

THE WINDSOR REPORT:

A REPORT FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS

1. Following the publication of the Windsor Report¹ on 18 October 2004, the House asked the Chairs of its Theological Group and the Faith and Order Advisory Group, the Bishops of Rochester and Chichester (assisted by the Vice-Chair of FOAG, the Bishop of Guildford and the House's theological consultant, Dr Martin Davie), to prepare a paper to help guide its own deliberations at its January 2005 meeting, with a view to this document forming the basis of the Church of England's response prior to the Primates' Meeting in Belfast on 20 –26 February. This document, which was also informed by discussion at a meeting of bishops at Lambeth on 1 December, is attached. The House was mindful that the issues which the *Windsor Report* seeks to address have significant implications for Anglican ecumenical dialogue and inter-faith relationships.
2. In considering the Report, the House was very conscious of the critical and urgent issues addressed by the *Windsor Report* for the cohesion of the Anglican Communion, and the need to support the Archbishop of Canterbury in his dual role both in terms of the leadership of the Anglican Communion and as the representative of the Church of England at the forthcoming Primates' Meeting. This meeting is potentially of great significance for the future unity of the Anglican Communion and its ecumenical

¹ *The Lambeth Commission on Communion: The Windsor Report 2004*, ACO £4.95

relationships, and with this in mind the House decided to focus on questions of particular immediacy for this meeting (rather than, for instance, consider points of detail about the illustrative Covenant set out in Appendix 2 of the Report).

3. With the foregoing in mind, the House therefore:
 - a Affirms the basis of faith and life that binds Anglicans together as set out in paragraphs 1-11 of the Windsor Report and illustrated by the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and accepts the basic principle of autonomy-in-communion exercised within the constraints of truth and charity set out in the Report².
 - b Supports the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates in taking all steps necessary to seek to achieve reconciliation by persuading all within the Anglican Communion to comply with the mind of the Communion as expressed by the Instruments of Unity,³ in the light of the recommendations of the Windsor Report.
 - c Supports the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates in requesting ECUSA and other parts of the Communion that have taken similar decisions to provide for the rest of the Communion the thought-out theological rationale, based on Scripture and Tradition, for the actions that have been taken that has been requested in the past but which so far has not been forthcoming.

² See paras 72-86.

³ For these Instruments of Unity see paras 97-104

4. The House also recognises that there are structural issues that will need to be resolved with some urgency in relation to how the Anglican Communion expresses its mind. The House supports the drawing up of an Anglican Covenant and commends an enhanced and properly resourced role for the Archbishop of Canterbury in fostering the unity and mission of the Anglican Communion.

5. Finally, the House upholds the Primates in its prayers as they prepare for their meeting in Belfast later this month.

(on behalf of the House of Bishops)

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February 2005

The House of Bishops Theological Group
Faith and Order Advisory Group

A Response to the Windsor Report

1 The teaching of the Windsor Report

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Lambeth Commission on Communion was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the request of the meeting of the Anglican Primates in October 2003. Its mandate was to ‘examine and report’ on the:

‘...the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to appoint a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and of the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise services for use in connection with same sex unions, and specifically on the canonical understandings of communion, impaired and broken communion, and the ways in which provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion.’

1.1.2 At the heart of the Commission’s discussion of these matters in the *Windsor Report* is what it says about the relationship between autonomy and interdependence. The

report argues that although the concept of the autonomy of the individual provinces of the Communion is ‘fundamental to Anglican polity’ (paragraph 72 – the paragraph numbers of the report will subsequently be referred to by their numbers in brackets) nevertheless the nature of autonomy has been ‘much misunderstood’ (72).

1..2 Autonomy and Interdependence

1.2.1 Autonomy, it maintains, should not be confused with an isolated individualism. Instead, it says:

‘The key idea is autonomy-in-communion, that is, freedom held within interdependence. The autonomy of each Anglican province therefore implies that the church lives in relation to, and exercises its autonomy most fully in the context of, the global Communion.(76)’

1.2.2 The report goes on to explain that:

‘...’autonomy’ thus denotes not unlimited freedom but what we might call freedom-in-relation, so it is subject to limits generated by the commitments of communion. Consequently, the very nature of autonomy itself obliges each church to have regard to the common good of the global Anglican community and the Church universal. (80)’

1.2.3 Because the autonomy of each church allows it the freedom to regulate its own affairs it allows for a proper diversity in the life of the Christian Church as a whole :

‘Autonomy gives full scope for the development of authentic local living out of the Christian faith and mission, in what has come to be known as *inculturation*. This is an essential part of the Christian mission: each church must find fresh ways to proclaim the Gospel of Christ into the context of the world in which it is living. The eternal truth of the gospel relates in different ways to the particulars of any one society, as we see already within the life of the earliest church as described in Acts. This combination of faithfulness to the gospel and inculturation into different societies will inevitably produce a proper and welcome diversity within the life of the Church. (85)’

1.2.4 However, the report says, there are limits to this diversity:

‘In the life of the Christian churches, these limits are defined by truth and charity. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 put it this way:

“The Churches represented in [the Communion] are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraints of truth and love. They are not free to deny the truth. They are not free to ignore the fellowship.”

