UNITY IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION: A CRITIQUE OF THE "VIRGINIA REPORT"

The 'Virginia Report' takes its name from the Virginia Theological Seminary where the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission held its meetings in December 1994 and again in January 1996.[1] It was this body that produced this report. It was the culmination of a series of events originating in 1988 at the Lambeth Conference with consideration of how the Anglican Communion should respond to the possibility of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) consecrating a woman as a bishop. Archbishop Robin Eames chaired the Commission and the background circumstances are described in the preface and introduction to the report. A number of resolutions were passed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference relating to the Virginia Report or aspects of the contents of the report. Resolutions were also passed in relation to this matter at the Anglican Consultative Council in Dundee, Scotland in 1999. The debate at the Anglican Consultative Council was relatively contentious and the resolutions seemed to reflect some caution about aspects of the report.[2] It is interesting to note that the web site of the Anglican Communion office is now configured in the terms of this report.

The issue addressed in the report is of fundamental importance, namely, the nature of the connection that exists between the provinces of the Anglican Communion and how organisationally that connection or unity is to be supported.

The report contains six chapters, the first of which sets out the context of modern pluralism. The report then develops a theological approach to the question of independence and unity by looking first at the issue of communion and the doctrine of the Trinity in the church (chapter three); belonging together in the Anglican Communion (chapter three); levels of communion and the principle of subsidiarity and interdependence (chapter four); and, *Koinonia* — its purpose and principles (chapter five). The final chapter is concerned with what are called 'instruments of unity'. This phrase was developed in the context of an early meeting of the Eames Commission. The chairman put it into the commission language and it is used to describe the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' meeting. These four so-called instruments of unity are the focus of the last chapter of the report and a series of questions is posed by the report in the final chapter in relation to each of these 'instruments'.

Themes and logic of the argument

There are a number of themes that recur in this report and some of them are the subject of specific exposition. These themes provide the theological and philosophical substructure upon which the argument of the report is developed.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

The report reflects recent interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in Western theology in terms of the community that exists between the three persons of the Godhead. In the history of Christian theology a distinction has often been made between the Trinity of the economy of salvation and the immanent Trinity. This distinction points to some differences of emphasis in the current debate that are significant for the use made of the doctrine of the Trinity in this report. It is commonly said that the Greek fathers came at this question from the economy of salvation and thus, in the terms of Karl Rahner 'the Greek way of thinking of the Trinity remains entirely orientated to man'.[3] The western tradition of thought, influenced in large measure by Augustine moved away from this starting point and focussed on the nature of the one Godhead. Miroslav Volf has recently discussed these differences.[4] He compares the Trinitarian formulation of Josef Ratzinger and John Zizioulas, and argues that Ratzinger continues the Augustinian line and in the process underlines the unity of the Godhead with his emphasis on the Trinitarian personhoods as pure relationality, *persona est relatio.* Zizioulas, on the other hand, works within a Greek tradition and uses the model that underlines the inter-dependence of the persona and their reciprocal interiority, but within a non filioquistic formulation. On this analysis, this model gives a priority to the Father and offers more prominence to hierarchy in the Godhead. This point becomes strategically important when we come to the question of the relation between Trinity and ecclesiology, an issue that is vital to the argument of the Virginia Report.

Miroslav Volf draws attention to this in his comparison of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, and it lies not far below the surface in recent dialogue documents, and in recent literature. Volf suggests that the unitary character of Ratzinger's formulation of the Trinity leads him to a unitary style of ecclesial relations which enables him to place a universal primacy naturally in a logically prominent position. On the other hand Zizioulas is enabled to give natural prominence to the priority of the bishop in a hierarchy in the light of the hierarchy of his Trinitarian formulation. Thus, in the former case, the separate identities of ecclesial communities are diminished and in the latter case they are recognised within a hierarchical framework.

