of Canterbury has never made a public comment concerning the arbitrary exclusion of our province, but with his presence and speech, legitimated all those statements made during the Encounter that intend to reinvent the Anglican Communion, transforming it into a federation of churches through the subscribing of a confessional declaration. We express our deepest regret for the disfigurement of our *Ethos*.

5. We have tried contact with your Grace, hoping for a word of moderation concerning all this, since we feel vilipended and disrespected as the Anglican Province of Brazil. However, what we observe is the absence of a firm attitude to protect the integrity of our Communion as well as our provincial autonomy. There are, to the contrary, partial attitudes such as the granting of as special meeting with the deposed bishop, whereas for us, even though we asked for a meeting with you Grace thirty days ago, no date for a meeting has been appointed. Worse still is the fact that we have received information that the case alleged by Robinson Cavalcanti has been taken on board by the reference panel, while for us it has been offered the sending of a mediator, something that we consider to be a total mistake.

6. In view of this, the House of Bishops of the Brazilian Province manifests to all instances of the Anglican Communion our unanimous solidarity with our bishop primate, Dom Orlando Santos de Oliveira. The 26 Latin American bishops present to the Congress of Theology in Panama, have showed solidarity with us with full approval of a motion by the assembly of 150 people from Latin America and the Caribbean, clergy and laity of almost 30 Anglican dioceses according to the statement widely divulged in the Anglican world, and in October with the reactivation of CALA (Latin American Anglican Council).

7. The Brazilian Province does respect the Lambeth Quadrilateral and seeks to continue an integral part of the Anglican Communion through the bonds of affection that are expressed by sharing of the bread and to remain together in spite of our differences. And the most important sign and instrument of our communion is your Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We place our attitude under God's judgement, and wish to have your Grace's impartiality and consistency with the Anglican principles with which we share for centuries. Signed:

***Dom Orlando Santos de Oliveira, Primaz; Dom Clovis Erly Rodrigues;
Dom Luiz Osório Pires Prado; Dom Almir dos Santos; Dom Glauco Soares de Lima; Dom Jubal Pereira Neves;
Dom Celso Franco de Oliveira; Dom Naudal Alves Gomes; Dom Sebastião Armando Gameleira Soares;
Dom Filadelfo Oliveira Neto; Dom Hiroshi Ito; Dom Maurício Andrade***



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