This means that any development needs to be explored for its resonance with the truth, and with the utmost charity on the part of all - charity that grants that a new thing can be offered humbly and with integrity, and

charity that might refrain from an action which might harm a sister or brother. (86)’⁴

1.3 Adiaphora, Subsidiarity and Reception

1.3.1 What the *Windsor Report* says about autonomy-in-communion also relates to what it says about the three further issues of adiaphora, subsidiarity and reception.

1.3.2 The report defines ‘adiaphora’ as those matters which are ‘indifferent’ in the sense that they are matters: ‘...upon which disagreement can be tolerated without endangering unity’ (36) and ‘subsidiarity’ as: ‘...the principle that matters should be decided as close to the local level as possible’ (38). It also states that: ‘Subsidiarity and adiaphora belong together: the more something is regarded as ‘indifferent’ the more locally the decision can be made.’ (38)

1.3.3 It is at this point that the issue of autonomy-in-communion comes into play. This is because, as paragraph 93 of the *Windsor Report* explains, when the claim is made that a particular matter in theology or ethics is indifferent two questions have to be asked:

‘First, is this in fact the kind of matter which can count as ‘inessential’ or does it touch on something vital? Secondly, if it is indeed ‘adiaphora’, is it something that, nevertheless, a sufficient number of other Christians will find scandalous and offensive, either in

⁴ A clear example of the way in which diversity has been limited within Anglicanism is the way in which the Lambeth Quadrilateral has been seen as setting out the fundamentals of Anglican ecclesiology in providing boundaries for the development of ecumenical relationships between Anglican churches and churches of other traditions.

the sense that they will be led into acting against their own consciences or that they will be forced, for conscience's sake, to break fellowship with those who go ahead? If the answer to the second question is 'yes', the biblical guidelines insist that those who have no scruples about the proposed action should nevertheless refrain from going ahead. (93)

1.3.4 Both these questions relate to autonomy-in-communion. The question of whether something is essential or inessential is one that needs the widest possible discussion and agreement so that there can be a corporate discernment of the will of God and a corporate obedience to it. The question of whether something will cause scandal to other Christians is rooted in the idea of autonomy-in-communion because it is based on the principle that our freedom of action is limited by the need to take account of the effects of our actions on the other members of the body of Christ.

1.3.5 The report explains that in recent Anglican theology the term 'reception' has come to be used to refer to the process by which a controversial development can be tested out while the unity of the Church is maintained. It also explains, however, that:

'...the doctrine of reception only makes sense if the proposal concerns matters on which the Church has not so far made up its mind. It cannot be applied in the case of actions which are explicitly against the current teaching of the Anglican Communion as a whole, and/or of individual provinces.(69)'

1.3.6 Here again the idea of autonomy-in-communion underlies the argument. The use of the doctrine of reception to defy the

declared mind of the Church is an attempt to exercise freedom of action without reference to the wider Church and is therefore unacceptable.

1.4 Analysis and Recommendations

1.4.1 The specific recommendations of the *Windsor Report* can all be seen to flow out of this basic idea of autonomy-in-communion, or freedom limited by interdependence, and its application to the areas of subsidiarity, adiaphora and reception.

1.4.2 The overall account of recent events in the Anglican Communion given by the *Windsor Report* is that those in ECUSA and New Westminster, and, to a lesser extent, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, have unilaterally decided that matters do with same sex relationships are matters that can be decided at the provincial or local level. They have done so without agreement by the Communion as a whole, and having acted on certain convictions they have put them forward for reception in spite of these being against the declared mind of the Anglican Communion. On the other hand, those who have intervened in other provinces in response to the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster have unilaterally decided to act in this way in spite of the fact that this too was something that the Communion said should not happen. By so doing they have also damaged communion and contributed to the growing divisions within the Communion.⁵

1.4.3 The way forward that the *Windsor Report* offers also reflects its basic argument that there should be autonomy-in-communion.

⁵ See paragraphs 31-39, 69 29(3) and 122-123.

