

Transcript: Micheal Doe

Date: 31 July 2023



[0:00:00]

Interviewer: So, today's date is the 26th February. It is Helen Trotter interviewing Michael Doe. Can I ask you to spell your name please?

Respondent: Michael, M.I.C.H.A.E.L Doe, D.O.E.

Interviewer: And what is your date and place of birth please?

Respondent: December 24th 1947.

Interviewer: And today's interview is being recorded at Gray's Inn for the Christian Voices Coming Out Project. We have got a list of prompts that I am going to work through, but I suspect that actually what we are really going to talk about is Seeking the Truth in Love, which is your book, and what has happened since then, and what you think about the state of the church now. As I think Tracey told you, I am one of Jeremy Pemberton's Barristers, so I have been involved in his Employment Tribunal. I was the Employment Junior on that, and we are going off to the EAT this year. One of the things that the project would like to know is a bit about your background and childhood, where you grew up, and how it was?

Respondent: Right, I think we are just talking about the book?

Interviewer: Alright, I have to say that was my understanding. I have got some potential prompts here. I think it would be much more interesting if we just talk about the book, and what led you to write it, and where we have come since then. If you feel uncomfortable, I think that is the way forward. You wrote obviously Seeking the Truth in Love: The Church and Homosexuality, and as I understand it at the time you wrote that you were Bishop of Swindon, is that right?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And how long were you the Bishop of Swindon for?

Respondent: I became the Bishop in 1994. I went to the Lambeth Conference in 1998, and I can talk about that if you'd like, because that really gave rise to the book?

Interviewer: Absolutely, yes please.

Respondent: I mean, if this is also going to be an audio record, I'd better say that again, shall I? That I became Bishop of Swindon in 1994 and went to the Lambeth Conference in 1998. I was still quite young and quite a green Bishop, but we had to choose which section to go into, and I went into one, Called to Full Humanity, in which there was a sub-section on human sexuality. I would have to say that the whole process was not very well organised or resourced, or indeed in terms of meeting rooms located, so it felt quite unsatisfactory from the beginning. But even more so when it became very clear that in this sub-section of a quarter of the delegates, there was a very wide participation from around the communion, which was good, but also some very deep disagreements. At the beginning there was a lot of unhappiness, some shouting, and I think I would say it was largely due to Bishops from South Africa, and one or two English Bishops, in particular the then Bishop of Oxford Richard Harries, that we actually managed to settle down and start listening to each other, and remarkably produced at the end of the three week period a report from the sub-section which was agreed unanimously, which was quite a surprise.

Interviewer: Yes, I'm sure.

Respondent: And then we had to, at the last minute, put a resolution together, because at that time the Lambeth Conference still worked on a rather synodical model, so everything came into a final plenary lasting two or three days. We again managed to agree a resolution, and it was a little bit on the one hand and on the other, some people think others think differently. But nevertheless, it was a corporate effort. The problem was that when we got to the plenary, tempers got flared again across the board, particularly from people who hadn't been through the three week process that we had been through.

[0:04:41]

Interviewer: Right, so they were at the beginning of where you had been?

Respondent: Yes, and also a lot of them had come with quite clear agendas, both conservative and liberal.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: And on the floor of the plenary the report was accepted, but the resolution was radically changed. In particular by the insertion of the now famous, some people might say infamous, homosexuality is incompatible with scripture. Although if you actually read the resolution, that is simply a qualifying introductory phrase to the main part of the resolution, which is much more positive. That was what happened there, and George Carey was in the Chair. It was quite a messy process, and in fact he spoke about the resolution that had been passed even before the assembly had voted on it. So, the tension was quite high. Afterwards some of us wrote a pastoral letter to gay and lesbian Anglicans reiterating another part of the resolution which talked about travelling together and talked about listening to each other.

Interviewer: And I think in your book you said that had over 200 signatures. Is that right?

Respondent: That's right. Nevertheless, I mean it just felt rather depressing. So, I had a sabbatical coming up.

Interviewer: Pre-planned, regardless of...?

Respondent: Yes. I decided to take this as the subject, and I went off to Berkeley, California and wrote what became Seeking the Truth in Love. I remember coming back to Swindon and saying to my Diocesan Bishop, "I have written a book which may be a little controversial". And he said, "Well, while you have been away, I have done something a little controversial," and that was to accept that one of the Parish Priests in Swindon, Peter Stone, was going to transition to a woman, but would remain the Vicar of his Parish, mainly because the congregation were very clear that they wanted to welcome him back as Carol.

