

# AUSTRALIAN CHURCH RECORD

## Special Report #2: THE WINDSOR REPORT

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### Windsor Report Released

On the 18<sup>th</sup> October, the Windsor Report was made public. Although responses had already begun to be aired on the basis of prior leaks, these have multiplied following its. The response from conservatives has been, on the whole, rather negative.

The recommendations of this document contain many very seriously flaws, and, despite the claims that it will have negative consequences if it is *not* accepted, it will have far worse consequences if its recommendations are ever implemented.

### Sustained Critique Under Way

Given the significance of this report and the danger it represents, it deserves a serious and sustained critique. Steps are under way for this critique to be mounted in the next month or so.

Check our website for further updates on this project.

In the meantime, this Special Report of *The Record* contains some preliminary assessment and comment.

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### The Windsor Report: A Preliminary Assessment

#### Mark Thompson

The Windsor Report, released on 18 October, was doomed long before it was released. It was doomed when the decision was taken to avoid addressing the substantial issue underlying the current crisis in the Anglican Communion. Whether this decision is tied to the mandate the Lambeth Commission was given (although it is happy to step outside of its mandate on other issues, e.g. structural questions concerning the Instruments of Unity §107) or to a conviction that the traditional and current teaching of the Anglican Churches on human sexuality is bound to change sooner or later, what has resulted is a report that has no chance of success because it is preoccupied with symptoms rather than causes.

Some of the omissions in the report are nothing short of scandalous. A superficial treatment of 'unity' ignores those occasions on which the teaching of Scripture is repudiated by false teaching or by unrepentant sinfulness. There are some kinds of unity which we are to avoid at all costs (2 Corinthians 6–14). Similarly, the section on the authority of Scripture lacks an appreciation that these words *are* the word of God to us, which might call even the bishops of the churches to account for their teaching and behaviour. Most serious of all, the report lacks any consideration of the notorious and reprehensible actions of bishops in the USA, Canada and the UK

against those who have dissented from the revisionist views of human sexuality which lie at the heart of the current crisis. In certain dioceses of the Anglican Communion, faithful Christian men and women are facing, not simply 'a potentially hostile leadership' but acts of hostility, which should have been roundly condemned as unchristian and thoroughly inappropriate.

The great offence, as far as this report is concerned, is to breach fellowship by unilateral action or by interfering in another bishop's jurisdiction. There is virtually no appreciation of the magnitude of what has been done by those who have turned their backs on Scripture by endorsing homosexual practice. The lack of discernment evident throughout the report is staggering.

The great offence, as far as Christians are concerned, is that leaders of the denomination should be more concerned to preserve the structures of the institution than the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The gospel of Jesus Christ is infinitely more valuable than the worldwide Anglican Communion. The failure to identify the behaviour of the Episcopal Church of America and the Diocese of New Westminster in Canada as the apostasy which it is (along with similar actions and declarations by bishops in other parts of the Communion) is a telling indictment on the institution's capacity to honour Christ in the third millennium.

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### Unity and Interdependence: How is it Truly Expressed?

#### Peter Bolt

Two key terms in the Windsor Report are 'Unity' and 'Interdependency'.

How can a report speak so much about that kind of unity defined by reference to the highly questionable 'Instruments of Unity', and yet say so little about the most fundamental unity, namely, the unity with the apostolic faith delivered once for all to the saints?

To break with the apostolic faith is automatically to exclude oneself from historic Christian tradition – Anglican or otherwise. The denial of apostolic tradition is therefore an act of schism by definition. If bishops have broken with apostolic tradition, then their flock has no proper bishop.

The bishop's role is to maintain, promote, defend, and pass on the deposit of the apostolic faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. When a bishop becomes derelict in that duty, others need to take up the mantle. The troubles of recent days have seen 'orphaned' churches seeking alternative Episcopal oversight from bishops who maintain the apostolic faith.

Surprisingly, the Windsor report regards the bishops who have 'stepped into the breach' to be in error in the same way as those who have breached apostolic tradition. In fact, the language used for these bishops is even stronger than for those who have acted wrongfully in regard to homosexuality.

How can the report possibly treat those who have offended against the apostolic tradition in the same way as those who seek to care for the casualties by providing alternative Episcopal oversight for those now under schismatic bishops?

This is neither a breach of unity, nor is it a failure of interdependency.

It is, in fact the *proper maintenance* of unity, that is, the true unity that all Anglicans ought to be most concerned about. For the bishop now provides oversight for those who wish to maintain unity with the apostolic faith.

It is in fact, an *appropriate expression* of interdependence, for a shepherd has responded to the invitation of a flock that is being savaged by wolves. Isn't this exactly where the principle of interdependence ought to lead?