Immediate Recommendations

1.4.4 In response to the current situation in the Anglican Communion the report argues that:

- Those in Canada and the United States who have acted in contravention of the accepted teaching of the Communion on human sexuality should express regret for this ‘breach of the bonds of affection’ (134 & 144) – the bonds of affection being the bonds of truth and charity that should have led them not to act without proper regard to the rest of the Communion. They should also observe a moratorium on performing any such actions in future. (134 & 144)
- In order allow space for the healing of the Communion, and pending such an expression of regret, the bishops involved in the consecration of Gene Robinson and in the authorisation of same-sex blessings should seriously ‘consider in all conscience’ whether they should withdraw themselves from ‘representative functions in the Communion.’ (134 & 144)
- Because of the ‘widespread unacceptability of his ministry’ in other provinces of the Communion the position of Bishop Robinson should be kept under review and ‘very considerable caution’ should be exercised in ‘admitting him to the councils of the Communion’ (133)
- Those archbishops and bishops from elsewhere who have violated the principle of provincial autonomy by intervening in dioceses and provinces other than their own should express regret for the ‘consequences of their actions’ – the consequences being the further

deepening of the divisions in the Communion. They should affirm their desire to remain part of the Anglican Communion, observe a moratorium on such interventions in future and seek to reach an accommodation with the bishops of the parishes they have taken under their care. (155)

- All parties to the current dispute should seek to be reconciled with each other and consideration should be given to a symbolic Act of Reconciliation that would mark a new beginning for the Communion. (156)

Longer-term recommendations

1.4.5 Looking to the future, the report argues that in order to enhance the interdependence of the Anglican Communion the roles of the ‘Instruments of unity’ within the Communion (The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates’ Meeting) need to be clarified and strengthened with a Council of Advice being instituted to help the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise his role. (97-112 and Appendix One)

1.4.6 It also recommends that the churches of the Communion should consider adopting a:

‘...common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion. The Covenant could deal with: the acknowledgement of common identity; the relationships of communion; the commitments of communion; the exercise of autonomy in communion; and the management of communion affairs (including disputes).’

The intended purpose of the covenant is once again to support the development of autonomy-in-communion amongst the churches of the Anglican Communion.

1.5 Conclusion

1.5.1 It is clear from this brief overview of the argument of the *Windsor Report* that the report is not concerned with discussing the issue of homosexuality in itself. What it is concerned with is how the autonomy-in-communion of the churches of the Anglican Communion can be maintained in the face of this current crisis and strengthened in the future.

2. How should the Church of England respond to the Windsor Report?

2.1 The issues that need to be considered

2.1.1 This means that there are two issues which the Church of England needs to consider as it thinks about how to respond to the *Windsor Report*. The first is whether it accepts the basic principle of autonomy-in-communion which underlies the report. The second is whether it thinks the recommendations of the report represent a reasonable application of this principle.

2.2 The Church of England and autonomy

2.2.1 To begin with the first issue, it is clear that the Church of England accepts the principle of autonomy in so far as it means that a particular church, such as the Church of England, has the right to order and regulate its own local affairs through its own system of government and law. The whole of the Church of England's system of Synodical government and Canon law

rests upon this principle. Without it these would not make any sense.⁶

2.2.2 It is also clear that the Church of England believes in the principle that this autonomy has to be combined with the acceptance of interdependence between churches. This is shown in a number of recent ecumenical agreements entered into by the Church of England in which the characteristics of the visible unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ are described.

2.2.3 For example, the *Reuilly* agreement with the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches declares that the unity of the Church is a theological and missiological imperative:

‘In order to be truly itself and to fulfil its mission the Church must be seen to be one. The missionary imperative entails the overcoming of the divisions which have kept our churches apart. As our churches grow in faith into the fullness of Christ, so they will grow together in unity (Ephesians 1).’⁷

2.2.4 It then goes on to state that the ‘full visible unity’ of the Church must include:

- ‘A common proclamation and hearing of the gospel, a common confession of the apostolic faith in word and action....’⁸
- ‘The sharing of one baptism, the celebrating of one eucharist and the service of a common ministry

⁶ See Article XXXIV and the Preface to the *Book of Common Prayer*.

⁷ *Called to Witness and Service* London: CHP 1999 p.21

⁸ It is important to note that this means that there has to be agreement in both faith *and* morals. How Christians act is as important as the faith they profess and therefore there needs to be agreement on both.

(including the exercise of ministry of oversight, *episkope*)...’

