

# Primate's Theological Commission

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The Primate's Theological Commission of the Anglican Church of Canada has issued a 'Statement on the Discussion of the Authority of Scripture in the Windsor Report'.

Meeting in Winnipeg November 17-20 2006, in the context of prayer, Bible study and worship, the Commission discussed the nature, authority and interpretation of Scripture as they relate to the current debate within Anglicanism about the blessing of same-sex unions. It considered paragraphs 53-62 of The Windsor Report of the Lambeth Commission on Communion published in October, 2004 and concluded that they are an important contribution towards the articulation of a clearer consensus in the Anglican Communion on the nature, authority and interpretation of scripture. The statement, adopted unanimously, contains both affirmations of the Windsor material and notes to the church.

(The Windsor Report Response Group, a committee established by the Council of General Synod, is preparing a response to the whole of the Windsor Report that will be considered by the General Synod in June, 2007. A summary of this work is online at [www.anglican.ca](http://www.anglican.ca))

The Primate's Theological Commission was appointed by the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. It is made up of Anglicans with theological expertise. Terms of reference and membership of the Commission may be found at [www.anglican.ca](http://www.anglican.ca). Bishop Victoria Matthews of Edmonton chairs the Commission.

The most recent work of the Commission is the St. Michael Report on whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, published in May, 2005 at the request of the General Synod and the Primate. This Report is before the church for study, and its conclusions will be debated by the General Synod in June, 2007.

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The statement follows:

**Statement of the Primate's Theological Commission  
on the Discussion of the Authority of Scripture in the Windsor Report**

**The Primate's Theological Commission commends the reflections of the Windsor Report on scripture (§§53-62) as an important contribution towards the articulation of a clearer consensus in the Anglican Communion on the nature, authority and interpretation of scripture.**

**In particular, we affirm:**

- ❑ its emphasis upon the central role of scripture in Anglican belief and life, recognizing that reference to the authority of scripture in historic Christianity means “the authority of the triune God, *exercised through* scripture”. (§54);
- ❑ its affirmation of this authority as an aspect of “the dynamic inbreaking of God’s kingdom”, rather than “a static source of information or the giving of orders” (§55);
- ❑ its insistence that worship is the primary context in which the Church hears scripture as “the vehicle of God’s authority” and “God’s living and active word”, while exhorting that “it is the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together; [and] within that, each individual Christian, to the fullest extent of which they are capable, must study it and learn from it, thoughtfully and prayerfully.” (§57);
- ❑ the responsibility of bishops (together with other clergy and lay leaders) to function as teachers of scripture (§58);
- ❑ that “questions of interpretation are rightly raised, not as an attempt to avoid or relativise scripture and its authority, but as a way of ensuring that it really is scripture that is being heard” (§59);
- ❑ the “call to the whole Anglican Communion to re-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture. We can no longer be content to drop random texts into arguments, imagining that the point is thereby proved, or indeed to sweep away sections of the New Testament as irrelevant to today’s world, imagining that problems are thereby solved. We need mature study, wise and prayerful discussion, and a joint commitment to hearing and obeying God as he speaks in scripture, to discovering more of the Jesus Christ to whom all authority is committed, and to being open to the fresh wind of the Spirit who inspired scripture in the first place.” (§61)

**We note that:**

- ❑ given the Windsor Report’s very high expectation of “Christian leaders – chiefly within the Anglican tradition, of bishops – as *teachers of scripture*”, the Anglican Church of Canada (and possibly other parts of the Communion) must place renewed emphasis on the biblical and theological formation of bishops, clergy and lay leaders. To this end we applaud the Archbishop of Canterbury’s initiative and call for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion.

- we recognise in the above affirmations the historical Anglican doctrine of scripture as set forth in the Articles, the Ordinals, the Catechism, the Lambeth Quadrilateral, and the Solemn Declaration of 1893.