This simple contrast does not by any means exhaust the variations in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity available in the history of Christian theology. However, it does illustrate the point, which is not recognised in this report, that the model or formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity chosen will affect the way in which it is likely to work out when you come to the question of ecclesiology. Even if the matter is taken at the most general level, as this report tends to do, this issue cannot be avoided.

This generality of treatment, however, gives the impression that the doctrine of the Trinity is being used in this report somewhat as a validating talisman. However, there is a further point that the use of the doctrine of the Trinity in this report raises, namely, the relationship between this use of the doctrine and the actual ecclesial reality out of which the argument is developed. Again Volf hints at this question, although his hint is buried in a footnote when discussing Zizioulas: 'At least to me as an outsider, Zizioulas's unrestricted affirmation of hierarchy seems to correspond more to the Orthodox ecclesial reality than does the polemic against subordination in the church (directed especially against [Roman] Catholic ecclesiology) to which some Orthodox theologians are inclined'.[5] One might, of course, also wonder whether Volf's own formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity echoes his own free church ecclesial reality.

I am not suggesting that people are not being transparent and that the Trinitarian argument is really a cloak for ecclesiastical politics. Though, of course, we might all be subject to examination on that point by one who could see the inner workings of our hearts more clearly than we can ourselves. Rather my point is that these issues are inter-related and the precise character of that inter-relationship is not identified in the Report. For example, the more unitary formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the hands of Ratzinger makes it easier to move to a conception of the church created by this Trinitarian God which should have one single point of reference for unity and authority, just as the insistence on the hierarchy of the Father in some orthodox formulations makes an ecclesiology marked by strong episcopal hierarchy more understandable. Such a tendency in the formulation of the Trinity could also in another context lead to an argument for a moral and divinely sanctioned hierarchy between men and women. These different emphases in the doctrine of the Trinity can drift into the outer limits of the dynamics of the doctrine and begin to approach recognised heresies of the early church of subordinationism on the one hand and monarchianism on the other.

Community

This theme is again one that has been revived in orthodox theology, particularly at the hands of John Zizioulas, again in relation to an ecclesiological question arising in modern orthodoxy. The relationship between the families within orthodoxy has raised the question of the categories whereby the relationship between the churches within orthodoxy is regarded as being churches or part of the great church. Zizioulas's suggestion is that the church be thought of as a fellowship of churches and what holds them together is *Koinonia*. Such a conception is more elastic and allows for a slightly larger arena of legitimate diversity.

The idea has been taken up in ecumenical dialogues and ecumenical thinking to criticise divergent tendencies in the development of individual identities of churches and to argue for more connection. It became the centrepiece of the statement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Canberra in 1991[6] and has been used in a number of Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) documents.[7] The Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in 1985 declared in relation to Vatican II that 'the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's document'.[8] It is a much-discussed concept in ecumenical circles and it is used in this report in much the same way as it is used in that ecumenical dialogue. That is to say, it is used to sustain a wider range of points of unity than otherwise. Its application to the Anglican Communion in this report is interesting in another respect. It has long been held in major sections of Anglican thought that the Anglican Communion was not a church but rather a fellowship of churches. Arguments of this kind were used by some English bishops as the basis for not attending the first Lambeth Conference. Such a notion sits tolerably comfortably with the analogous use of this idea by orthodox theologians such as John Zizioulas in relation to the families of orthodox churches. However, in the hands of Roman Catholic theologians and official documents this idea is used directly in the development of a conception of the church, which for their purposes is a world wide church finding its central point of reference in the Bishop of Rome. The Virginia Report does not seem to be conscious of this older view of the Anglican Communion and moves in conceptual directions which appear to be more shaped by the imperial images which found expression in the papacy between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those tendencies were challenged at Vatican II, but in the late twentieth century social and cultural forces have helped their re-emergence in key parts of Roman Catholic life.