- ‘Bonds of communion which enable the Church at every level to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to take decisions, to teach authoritatively, to share goods and to bear effective witness in the world...’⁹

2.2.5 If the Church of England takes these points seriously it follows that it must believe that the exercise of provincial autonomy has to be exercised consistently with the demands of communion. The existence of a visibly united Church marked by a common proclamation and hearing of the gospel, shared sacraments, a common ministry and effective bonds of communion will remain forever impossible if individual churches are unwilling to limit the exercise of their own freedom for the good of the Church as a whole.

2.2.6 This is not simply a matter of following through the logic of the Church of England’s existing commitments. More fundamentally, it is about the Church of England’s commitment to the basic ecclesiological teaching of St. Paul that all baptised Christians form one body in Christ (1 Cor 12: 12-13, Eph 4:1-16) and that for the body of Christ as whole to flourish each member of the body has to have regard for every other member and to behave accordingly (1 Cor 12:14-26).

2.2.7 Furthermore the Church of England cannot consistently hold that less is required of the Anglican Communion than is required of the Church in general. As a result it will wish to support the view of the *Windsor Report* that individual

⁹ *Called to Witness and Service* pp.21-22. Similar or identical points are also made in the *Meissen*, *Fetter Lane* and *Porvoo* ecumenical agreements. Compare also the ARCIC statement the *Church as Communion*.

provinces within the Communion should abide by decisions duly arrived at by the representatives of the Communion as a whole

2.2.8 The Church of England therefore endorses the principle of autonomy-in-communion which the *Windsor Report* advocates. It underpins its whole ecumenical approach and reflects the teaching of Scripture and tradition about the fundamental importance of the visible unity of the Church upon which this approach has been based. It is integral to the claim of the Church of England to be a church rooted in Scripture and Catholic tradition (see Canon A5)

2.3 The Church of England and the Recommendations

2.3.1 Moving on to the issue of whether the recommendations of the Windsor Report represent a proper application of this principle, it is clearly the case that the actions of ECUSA and the diocese of New Westminster did constitute a repudiation of decisions taken by the representatives of the Communion as a whole. Their actions in regard to blessing same sex-relationships and consecrating a bishop in a same sex relationship were contrary to the declared and re-iterated mind of the Communion as expressed in Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference.¹⁰ In the words of the *Windsor Report* they were: ‘...in breach of the legitimate application of the Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it.’ (143)

¹⁰ As the Archbishop of Canterbury puts it in a letter to the Primates of the Anglican Communion on July 23 2002: ‘...the Lambeth resolution of 1998 declares clearly what is the mind of the overwhelming majority in the Communion, and what the Communion will and will not approve and authorise.’

2.3.2 It is also clear that these were decisions reached in the knowledge that they would have extremely serious consequences for the Communion as a whole. It is significant that Bishop Frank Griswold, the presiding bishop of ECUSA was himself a signatory of the Primates' statement of October 2003. This declared that the consecration of Gene Robinson would: '...tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level' and yet he went on to preside at that consecration the following month.

2.3.3 If these actions of ECUSA and New Westminster were to be regarded as acceptable it would render the principle of autonomy-in-communion meaningless, and this would mean that in principle any church, or indeed any group within a church, was free to take whatever action it saw fit without reference to anyone else.

2.3.4 As we shall explain below, the *Windsor Report* makes a distinction between the actions of those archbishops and bishops who responded to requests for assistance by intervening across provincial and diocesan boundaries and the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster. Nevertheless, it is clear that those who intervened in this way knew that this was something that successive Lambeth Conferences and the Primates meeting in October 2003 said should not happen. Therefore they also violated the principle of autonomy-in-communion. As a result in order to be even handed the *Windsor Report* also had to criticise such unilateral actions as well.

2.3.5 The question is where do we go from here, with a view to the Communion moving forward together? The response offered by the *Windsor Report* is helpful in four ways.

2.3.6 First, it emphasises the importance of reconciliation. As Eph 2:11-22 indicates, the reconciliation with God achieved by Christ on the cross is also the foundation of a new form of human society in which the old divisions of humanity are overcome. The reconciliation of Christians with one another is thus the outward and visible sign of their reconciliation with God and, as such, the test of its reality (1 Jn 2:9-10). It follows that the *Windsor Report* is correct to insist that the life of the Anglican Communion must be marked by the reconciliation of those who have been at enmity because of the present crisis.

2.3.7 Secondly, the process of reconciliation has to be set in the context of repentance and forgiveness (134). Traditionally, there have been seen to be three parts to repentance, *contrition* (sorrow for what has been done wrong in the past), *confession* (admitting that one has done wrong) and *amendment of life* (ceasing from wrong behaviour and doing better in the future). *The Windsor Report* asks those on both sides to repent in this fashion by expressing regret for what they may have done wrong (contrition and confession), ceasing to act in those ways and seeking to make things better in the future (amendment of life).