Interviewer: And that would have been in what, sort of 1999/2000?

Respondent: The book was published in 2000.

Interviewer: So, at that stage, is it fair to say that your Diocesan Bishop was quite forward-thinking in terms of accepting who this Parish Priest was, and accepting the Parish's wishes in terms of keeping that Priest?

Respondent: Yes, and because there had also been quite a bit of work done within the House of Bishops on those issues, and he was clear that there were no theological or canon law barriers to Carol coming back.

Interviewer: And so, how did you anticipate that your Diocesan Bishop would receive the news about your book Did you feel quite confident that he would be supportive, or were you a bit more concerned?

Respondent: I think we were both within the liberal catholic rite of tradition. I mean, that really takes us on to talk about the content of the book.

Interviewer: Yes.

[0:08:34]

Respondent: Because in many ways it is not terribly radical. One of the interesting parts of its reception was being criticised both by conservatives and also by LGCM. I mean, when it was published the Daily Express, well let's first of all establish what the book contains. What it attempted to do was to summarise the history of the issue within the rite of the church, within a more general context of how the church has dealt with or failed to deal with sexuality generally. What I tried to do was to set out a summary of what has been said and written, and then in each area, it's like a scripture of tradition experienced to offer some kind of continuum whereby people could identify where they stood along the line. And although I guess the book indicated that I was at the more liberal end of the line, and simply being open to having a continuum is liberal.

Interviewer: Yes, quite.

Respondent: It wasn't specifically, well it certainly wasn't as radical as some people felt it should be.

Interviewer: So, was it that you were being criticized by the more conservative for being too radical, and being criticised by LGCM for not being radical enough?

Respondent: Precisely, and it wasn't helped by the fact that the Daily Express misquoted, misrepresented it, which led to some very unfortunate stuff. Sort of deaths threats and so on.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: And my poor secretary had to cope with that. She had to open the letters and take the phone calls.

Interviewer: Yeah. How long did that continue for?

Respondent: Not for long, because the book then sort of became available and people could read it. And of course the DLT who agreed to publish, they approached Rowan Williams who was then still in Wales, and he very gladly wrote the foreword, and of course he has been criticised for that. But then he has been criticised for many other things. Again, poor man, he also suffered slings and arrows from both the right and the left.

Interviewer: Yeah, because I felt that his foreword really was an acknowledgement of the work that there is to be done, and the fact that one has to move forward and talk about the issues before they are going to be resolved. It doesn't seem to be no more or less than that. I was pleased to see that he had done it, but it didn't seem to me it was a particularly controversial foreword, unless I misread it entirely.

Respondent: No, although of course it was some years ago. I mean everybody, well not everybody, but a lot of people have moved forward since then.

Interviewer: Yes, 16 years ago, gosh.

Respondent: The other thing that wasn't helpful at the time, and I must be careful at this point, is that there were two Carey's involved. The message from Lambeth, I am not attributing this to George Carey, but there was a very clear message to be relayed to me from Lambeth, which was summed up as, "Well, that's the end of him then".

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: And I was clearly meant to hear that.

Interviewer: Yes, and how was that message transferred to you?

Respondent: Via another Bishop.

[0:12:22]

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: In the meantime, a journalist on the Church of England Newspaper who happened to be George Carey's son, wrote a piece which I think was supposed to be a review, but I thought was a total misrepresentation of what I had said. And to be fair, the Editor of the Church of England Newspaper agreed to publish an equal length rebuttal from me.

Interviewer: Good.

Respondent: Helped of course by the fact that the Church of England Newspaper is always grateful for anything that will fill up space.

Interviewer: Yeah (laughing), quite fair.

Respondent: Yes, well one could say certain things about Andrew Carey's own situation, which makes it a little bit hypocritical to edge into this area in such a critical way, but there we are.

Interviewer: Did you feel that he was the puppeteer or the puppet master?

Respondent: Oh, I think the puppet master, because he was then, he has gone quite quiet now, but then at least, he was part of that media focus linked to David Virtue in the States, and Christopher, what's his name, here? Christopher Sugden here, who have really, and they moved quite a bit from print media into social media, have really been trying to sharpen the sharp end.

Interviewer: Yeah. And so all of this is around 2000. What was your Diocesan Bishop's reaction after publication happened in, you know the slings and arrows are being thrown at you, did he continue to be supportive?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And how long did you remain as Bishop of Swindon after publication? So, this was published in 2000.

