

IDENTITY, GRACE AND THE HUMAN CONDITION  
*(The Windsor Report)*

Who are we? What are we about? Why?

(Part One: Identity—Who are we?)

# IDENTITY

## Who are we?

The Windsor Report challenges us to think about our identity as individuals and as members of a faith community.

My **primary identity** as an individual is that by baptism in Christ, I am a child of God and a participant in the Paschal mystery by which I am redeemed, made new and spiritually sustained in a highly political, intriguingly historical, natural world, shaped by cultural forces and assailed by power concerns and violence.

My **secondary identity**, also related to my baptism in Christ, is that I am a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, in a fellowship of Christians influenced and impacted by the Anglican ethos. I am an Anglican, whose “bonds of affection” in relationship to other Anglicans, are sustained by our common faith in Christ and our historic ties to Canterbury, the Elizabethan Settlement, the Books of Common Prayer, the liturgical drama of salvation and the healthy tension between the three-fold sources of Anglican authority: scripture, reason and tradition.

The benefit of being baptized in Christ is called “Salvation.” For Anglicans this not only involves forgiveness of sins, but also a call to a holy life.

Section A of the Windsor Report is entitled The Purpose and Benefits of the Communion. When we understand first that who we are is related to our baptism in Christ, we can then address our identity as Anglicans.

The Report affirms that the New Testament scriptures give us a biblical foundation for our communion in Christ. A quote from the Report gives a clear picture of what Anglicans hold in common.

***God has unveiled, in Jesus Christ, his glorious plan for the rescue of the whole created order from all that defaces, corrupts and destroys it. The excitement and drama of that initial achievement and that final purpose pervade the whole New Testament, and set the context for understanding why God has called out a people by the gospel, and how that people is to understand its identity and order its life.*** (p.11)

Reflection:

1. Anglicans have in common the drama of Salvation, the biblical story that begins with Abraham, and reaches its apogee in the Paschal Mystery and the Resurrection. What is the relationship of the *drama of Salvation* to all that defaces, corrupts and destroys the created order?

2. If Salvation has to do with both the forgiveness of sins and the call to a holy life, what is the nature of that holy life?

(The Windsor Report suggests that challenges to our unity and communion as Anglicans have emerged because of different interpretations of “that holiness to which we are called.”)

a. In general, the underlying issue is **diversity within the Church community**. Diversity is a justice issue (for the poor, for women, for Gays, for Multicultural realities and concerns, and Pluralistic developments.) The Windsor report challenges us to think about the nature of the Church. The challenge may be presented for class discussion in this question: Is there something the culture does not know or, if known, rejects about the way the Body of Christ lives and acts in the world? Do we agree on how the Body of Christ is to act in the world?

b. The Anglican Communion is aware of various actions that have occurred within Provinces, the discussion of which has been divisive and reached an impasse in resolution. The impasse focuses on:

- Theology and cultural influences
- Procedural neglects
- Assumptions about matters of Indifference\* and matters of secondary importance\*\* (\*adiaphora and \*\*subsidiarity)
- Adversarial debate, a breakdown of trust, and the failure to model Christ to the world
- Authority

(It is important that each of these so-called areas of impasse be discussed separately with reference to theological, biblical, moral and sacramental teaching of the Church.)