2.3.8 As the Archbishop of Canterbury reminds us in his Advent letter to the Primates and Moderators of the Anglican Communion this call to repentance is vital. Apology is not enough.

‘Because there has been much talk of apology in the light of the Report, it has been all too easy to miss the centrality of God’s call to repentance. Apology is the currency of the world. People in law courts argue about their rights in order to try to extract a satisfactory apology, an adequate statement of apology. An apology

may amount only to someone saying, ‘I’m sorry you feel like that’; and that doesn’t go deep enough.

To repent before one another is to see that we have failed in our witness as God’s new community, failed to live in the full interdependence of love – and so to see that we have compromised the way in which God can make himself seen and heard among us. When St. Paul writes about conflict in the Church, he is concerned above all that we act in such a way that we can be seen to live as Christ’s body together, so that the world may see Jesus.¹¹

2.3.9 Thirdly, the report makes a careful differentiation between the regret required of ECUSA and New Westminster and the form required of Archbishops and Bishops from elsewhere. This is in line with the fact that the latter, however irregularly, were responding to action previously taken by ECUSA and New Westminster by seeking to give pastoral care to those in ECUSA and New Westminster who were seeking to remain loyal to the teaching of the Communion as a whole.

2.3.10 A major complaint by those on the conservative side in the Communion has been that the Windsor Report sees a ‘moral equivalence’ between the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster and those who went to the aid of beleaguered parishes and dioceses in response to their actions. However, as Oliver O’Donovan notes:

¹¹ Advent pastoral letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, 29 November 2004 at

www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/39/00/acns3917.cfm

‘The reader who can glance more or less simultaneously at §§ 134 and 155:

“the Episcopal Church (USA) be invited to express its regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached....”

“We call upon those bishops who believe it is their conscientious duty to intervene in provinces, dioceses and parishes other than their own to express regret for the consequences of their actions.”

will not be impressed by the claim that the Commission treats the actions of the Episcopal Church and those of the intervening bishops as morally equivalent. They are not described in equivalent terms with respect to their subjective motives (breach of affection is not the same as conscientious duty) and therefore they are not presented as equivalently regrettable (what *was done* is to be regretted in the one case, what *ensued* is to be regretted in the other).¹²

What this means is that in the case of the intervening bishops the element of confession in their repentance would have to be a confession that the consequence of acting in the way that they did inevitably was a deepening of the divisions within the Communion that had already been opened up by the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster.

2.3.11 Fourthly, it provides a realistic way forward for the Communion in the medium to long term. The instruments of communion are an accepted part of the life of the Communion

¹² O M T O’Donovan *The Only Poker Game in Town* at www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/docs/2004/10/200410250donovan.pdf

and so the proposal to strengthen them so that they work more effectively should be welcomed

2.3.12 It has been suggested by some commentators that the strengthening of the instruments of communion will lead to an over centralised Communion in which there will be no room for diversity. There is no reason why this should be the case. The policy of the Communion will continue to be determined by the representatives of the provinces as it is now and individual provinces will continue to have the freedom to determine their own affairs subject to the agreement of the Communion in regard to matters that touch on the common life of the Communion as a whole.

2.3.13 What is being proposed is that the responsibilities that the various instruments have for taking decisions on behalf of the provinces should be clarified. In particular that it should be made clear that the Archbishop of Canterbury, working with a Council of Advice, has the authority to articulate the mind of the Communion in matters of controversy, and has discretion over who is invited to the Lambeth Conference and the Primates Meeting.

2.3.14 The Archbishop of Canterbury would not have untrammelled jurisdiction. Bishops and Archbishops would retain their current authority within their own dioceses and provinces. What would be new is that there would be an explicit acceptance that when the Archbishop, articulating and reflecting the expressed views of the instruments of unity, speaks on behalf of the Communion what he says would need to be heeded as expressing the mind of the Communion.

2.3.16 It should be noted however, that what he might say on behalf of the Communion would be open to scrutiny on the

basis of its consonance or otherwise with Scripture. Scripture, interpreted in the light of tradition and reason, would remain the ultimate Anglican authority and only teaching that was in line with Scripture could rightly be received as authentic Anglican teaching.