Respondent: I did ten years, and at that point I decided that I would like to do something else. At the time, I think it is right to say that during the whole of the Carey's no single men became Diocesan Bishops in England.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Geoffrey became Bishop of Europe. I'm not saying I would have made a good Diocesan, but I think it is clear that that was not going to be an option for anybody who wasn't married with two kids and a dog. So, the job at USBG came up, and I'll talk a bit about that in a moment if you like.

Interviewer: Yes please.

Respondent: I think the other thing to say, because I mean your question suggested that there might have been hostility. I mean, we were at that point meant to be, as we are supposed now to be in a different way, in a process of conversation. I was an elected member of the House of Bishops, Suffragans elect a certain number, and I sat in the House of Bishops in most of my ten years as Bishop of Swindon. We had had issues with human sexuality, which was meant to be at the beginning of our debate. Nothing much had happened. The House therefore commissioned the Faith and Order people to do a second resource document called Some Issues in Human Sexuality, and some of us rather wickedly thought in another ten years we would have a document called Some Other Issues in Human Sexuality (laughter). But to be fair, and it was written by a Conservative Evangelical, but he quoted large chunks from my book, and in fact a couple of chapters actually take the structure of two of my chapters. So, there was a debate going on, and the book contributed to it.

[0:17:06]

Interviewer: Do you think it would be fair to say, certainly in light of the veiled or not so veiled warning that you had apparently had from Lambeth, that whilst there was this conversation that was supposed to be ongoing, its parameters were rather transcribed by what the boss wanted the outcome to be?

Respondent: Yes. I mean, they were transcribed by two things. I mean, firstly the Archbishop's own theological position. But secondly, what Rowan inherited and struggled with, and never was able to deal with, which is the way that these issues impact upon the wider Anglican community, and the way that they have been used, I would have to say often by both sides, as a weapon.

Interviewer: And obviously now we have the Archbishop of York, who I think it is fair to say is less liberal than one might hope, but equally he seems to be rather more open, and liberal, and prepared actually to have a conversation with some substance to it. In terms of where they are now, and where things were as you saw them in 1998, and after the effect of your book in 2000, what do you think has changed, if anything?

Respondent: I am happy to talk about that, particularly from the context of USPG. Before I do that, I should just perhaps finish off the other section.

Interviewer: Yes, do.

Respondent: By saying that there was indeed criticism from the conservative side. I mean, not just about my book, but about those Bishops. Michael, Bishop of Wolverhampton, got it in the neck I think even more than I did. He moved the amendment to the Lambeth Conference about listening to the experience of gay and lesbian people, and got it through. There was also criticism from LGCM. I have had one or two problems with LGCM which perhaps we won't go into, but that certainly led me to think that I was going to put my support with Changing Attitude.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I'm not going to go into that, but I was, and I remain a patron of Changing Attitude. Where have we moved on, you ask, since then?

Interviewer: Yeah. So, you were Bishop of Swindon until 2006.

Respondent: 2004.

Interviewer: 2004, forgive me. And then you moved on?

Respondent: I moved to USBG, and I had another sabbatical, and produced that. Now, that is not about human sexuality. It is about the Anglican Communion and World Mission. But clearly those two things are very much bound up with sexuality issues.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: My experience more generally first about the Anglican Communion, is from the USBG perspective, and I have to say that because it means that the people you meet, and I have travelled a great deal, the people you meet tend to be in the more liberal catholic churches, and although I would go to all Africa Bishop's meetings in Nigeria and Uganda, generally speaking our partners were those, some of whom had a more liberal understanding of these issues, obviously South Africa, many of whom ... actually, I would say particularly in Asia, didn't think it was an issue they really needed to spend much time talking about. Others in Africa who, for cultural reasons more than anything else, felt that they were very unhappy. I mean, my quotation in the book is, "We don't like what the Americans have done". This is Gene Robinson, "We wish they hadn't done it, but in the end all of us have to get on with being in the church wherever God has called us, and we have got more important things to worry about". And it only ever emerged where it could be used as a political weapon. So, we had it for example in the province of Central Africa with a meeting on the shores of Lake Malawi, and I and the representative from the Episcopal Church in the States, were denounced as going around Africa stirring up homosexuals. The (inaudible 00:22:53) in Zimbabwe, it was used in the same way there, and at one point we lost the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, but then we got it back into the communion. More broadly in the communion, and insofar as this book touches on all of these issues, this is where I have tried to do some analysis, and my argument I think is that from North America both the conservatives and the liberals have used this issue as a way of trying to exert power not unrelated to their availability of money around the rest of the communion. And both have tried to impose their own agenda on the rest of the communion. And all of that has been very sad, and again this book in the States, I'm a fool to myself really, I mean this book in the States has been criticised from both sides.