Responses to Windsor must sort out a proper way to evaluate the thinking and proposals that are being put forward. The many 'buzz words' of the report cannot be left empty, but must be filled with proper content. The action of the bishops providing alternative Episcopal oversight in a time of need, provides a case study of how proper unity can be maintained, and how true interdependency can be expressed.

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### USA – MIXED RESPONSE TO THE WINDSOR REPORT

Gav Poole, Friday, October 22, 2004

When I awoke on Monday morning the Windsor Report had been published for some hours. Bleary eyed, I turned on my computer and downloaded e-mails, curious as to whether there was any response to the report. My inbox quickly filled. Within hours of the report's release there was no shortage of sentiment.

The response from conservatives was varied. On the one hand many were disappointed, feeling that the report fell well short of their expectations.

One declared: "ECUSA gummed to death". Another complained the report was "underwhelming". The main concerns were that ECUSA was not sufficiently disciplined, the bishop of New Hampshire remains the same and that the report failed to offer adequate episcopal oversight, instead opting for the model offered by the ECUSA House of Bishops termed, "delegated episcopal oversight", where the choice of the alternative oversight largely rests with the incumbent bishop. The report does call upon ECUSA and the Diocese of New Westminster to offer expressions of regret, but is equally scathing on those who have declared themselves in broken or impaired communion. In his statement, the Primate of All Nigeria wrote, "It is wrong to use equal language for unequal actions."

Probably one of the most significant responses was that by the Anglican Network and the American Anglican council. Acknowledging certain strengths of the report, they complained: "We have strong concerns, however, about the fact that they call only for (ECUSA) to 'express regret' and fail to recommend direct discipline of ECUSA."

They also regret the ECUSA Presiding Bishop's expression of regret, which stopped well short of regret for the action taken by ECUSA, and instead expressed regret for the "negative repercussions." He also expressed regret that

"there are places within our Communion where it is unsafe for them (gay and lesbian persons) to speak out the truth of who they are." Bishop Robinson was a little more honest about the limits of his regret when he confessed in USA Today that, 'he sees no need to repent because "the Holy Spirit led us."'

The news is not all "regret". Diane Knippers, President of The Institute on Religion and Democracy, a conservative stronghold, celebrated the introduction of a basic international Anglican legal standard (or 5<sup>th</sup> instrument of unity) as a, "huge step for Anglicanism." The Bishop of Dallas, James Stanton, believes that the report correlates well with its intent to find, "... a way forward which would encourage communion within the Anglican Communion."

There is no doubt that the reason for the varied response was the different expectations. Dr Eames states in his forward, "This report is not a judgment. It is part of a process." This is in keeping with the Archbishop of Canterbury's request to the Commission. If I awoke on Monday morning expecting the report to solve the Anglican Communion's problems I was sorely disappointed. This is one step among many more to come and the implications of the report are yet to be seen.



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### UK – Mixed Responses

Liz Cox, Derby.



What do the Anglicans in the UK think of the Windsor Report, released on October 18th? Well, that all depends on which Anglicans you ask.

The television and radio media has reduced it to a few words. Usually this is something vague about apologies, covenants and communion.

Occasionally an Anglican is asked to comment. The commentary is very positive from these representatives. The Independent News quoted the Rev Martin Reynolds, spokesman for the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. He said: “We are not in crisis. It is those people who find homosexuality unacceptable who are in crisis. We hope this report is the beginning of a long discussion, not the last word.”

Therein lies the problem. Other UK Anglicans had hoped for more. They had hoped that the Windsor report would call those who ordained Gene Robinson, as well as those in New Westminster, to repent. That is: to repent of their actions

rather than simply being “invited to express its regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached”. Having not hoped for much at the beginning, the leaked reports had given people cause to believe such decisive reprimands might happen.

Evangelicals are disappointed and confused. They are disappointed in the report’s lack of action and also in its words addressed to the primates of the Global South. For they, too, were invited “to express regret for the consequences of their actions” in offering alternative oversight.

Nigeria’s Archbishop Peter Akinola’s response has expressed the anger of many in the UK. They are confused as to where this leaves evangelicals for the future.

Unity in terms of the Windsor report does nothing to reverse what has already taken place. Some here are saying that Canterbury should have acted immediately against ECUSA and New Westminster. Delaying has allowed the belief that the matter is up for debate. With the moratorium on further offers of alternative oversight how can those who disagree show a united front? Is it left to each individual church to stand alone for the truth in their local area? They had hoped for more support.

For now, the mood is one of sadness for lost opportunities and one of waiting to see what happens next.

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### **Future Issues:**

The 'Paper' will be published in full several times per year. In addition, special reports, such as this one, will be posted from time to time.

Previous Special Reports:  
General Synod 2004

The next 'full' version of the paper has been delayed and will be posted in late November/ early December 2004