2.3.17 The suggestion that there should be an Anglican Covenant also seems to be a helpful one, though further work would clearly be needed, as the *Windsor Report* recognises, to produce a draft which might command general support. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has written in his Advent letter:

‘The Windsor document sets out a possible future in which we willingly bind ourselves closer together by some form of covenant. I hope we will see virtue in this. No-one can or will impose this, but it may be a creative way of expressing a unity that is neither theoretical nor tyrannical. We have experience of making covenants with our ecumenical partners; why should there not be appropriate commitments which we can freely and honestly make with one another?’¹³

2.3.18 It would therefore seem that there is a *prima facie* case for the Church of England welcoming the recommendations of the Windsor Report as the way forward for the Communion.

3. Responding to criticisms of the Report

3.1.1 A number of criticisms have been raised about the Windsor Report and its recommendations and these need to be considered carefully before the Church of England decides how to respond to the report’s recommendations.

¹³ Advent pastoral letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury

3.2 Deeper problems in North America?

3.2.1 The first criticism, which has been raised by many conservative commentators on the report, is that it does not get to the heart of the issues facing the Communion because it fails to address what they see as the fundamental problem, namely, the long term drift away from Catholic orthodoxy in large parts of ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada. As they would see it, the rejection of accepted Anglican teaching on human sexuality and the assertion of provincial and diocesan autonomy that this involves are only the symptoms of this more basic problem.

3.2.2 The response to this objection is that even if it is accepted that the Lambeth Commission did not go far enough in this respect this does not negate what it has to say about autonomy-in-communion or how the Anglican Communion should go forward from here. The fact that the Windsor Report does not say everything that it might have said does not mean that what it does say is mistaken or that its vision for life in communion is unacceptable.

3.3 Too Precipitate?

3.3.1 The second criticism from another quarter is that the approach to the present crisis taken by the report is a too precipitate one. What is required, it is argued, is long term patient dialogue with ECUSA and New Westminster in order to discover what has motivated them to take the action they have and to try to develop a new future for the Communion that will encompass those of radically varying views within it.

3.3.2 The difficulty with this analysis is that the longer the present crisis remains unresolved the deeper and more

entrenched are becoming the divisions in ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada and between these provinces, or parts of them and other parts of the Communion. There is a very real danger of ECUSA, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Communion as a whole beginning to ‘walk apart’ and if this happens the chance for the kind of patient dialogue that proponents of this objection want to see happening will be lost for the foreseeable future.

3.3.3 The crisis within the Communion requires a speedy resolution and the question that therefore needs to be asked is whether the proposals in the *Windsor Report* provide a feasible and theologically acceptable basis for such a resolution.

3.4 Deeper problems within the Communion?

3.4.1 The third criticism is that the report fails to address the deep-seated cultural, historical and political roots of the present problems within the Communion.

3.4.2 In response to this objection it has to be accepted that these long term causes of division within the Communion do exist and that they do need to be addressed. The pain caused by past hurts, misunderstandings and misrepresentations needs to be acknowledged if the Church is to move forward to that better future to which it is summoned by God. As *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* puts it: ‘The healing of memories is a necessary part of the healing of the wounds of division of the body of Christ.’¹⁴

3.4.3 However, the current crisis in the Communion also needs to be addressed and this means addressing the specific issues

¹⁴ *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* Peterborough & London: Methodist Publishing House/CHP 2001 p.14.

raised by the actions of ECUA and New Westminster and the responses to them. Unless and until these issues are resolved there will not be the kind of confidence and trust within the Communion as a whole that is the necessary pre-condition for the 'healing of memories' to begin to take place. Just as the South Africans had to make the transition to majority rule before establishing their Truth and Reconciliation Commission so the Anglican Communion needs to find a solution to its current problems before it can enter into a 'truth and reconciliation' process of its own. Therefore, once again, the question is whether what the *Windsor Report* proposes is an acceptable proposal for resolving these current problems.

3.5 Lack of Eucharistic Theology

3.5.1 The fourth criticism is that the report makes insufficient reference to the importance of Eucharistic theology in its discussion of communion. Some claim that an ecclesiology rooted in the Eucharist would be more focussed on emphasising the welcoming love of God which invites all to partake at His table and less focussed on drawing up lines of demarcation which exclude people.

3.5.2 While accepting that there is a lack of explicit Eucharistic theology in the *Windsor Report* it is difficult to see how it would have affected the main thrust of the report's conclusions had such theology been included. This is because the Eucharist itself is a pointer to the unity of the body of Christ: 'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread' (1 Cor 10:17). This means that it raises the issue of how we relate to the other members of the body and thus the issue of autonomy-in-communion which is central to the *Windsor Report*.

3.5.3 Furthermore, in both the Christian tradition as a whole and in the Anglican tradition in particular, participation in the Eucharist has generally been seen as a sign of committed and faithful Christian discipleship. Consideration of the Eucharist thus itself raises issues of the requirements of Christian discipline and when it is appropriate to impose discipline that are at the heart of the matters considered by the *Windsor Report*.