Interviewer: Right. Probably means you are doing something right if everyone is unhappy with it (laughing).

Respondent: But my much stronger criticism, and the book is much clearer here than perhaps the previous one, my much stronger criticism is the way that the conservatives in the States, having lost the battle on their home ground, went out seeking allies in the rest of the world. And I put that down to the fact that the rest of the agenda was not available to them, because you are going to get nowhere in the United States if you are anti-women. You are going to get nowhere even now if you are anti-divorce. And the only issue available was the gay issue. So, that became the main focus. And it's interesting that the alternative, the Episcopal Church in the States, which Justin seems to be wanting to draw now into the communion, actually makes provision for the ordination of women, despite what the scripture says about it. It actually makes provision for marriage after divorce, despite what the scripture, and indeed tradition, say about it. And yet it will nevertheless shout about scripture and tradition with regard to sexuality issues.

Interviewer: And why do you think that is? Because certainly one of the things that struck me when we were doing Jeremy Pemberton's case at first instance, was there has been actually quite a quick change in church thinking, particularly about divorce, and you know we looked at the Canons, and we looked at where they were, and then we looked at the changes that had been made, and it has taken 40 or 50 years, but actually it has moved quite quickly. Why do you think it is that there appears to be this sticking point in respect particularly of same sex marriage and same sex unions?

Respondent: I suppose it's a global thing, and culturally. I am not going to fall into the trap which the American liberals so easily fall into, which is saying, "The rest of you will grow up and agree with us one day". I have to accept that there are fellow Anglicans in parts of Africa who, on the basis of how they read scripture and tradition, come to a different conclusion. Nevertheless, I have to say that another reason is the cultural one, but I mean you have to do the same analysis of written. I mean, you say, "Have we not moved?" I mean, the remarkable thing about British society as a whole is how far we have moved in a relatively short time.

Interviewer: Yes, so it may well be a question of the church catching up.

Respondent: Yes. I was in Portsmouth, I was at Portsmouth Cathedral on the night when it all changed, in the Navy Dockyard. At one minute to midnight, it was illegal, a disciplinary offence to be gay. At one minute past midnight it was a disciplinary offence to discriminate against gay people (laughing). So, I mean the world has changed, hasn't it?

Interviewer: Oh, absolutely. And certainly, where we are now in terms of same sex marriage, I am sure a lot of people wouldn't have thought that would ever happen 20 or 30 years ago. In fact, not even that long ago. And it may well be that it is just that the church need to make up ground. Do you think that will happen?

[0:28:33]

Respondent: I don't know. I'm starting to think that in fact people might go back. I don't know. I mean, I have come, it took me a long time, but I have come now to support equal marriage. I have always been in favour of addressing same sex partnerships, but the question of marriage, it is very interesting, I don't encourage them. I mean, they don't say it because I said it, but amongst the benches of the senior people here, I think that would be the commonly held position now, that they are very happy that there are legal civil partnerships, and I don't think they would have, well there was one here at the chapel, and you know I don't think most of them have any problem with that. The sticking point I think is whether marriage as such is a distinctive thing.

Interviewer: That was exactly what I was going to ask you. What is the difference between if you were in support of a same sex civil partnership, what would the difference be between partnerships and marriage? You say that you were always supportive of civil partnerships, and you are now supportive of equal marriage. What was the tipping point for you?

Respondent: The open to reproduction thing has never been an important issue. Again, it is to some of the benchers, but that has always struck me particularly around annulling weddings, to be a bit of a red herring. I suppose it is to do with the sacramental nature of it, and it's a bit difficult because for most heterosexual couples, marriage is not sacramental, it is simply a legal agreement that you can easily break and form another one. I mean, you might want to start arguing something different, not the lack of distinction between gay and straight, but the distinction between legal arrangement and sacramental relationships. I have never had a thought down this line before, so you see that might suggest to you that the civil partnerships for heterosexual people are a good thing, but

that is the distinction we should make, and that is not to say that all civil weddings would not be sacramental. I think that would be detrimental, as the church has always held that marriage is marriage, whoever does it, and whether it is blessed in church or not. So, I wouldn't want to go down that route, but you might want to start arguing that whatever the sexuality of the people involved, there are now two kinds of relationship institutions. There's a thought.