Subsidiarity

In modern theology the principle of subsidiarity has been most widely used in the lead-up to Vatican II. The principle is that things should not be done at one level of decision-making or authority that can be adequately or properly done at a lower level. This principle has had a long history in Gallican theology and in the revival of Gallican theology at the hands of people like Jean de Lubac. This principle plays a role for de Lubac in his critique of the juridical conception of the church which he sees characterising the second Christian millennium. He characterises the first Christian millennium as a time of the spirit. De Lubac and his French colleagues were significantly influential in the lead-up to Vatican II and the principle of subsidiarity has been widely used by Roman Catholic theologians in order to critique an over-centralised hierarchical conception of the papacy and the Vatican and the church structure generally. In the hands of some Roman Catholic theologians it has been part of an argument which contrasts a hierarchical and democratic church.[9]

Here in the Virginia Report the concept is used to acknowledge the present structures but is not given the same valency in the argument as the earlier conceptions of Koinonia and Trinity. Given its intellectual pedigree, that is not surprising since it would run against the current of the argument in this report.

Episcope — Oversight

This report is strong in underlining the personal character of episcope. In this respect the report draws on a long tradition of Anglican apologetics directed towards Presbyterian and later dissenting movements. However, in the way in which this report uses the notion of oversight the concept tends to move in a comprehending direction so that the bishop has a complete oversight over all aspects of the life of the community. The conception appears, therefore, to be moving in organisational terms in the direction of a corporate Chief Executive Officer. There are some understandable difficulties in relation to this concept in a longer Anglican tradition rather than one that is envisaged as commencing with the sixteenth century as this report tends to assume. In the period up until the fifteenth century, the development of episcope in terms of its pattern and responsibilities in British Christianity was gradual in terms of its jurisdictional development. Canterbury, of course, procured priority first in areas to do with ordination then subsequently with Lanfranc in ecclesiastical law with the establishment of separate ecclesiastical jurisdictional authority guaranteed by the Crown.[10]

In the English Reformation, however, there is a significant statute revolution whereby bishops become crucial to the single jurisdictional authority of the Crown. One of the significant authority consequences of the abolition of the monasteries was that it narrowed institutional authority to the bishops, whose cathedrals, though very wealthy, were never abolished. At the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, James I rejected prophesying on the grounds that it was a political threat to his crown saying, 'that they aymed at a Scottish Presbytery, which, sayth he, as well agreeth with a monarchy, as God and the divell. Then Iack and Tom, and Will and Dick, shall meete, and at their pleasure censure me and my councill, and all our proceedings'. And then turning to the bishops, the king said, 'If once you were out, and they in place, I know what would become of my supremacie. No Bishop, no king'.[11]

As far as James I was concerned, *episcope* as conceived under the statutes of the English Reformation was a model of authority not only compatible with, but supportive of the singular authority of the Royal Supremacy. In the period of colonial and imperial expansion, that model was extended beyond the borders of England where eventually changes occurred that made that experience in England less appropriate and less relevant in its institutional and organisational clothes. It is sometimes suggested that this colonial expansion took place on the wings of a Tractarian imperial concept of a missionary episcopate. That proposition is open to serious doubt. What is not open to doubt is that the polity that appeared at the end was definitively synodical in character. However, the report does not seem to have escaped from this imperial or colonial framework. The English Reformation

Throughout this report respectful allusions are made to the English Reformation but only a slender role is given to the Reformation, at least in terms of its theology. References sometimes appear to me to be out of focus. The reference at 4.21 to Hooker on consensus is an example, though later there is, I think, a correct note at 4.26 in regard to 'Hooker and Field and ecclesiologies'. The report also makes a good point at 3.3 that the Acts of Uniformity of the sixteenth century at least were attempts to contain diversity, though that could not be said of the *Acts of Uniformity* of the seventeenth century. Comment in 3.25 that in the sixteenth century Reformation no attempt was made to minimise the role of bishops appears to me to be somewhat disingenuous since in institutional and legal terms the Reformation legislation actually increased the political significance of the bishops. The theological significance of the English Reformation is not systematically developed within the report, and its place in the longer run of Anglican Christianity is quite misleadingly portrayed.