3.6 *Selectivity of Critique*

3.6.1 The fifth criticism is that while the report criticises ECUSA and New Westminster it says nothing about the shortcomings of other parts of the Communion with regard to issues such as episcopal authoritarianism, and the toleration of oppressive and exploitative relationships between men and women.¹⁵ There can be no doubt that such problems do exist, but three further points need to be made.

- The Lambeth Commission was asked to address the immediate crisis in the Anglican Communion rather than to look generally at the shortcoming of all the various Anglican provinces.
- The problems that exist within other parts of the Communion do not mean that we can ignore the actions of ECUSA and New Westminster and the problems that these have raised.
- Most importantly, if the various problems that exist in all the provinces of the Communion are to be properly

¹⁵ The latter issues are raised by Lambeth 1.10 itself in what it says about the need to reject: 'violence within marriage and the trivialisation and commercialisation of sex.'

addressed in a fraternal dialogue with Christians from other parts of the Communion there needs to be an atmosphere of trust and confidence between the churches involved. Unless and until the present problems of the Communion are addressed it will be difficult if not impossible to develop this trust and confidence. Furthermore, if nothing is done and the churches of the Communion begin to ‘walk apart’ the prospects for this kind of dialogue will become even more remote.

3.7 Who pays the price?

3.7.1 The sixth criticism is that if the Windsor Report’s recommendations are accepted those who pay the price for reconciliation within the communion will be its gay and lesbian members and their supporters. Thus the press release on the *Windsor Report* by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement declares:

‘There is great pain for us in the idea that a moratorium should be called in the consecration of lesbian and gay people in same sex partnerships.

We struggle with the idea that those bishops who consecrated Gene Robinson as a bishop, and who are happy to allow the authorised blessings of same sex couples should be asked to consider withdrawing from the Councils of the Church.

We are particularly pained by the isolation suggested for Bishop Robinson from his episcopal brothers and

sisters throughout the world. This is an isolation many homosexuals feel all their lives.¹⁶,

3.7.2 These feelings of pain need to be taken seriously, but as in the case of the previous criticism a number of further points have to be noted.

- Any commonly agreed standard of faith or morals is bound to be difficult and even painful for those who disagree with it, and wish to argue for it to be amended. However, a necessary part of Christian discipleship is learning to accept the constraints of living within a community that makes decisions that we may not agree with. We should not minimize the struggles that this may involve, but it is a necessary part of the baptismal vocation which involves dying to self and rising to a new life lived within the body of Christ (Rom 6:1-14, 1 Cor 12:12-26, Eph 4:1-16).¹⁷
- As was noted in *Some Issues in Human Sexuality*, it would be wrong to assume that all homosexual Christians are in favour of the Church moving to an acceptance of sexually active homosexual relationships. There are Christians with a homosexual orientation who want the Church to uphold traditional biblical teaching and will feel that their struggle to remain faithful to this teaching will be betrayed if it does not.¹⁸ In addition,

¹⁶ Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement press release, 18 October 2004, at www.lgcm.org.uk/html/library/html

¹⁷ For the development of this point see M Ramsey *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* London: SPCK 1990 p Ch III

¹⁸ See *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* London: CHP 2003 pp.277-278 which refers to M Hallet *Sexual Identity and Freedom in Discipleship* Cambridge: Grove Books 1997

there are also homosexual Christians who may wish to see the Church change its teaching, but nevertheless do not believe it was right for ECUSA and New Westminster to act in the way that they did

- The *Windsor Report* provides a way in which those who may dissent from Anglican teaching on matters of sexual ethics can pursue their case within the constraints of autonomy-in-communion.. As the report indicates (141-2), what they have to do if they want to advance their cause is to convince the Communion as a whole, on the basis of Scripture, tradition and reason, that their proposals: ‘...would constitute growth in harmony with the apostolic tradition as it has been received.’ It is this approach, and not unilateral action in defiance of the agreed position of the Communion that is the proper way forward.
- Acceptance of the recommendations of the report would mean a commitment by all the churches of the Communion to take seriously the requirement of Lambeth 1.10 that Anglicans should listen to the experiences of gay and lesbian people, an acceptance that: ‘...any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and the basic requirements of pastoral care’ (146), and a commitment to a continuing study of issues of human sexuality, including a sharing of statements and resources on this topic.

3.8 What if Windsor’s recommendations are rejected?

3.8.1 The seventh and final criticism is that the report says nothing about what should happen if within a specified period

of time the individuals or churches named by the *Windsor Report* either fail to respond to the recommendations of the report or explicitly reject them.