Interviewer: Yeah. And in terms of your work with USP, you started that in 2004.

Respondent: And retired in 2011.

Interviewer: Okay, and were you in Africa for the entire time?

Respondent: Yeah. I mean, I ran the organisation here.

Interviewer: I see.

Respondent: Although mission agencies are having a tough time, so I spent a lot of time restructuring and downsizing. I was out of the country less perhaps than my predecessors had been. I suppose I was traveling for a quarter of the year, normally going to somewhere for (inaudible 99:32:52).

Interviewer: And it says on the back of this book, Saving Power, that you were the Honorary Assistant Bishop with the Diocese of Southwark.

Respondent: I still am.

Interviewer: I was going to say, is that a position that continues?

Respondent: We are Archdeacons and Bishops together. We are an honorary bunch, Richard Harries, Peter Selby etc etc, David Atkinson. So, it's fortunate for Bishop Christopher we don't actually get together very often. We tend to get in trouble sometimes. I mean, basically what marks us all out is that we have all retired in London. Like, I get paid for coming here, but generally speaking we are still doing all kinds of stuff.

[0:33:51]

Interviewer: Well, I'd like to say when you say that you're retired, that you are now at Gray's as the Preacher here.

Respondent: I'm at Gray's, I'm the Assistant Bishop at Southwark. I also confer in London and Manchester, and I chair the I do that probably two days a week. But I'm young and fit, so...

Interviewer: Yeah, quite right. How long have you been at Gray's for?

Respondent: I came straight from ... in fact, I overlapped by a few months. I mean, this job came ... do you know Roger Eastman?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Roger Eastman was a Trustee of the USPG.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: So, I was retiring, and he alerted me to this. I just noticed next week I am here every day, but I do quite a lot of (inaudible 00:34:44).

Interviewer: Well, you should, excellent.

Respondent: And I'm just putting together a celebration of Shakespeare work and music.

Interviewer: Lovely.

Respondent: (Inaudible 00:35:01 - 00:35:12) and that gave him the chance to play Romeo at the age of 42.

Interviewer: Beside himself, I expect

Respondent: All this kind of thing, and I do student stuff.

Interviewer: So, in terms of what we were discussing earlier, the sort of \$64,000 question is where do you feel this may or may not go as an issue in terms of the church and where the church is going to move, if the church is going to move, with our current Archbishops or with their successors?

Respondent: Two questions there. One is about the Church of England and the other is about the Anglican Communion. I am obviously, obviously because of my last job, very committed to the latter. The Church of England, it is very difficult to know where the Church of England is going. I mean, you commented earlier about one or two of the leadership. The fact is that with the exception of the Bishop of London, and this may change when he retires very soon, because most of the money the Dioceses (inaudible 00:26:30) type complications. At the moment, with the exception of Richard, all the Bishops in senior positions, and a growing number of people in the Dioceses generally, are Evangelicals. I wouldn't put either the word conservative or liberal in front of it. I think the only adjective would be church growth, so church growth Evangelicals. I don't sense any great antipathy, certainly towards gay and lesbian people, and even against any progress on their better incorporation and recognition within the life of the church. There is of course, if these people are committed to church growth, there is a strong evangelistic argument in favour of inclusivity and not alienating people. It was very clear that our failure, when we thought we were going to get women Bishops, and then our failure was very bad for us.

Interviewer: It was.

Respondent: In terms of reputation.

[0:38:00]

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Respondent: And that's bad Evangelism. So, I would not be pessimistic on a solely Church of England front to us making some progress. Maybe we learnt some things after the interminable debates about the ordination of women. Maybe we learnt some things about how you make progress without alienating people, even if you have to do some quite un-Anglican, un-catholic things, like creating Bishops for special constituencies. As things become normal in society as a whole, it is more likely that the church is going to move in the same direction. That's not necessarily always a good thing. I mean, the way that we pander to consumerism. I happen to think that economic issues are more important than any other issues, including sexuality issues. That's why I spend two days a week in that area of work. I recognise that inclusivity is part of the Justice Agenda, but I think that we are very bad, and far worse when we try to deal with inclusivity and justice for the poor, globally as well as domestically. I mean, we have raised our voice a bit against Cameron Osborne, but nowhere near enough.

Interviewer: Not enough.

Respondent: So, how did I get on to that rant?

Interviewer: I was asking you effectively where we would like to be and the way forward?

