

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

Who are we? What are we about? Why?

(Part Three: The Human Condition—Why?)

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Why are we doing anything?

We began this study with reference to the Windsor Report as a vehicle for teaching the Christian Faith and the phenomenon of Anglicanism. But we also raised the question as to our identity. We are baptized human beings! We are graced sinners! We are “the redeemed.” Our formation and story are shaped by Christ, the Body of Christ, and the Anglican experience.

We cannot conclude any study of the Windsor Report without recognizing that the issues which generated the report and the reaction to those issues are entangled in what the Church understands to be *the potentially damnable human condition*.

The Human Condition is one of separation and estrangement from God. We may not believe that such a condition exists. The daily news witnesses to the “Human Condition” on an hourly basis. The word which Christians use to speak of this human condition is SIN, not bad deeds, but a continually destructive situation.

Sins, plural, are illustrations of the quagmire, the morass, the “seven deadly dispositions,” the destructive inclination we exhibit in our lives because we are separated from God. We are not friends of God, but users of God. *Bless me. Give me. Heal me. Reward me. Protect me.* “God heard my prayers and protected my son from a car bomb that killed nine of his buddies.” “Thank you, God.”

The Windsor Report witnesses to the Human Condition! Why the Report? You and I got stuck in the twenty-first century struggling with the meaning of human sexuality, the nature of marriage and the medical use of human embryos. This generation is not embroiled in issues of child labor, slavery, worldwide depression, John L. Lewis and United Mine Workers’ strikes, not even McCarthyism or Communism, Tuberculosis or Polio!! We got the social, physical, moral, genetic and psychological issues associated with all aspects of human sexual development. One would expect this sooner or later since we have tried to avoid the issue of sexuality since Sigmund Freud. The Church has an abysmal record of dealing directly with the gifts and wonders, joys, possibilities and dangers of sexuality. St. Augustine has done us no favors.

The Holy Spirit, the Grace of God, the love of Christ for women, for HIV/AIDS victims, for pregnant thirteen year olds, for sexually abused children, for gays and lesbians, even Christ’s love for Britney Spears and her erotic antics, all conspire to say to the Christian Church in this century “deal with sexual issues now! --Not rules, not Supreme Court definitions, not wishing for a gentler time. The Windsor Report asks us to realign our communion as Anglicans, our relationship as a loving, witnessing community of faith, so that we may concentrate on the Gospel to a sexually inundated culture.

The Windsor Report challenges Anglicans to stay under one roof, receive the sacraments, offer prayers, study scripture, minister together to the suffering, the

oppressed, the outcast, the marginalized ... and consider some actions that will move us toward reconciliation, as we unify to deal with what God has surely given us in our time: the redemption of human sexuality from its inevitable entanglement in the human condition.

Reflection

It may seem regrettable that the Windsor Report, itself, reflects the Human Condition, but what did we expect when a new millennium seems to challenge us with matters sexual? If human beings were not separated from God, strangers to God's love, there would be no story of salvation. We might again hear God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, calling our names – but, unlike the mythic creatures, Adam and Eve, we would not be hiding. We would understand the joy of nakedness and the wonders and complexity of the human body and loving human relationships.

The Windsor Report is in a strange way all about relationships; our relationship with God and our relationship with each other. The report basically judges Anglicans for standing naked in the world. Exposed! As Anglicans, about to divide, we stand naked before the world, displaying anger, divisiveness, and a lack of charity at every level. We are embroiled in in-house issues to the degree that more serious issues desperate for the love of Christ go wanting!

The Windsor Report is written and designed to offer a path to reconciliation. The Report uses the word “healing.”

- (1) What does the Report mean by “Interdependence”?
- (2) What is meant by “degrees of impairment” in episcopacy? (Ref: Women consecrated as Bishops, Divorced priests consecrated as Bishops)
- (3) How do you respond to the specific recommendations made in the Report as listed below?
 - a. ECUSA is to express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached. (Note: Regret in this case would signal the desire to remain in communion.)
 - b. Agree on a moratorium on the election and consent to consecration of any candidate to the Episcopate who is living in a same gender union.
 - c. Request a contribution (a developed statement) from within the sources of authority (Scripture, Apostolic Tradition, Reasoned reflection) on how a person living in a same gender relationship may lead the flock.

d. Where bonds of affection have been breached on sexual matters, participating Bishops withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion.

e. Determine in continued study whether or not a distinction is to be made between same sex unions and same sex marriage.

f. Bishops who intervene in provinces, dioceses, and parishes other than their own should express regret of consequences and desist from crossing borders.

The readers of the Windsor Report will recognize within the material and between-the-lines that there are opportunities to review the basic theological teachings of the Episcopal Church. Persons responsible for Christian Formation, as well as Rectors and Parish Assistants are encouraged to introduce to adult class theological substance that grows out of the report. The following list of subjects may be developed as bulletin inserts or as single-sheet distributions as these subjects are mentioned or implied in the report.

- The doctrine of the Church
- The authority of Episcopal orders (Bishops, Priests, Deacons).
- The Anglican interpretation of Scripture
- The sources of theological and moral authority for Episcopalians: Scripture, Reason, Tradition
- The doctrine of the Trinity
- Anglicanism and morality
- The centrality of Eucharist and Liturgy (The starting place of Communion)
- The Sacraments
- The nature of Anglicanism and the value of the Anglican Communion