3.8.2 All the report has to offer in relation to this scenario is that: ‘we shall have to begin to learn to walk apart’ (157). In spite of the terrible divisions of the Christian Church, this is problematic theologically because it is impossible to see how those who are baptised members of the body of Christ could be content with simply walking away from each other.¹⁹

3.8.3 Would a better approach, it has been argued, not be for some kind of restorative discipline to be exercised in cases where there is an explicit rejection of the report’s recommendations or a failure to respond to them? Discipline is a concept which has strong biblical support (Mt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:1-5, 2 Thess 3:14-15, 1 Tim 1:20) and which has had an important place in Christian ecclesiology.²⁰

3.8.4 Such discipline may also require the instruments of unity to agree adequate episcopal oversight for those who have adhered to the declared mind of the Communion. The report’s treatment of this issue has been widely regarded as inadequate and needs strengthening.

¹⁹ It has been suggested that the picture in paragraph 157 is of two groups walking alongside each other but the context suggests that what is being envisaged is different groups moving apart and all the indications are that this is what will in fact happen unless the process of reconciliation envisaged by the report takes place.

²⁰ For an exploration of the idea of discipline and its application to the current issues facing the Anglican Communion see, for example, C Seitz et al *Communion and Discipline* Colorado Springs: The Anglican Communion Institute 2004.

3.9 Conclusion

3.9.1 Although serious, these criticisms do not fundamentally weaken the approach of the Windsor report and its recommendations as a starting point for further discussion and action.

4. What actions should the Church of England take in the light of the report?

4.1.1 How then should the Church of England act in response to the report? Four forms of action would seem to be necessary.

- First, an affirmation by the Church of England of its acceptance of the basic principle of autonomy-in-communion exercised within the constraints of truth and charity as the essential form of life within the body of Christ.
- Secondly, in the light of this, a re-affirmation that the Church of England itself adheres to the ‘bonds of affection’ constituted by the ‘Instruments of Unity’,
- Thirdly, a recognition that successive Lambeth Conferences, Primates’ Meetings, ACC gatherings and Archbishops of Canterbury have expressed the mind of the Communion both on the subject of sexual behaviour and on that of unilateral episcopal intervention, and have also requested that this mind be upheld and respected by dioceses and provinces while careful and sensitive study of human sexuality continues and is shared within the Communion.

- Fourthly, support for the Archbishop of Canterbury in taking whatever steps are necessary to seek to achieve reconciliation by persuading all sides in the Anglican Communion to comply with all the recommendations of the *Windsor Report*.

4.1.2 In specific terms this would mean the Archbishop calling upon all those specified in the report to express the appropriate form of regret called for by the report and to observe the moratoriums that it recommends.²¹ It would also mean the Archbishop calling on all churches of the Communion, including the Church of England, to:

- Express penitence for their shortcomings and the ways in which these may have harmed the well-being of the Anglican Communion as a whole.
- Seek reconciliation with one another.
- Work to clarify and strengthen the operations of the instruments of communion
- Move towards the development and acceptance of an Anglican Covenant.

²¹ The moratoriums called for by the *Windsor Report* should not be considered in isolation. Each side needs to adhere to the mind of the Communion as expressed by the Instruments of Unity. The issue of whether intervention across diocesan and provincial boundaries can sometimes be justified and, if so, on whose authority and under what circumstances, also needs to be investigated.

4.1.3 The drawing up of an Anglican Covenant and its ratification by all the churches of the Anglican Communion might take some time. A strong case can therefore also be made for the adoption by the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council of a brief statement in order to restore and renew the framework of trust within the Communion. This would express the commitment of the churches of the Communion to the principles of autonomy-in-communion until such time as a fuller Anglican Covenant was agreed. If this idea is accepted then the Church of England will need to play its part alongside the other provinces by accepting such a statement and by helping to draw up a longer covenant in due course. This will involve further work on how we arrive at the express mind of the Communion in our life together.

4.1.4 It was also noted by the House of Bishops at its meeting in January 2005 that a proper response to the issues addressed by the *Windsor Report* will entail consideration of a range of other issues including:

- The limits of diversity in communion
- The development of appropriate methods of consultation between bishops, clergy and laity in the life of the Anglican Communion.
- The development of a ‘community of interpretation’ that will assist the churches of the communion to reach a common mind.
- The relationship between doctrine and ethics.

- The consequences for the Church of England of the development of an enhanced role for the Archbishop of Canterbury within the life of the Communion.

(on behalf of the House of Bishops)

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February 2005

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