Respondent: Oh yes. So, I was saying that from the point of view and in the context of the Church of England. I mean, globally the Anglican Communion is far less clear. I mean, I am a great fan of Rowan Williams, but he didn't hack it, partly because he let people run rings around him. He was just too nice and too holy, whereas Justin has got the Chairman of the Board, the Chief Executive approach.

Interviewer: What approach do you think John Sentamu has?

Respondent: John is a very difficult person to understand sometimes, and to work with. He has always been very, very nice to me personally. I'm going up in a couple of months time to have lunch. He just has a different style.

Interviewer: And do you think that is cultural because of his own experiences?

Respondent: It is cultural and temperamental, yes. So, also he must be coming up to retirement.

Interviewer: Yes. He's been here quite a long time, hasn't he? When he cut his dog collar into pieces, that was years and years ago, wasn't it?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: I think that was a lot earlier on in his tenure, so I would think his time is coming to an end. How credible do you think it is in terms of the church in this country that a Priest who has licenses in two different Diocese can be rebuked by one and have their license stripped by another? In terms of the church's position on equal marriage?

Respondent: Well, it doesn't look too good. It may just be that the Bishops concerned lack the support, personal support in the Diocese, the collegial support of the House, and also just the experience to deal with these things. I mean, you can rightly criticise some Bishops for saying one thing and doing another, but sometimes you keep leadership effective, and you keep processes moving forward not by making great statements, but simply by letting things happen in a way that you believe will be in the long term fruitful. So, Nick Holtam in Salisbury has not said anything publicly that is going to cause people to denounce him, but he is happy to let things happen, which is what David did before him, and just to let things move forward. So, there shouldn't have been a great storm about Jeremy. It was all happening smoothly. Now, you may say that that is not the way to make a proper witness and to stand up for things that are clearly right. You may well say that. It may be that in the longer processes of time, and within the strange thing called the Church of England, there are ways of doing things which do get us at least traveling in the right direction, if not where we want to be as fast as we might hope. I mean, I think in both cases you are involved in, but also Jeremy's case vis-à-vis Winchester and Salisbury, that some Bishops have not really had the experience or the sensitivity to see how these things can be done. Are you going to tell me that is a typical prevarication?

[0:45:03]

Interviewer: Not at all. I wouldn't dream of it (laughing). Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would have like to have discussed, particularly in respect of the book, which we

have gone over, but I just want to make sure that you feel you have said everything about that that you wanted to?

Respondent: No. I think all the things I jotted down this morning, we have touched on.

Interviewer: Do you feel fairly positive in terms of the church in the future being able to listen to and embrace everyone regardless of their sexuality, or not?

Respondent: Well, I mean the good news is the progress that we have made, and the fact that Justin, with whom the ball does stop often, is I think genuinely trying to find a way forward. That's the good news. I mean, my fear I suppose, I don't want to go into an analysis of the Church of England, I have already gone into all sorts of areas which you didn't need to hear about. I mean, my problem with the Church of England I think is that if we are not careful, we become so engrossed with the Church Growth Agenda that we lose sight of other things, and in particular other things outside the life of the church. I mean, it is bad enough simply to measure ... I review for the Church Times in this theology, and I've just done a book which is about global growth of the church and where it has grown and where it hasn't grown in the last century, with not one word of evaluation as to what is the nature of this growth.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: What is the value? What is the depth? And Bishops I know from my last job, will say to you quietly, "Stop drawing attention to the fact that our church is growing in leaps and bounds, because we have breadth the fatal death". Sorry, so I mean that is bad enough, but it gets even worse if we so focus the agenda on enlarging congregations without an awareness of the need for the church to be much more prophetic about economic issues and the fact that we have a role vis-à-vis the nation, bizarrely because of the Establishment, which you can criticise historically in the same way you can criticise the Anglican Communion colonially. But nevertheless, we have what we have, so there is responsibility to be held. We have a duty I think to the nation, whether or not they come to church, and not simply that they might come to church. So, that would be my sort of analysis of the wider context. Where in that does the human sexuality issue come? Well, we talked about Evangelism, and that being more inclusive has got to be helpful to promoting Christian Gospel in all its aspects. Whether those who are now shaping the agenda of the Church of England, primarily focused on numerical growth, will feel that the human sexuality issue is a secondary issue. I can't think that they would feel that it is an obstructive issue, so that in itself might be a little encouraging as we move forward.

Interviewer: Touch wood. That's great, thank you very much for that.

[End of transcript]