



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

E Civitate Vaticana, die

17 December 2004

To His Grace  
the Most Reverend and Right Honourable  
Dr Rowan Williams  
Archbishop of Canterbury

Your Grace,

I greatly appreciate your letter of October 18<sup>th</sup>, the very day in which the *Windsor Report* was made public, inviting my informal reaction to the Report's contents.

I am grateful for the ecumenical way in which the Anglican Communion has proceeded in the preparation of the Report, and in particular, for the invitation last December to join you in establishing an ad hoc sub-committee of IARCCUM to reflect on how the Agreed Statements of ARCIC over the past thirty-five years could contribute to the current Anglican discernment process. The significant ecumenical concern which has been structured into the process by which the *Windsor Report* will be studied and reflected upon is, for us, a sign of trust and an encouragement to continue our relations and our dialogue.

My first and overarching comment is that the *Windsor Report* proceeds in a direction which, for the most part I find helpful. I welcome the ecclesiological approach by which the Report seeks to address and resolve the problems which confront the Anglican Communion. Consistent with the ARCIC documents - in particular, "Church as Communion" (1991) - and the IARCCUM ecclesiology sub-committee's reflections, the *Windsor Report* takes as its point of departure and builds upon the foundations of an ecclesiology of communion (*koinonia*). Notwithstanding the substantial ecclesiological issues still dividing us which will continue to need our attention, this approach is fundamentally in line with the communion ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

The consequences which the Report draws from this ecclesiological base are also constructive, especially the interpretation of provincial autonomy in terms of interdependence, thus "subject to limits generated by the commitments of communion" (n. 79). Related to this is the Report's thrust towards strengthening the supra-provincial authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury (nn. 109-110) and the proposal of an Anglican Covenant which would "make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the churches of the Communion." (n,118). All these consequences are in the line with the general thrust of ARCIC's statements. As expressed in "The Gift of Authority" (1999), maintaining and strengthening the *koinonia* and a commitment to interdependence are constitutive aspects of the Church and vital for its unity.

From this Pontifical Council's perspectives the core recommendations of the Report would have a positive ecumenical impact, and we pray that these suggestions and proposals will be received and implemented. In a spirit of ecumenical partnership and friendship, we are ready to support this process in whatever ways are appropriate and requested.

Though we are fundamentally encouraged by the *Windsor Report*, and note that its recommendations reflect the major insights of our common ecumenical documents, there are two points also found in the ARCIC texts which we hope can be more clearly articulated and directly addressed in the ongoing reception and implementation of the *Windsor Report*.

The first point concerns the text's ecclesiological approach itself. While the Report stresses that Anglican provinces have a responsibility towards each other and towards the maintenance of communion, a communion rooted in the Scriptures, considerably little attention is given to the importance of being in communion with the faith of the Church, through the ages. In addressing the exercise of authority in the Church, "The Gift of Authority" speaks not only of the necessity of a synchronic communion of churches but also of a *diachronic consensus*; in fundamental matters of faith and discipline, the decisions of a local or regional church must not only foster communion in the present context, but must also be in agreement with the Church of the past, and in a particular way, with the apostolic Church as witnessed in the Scriptures, the early councils and the patristic tradition. While the *Windsor Report* stresses the catholicity of the Church, we believe that in the discussion that will follow, it might be helpful for the Anglican Communion to place more stress on the Church's apostolicity. This aspect also has important ecumenical ramifications, since we share a common tradition of one and a half millennia. This, common patrimony - what Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey called our 'ancient common traditions' - is worth being appealed to and preserved.

The second area we would hope to see more directly addressed in discussions of the Report and its implementation concern the moral questions at the heart of the current controversy. The Report stresses that it was not its mandate to deal with disputed questions concerning homosexuality. We have noted that the problematic character of decisions taken in the Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada is addressed from an ecclesiological perspective but not a moral one. While the *Windsor Report* calls for a moratorium on same-sex blessings and episcopal appointments of those in same-sex relationships, this in itself is open to different interpretations. We would ask whether the traditional Christian understanding of marriage and human sexuality doesn't need to be reasserted more clearly. As you know, the position of the Catholic Church in this matter, as expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (nn, 2357-59), is clear, and for us remains binding. We believe that on these matters, we appeal to a shared apostolic patrimony which includes the Scriptures, but also includes a common tradition - grounded in a common interpretation of the Bible - of over 1900 years. In light of this patrimony, we ask whether there might be occasion to affirm the vision of human sexuality which was set forth in the ARCIC document "Life in Christ" (1994) (n.b. nn. 55-58, 87), in which we began to articulate together that shared patrimony. From a practical and pastoral perspective those moral questions are laden with strong emotional resonances and are potentially divisive, and therefore are of special importance for Christian unity and ecumenical relations.

In conclusion, the *Windsor Report* has important ecumenical implications insofar as it would provide for a greater coherence within Anglicanism, allowing an enhancement of our understanding of the Anglican Communion precisely as a communion. For the continuation of our ecumenical dialogue, it is important for us to have a clear understanding of who our partner is. The text stands in line with our ARCIC documents, though there are other elements of ARCIC's work which, we believe deserve further attention. Its recommendations address two underlying questions of broad ecumenical significance: the relationship between the universal Church and the local church; and a question which is becoming increasingly acute, namely, the tension between the Gospel, as reflected in the apostolic witness, and the approaches and trends of our post-modern societies. Both questions are faced by all Churches; though in different ways, we are confronted by many of the same problems and the same challenges. Therefore we should seek to undertake to address these issues in dialogue, so that we can give witness together to a world which has a pressing need for the common witness of the Church.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, I assure you of my prayers for you and for all the members of the Anglican Communion, On behalf of all of us at the Pontifical Council., I wish you, your family and the Lambeth Palace staff the peace which Christ alone can give as you ponder the mystery of his Incarnation.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Walter Cardinal Kasper *President*