Primacy

The notion of primacy in this report is developed in relation to the tradition of metropolitans and in particular is borne out of the history of the Archbishopric of Canterbury and its pre-eminence in England. The pre-eminence of the Archbishopric of Canterbury is the consequence of a series of political moves and key initial steps were taken for plainly political reasons to do with the unity of the kingdom and power politics. While there are some modifiers in the report the notion of primacy is influenced by the idea of primacy in the Roman Catholic tradition that appears to be viewed in its modern form. But the modern form of the primacy in Roman Catholicism is the consequence of developments from the seventeenth century in a very singular direction, developments accelerated during the course of the nineteenth century in response to the pluralism of modernity.

There is a longer model of the role of the metropolitan in the life of the church which is not developed in this report and which was significant in the historical development of the Anglican Communion particularly in the nineteenth century. It raised to consciousness the difficulties which extra-territorial metropolitical responsibilities raised for the politico-juridical conception of the metropolitical role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. That notion of metropolitan sees the local province as ecclesially self-contained for jurisdictional purposes and for the purposes of completeness of order in the ministry. By using the imagery of the Roman Catholic Church and the modern notion of Primacy the report significantly misses crucial aspects of the broader history of early Christianity and of the later history of Anglicanism.

Moreover, the Anglican Communion should probably be regarded as being born in the concordat between the bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church and Seabury over the significance of their consecration in 1784 of Seabury for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.[12] The War of Independence broke the legal connection with England and thus with the legally established Church of England. The English bishops were prohibited from ordaining bishops for places outside of England. For this reason Seabury went to the Episcopal Church of Scotland seeking consecration. This episode is full of ironies. Seabury had supported the loyalist cause in the War of Independence, those who consecrated him were non-jurors, and back in the United States of America not all accepted Seabury, at least in part for his political commitments during the war. Even so this step illustrated the fact that Anglican Christianity was transportable beyond England, a point made already by the existence of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. What was apparent in the Seabury consecration, became again manifest in the growth of colonial churches as those colonies became independent, and where overseas provinces were established, such as in Australia in 1847.

Missing links

Reading through this report I asked myself what things about Anglicanism in its worldwide development are missing in relation to the question of what holds Anglicanism worldwide together. The following points came to mind.

Congresses

Church congresses were a major force in holding sections of Anglicanism together regionally in the period 1860-1930. That was true in Australia and it was true also in North America and England. That movement brought a cross-section of church people together on common concerns. There was a pan-Anglican congress in the first decade of the twentieth century motivated by similar intentions. The movement declined in influence in the early part of the twentieth century, I suspect in the face of sectional organisations and events which began to occur. The principle was revived in the 1960s and was influenced by the work of John Howe, the first Secretary-General of the Anglican Communion. Congresses were held in 1954 at Minneapolis and in 1963 in Toronto, and there is currently before the Anglican Communion a proposal that is commented upon in an appendix to the Virginia Report in somewhat derisory terms.

Regionalism

There are a variety of regional alliances and coalitions between provinces or parts of the Anglican Communion which are not mentioned in this report and apparently not considered. Province 9 of ECUSA is a good example of the reach of that Church generally into Latin America and the Pacific. This is to say nothing of its reach into Europe, although there, of course, it overlaps with the reach of the Church of England. There is a multitude of informal connections of various kinds regionally which serve to hold different areas of the Anglican Communion in connection with each other. The Council of the Church in East Asia, mainly concerned with extra provincial dioceses in Asia but not exclusively, is an example. Council for the Anglican Provinces of Africa and the South Pacific Anglican Council are others.

Networks related to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)

For some time there has been a range of networks on various topics which are informal, mostly unfunded from the ACC budget, which nonetheless have had the recognition of the ACC and have brought people into coalitions of interest from the provinces around the Communion. The connections from various provinces to the office of the United Nations observer might be an example of such a network. Others are the Network for Inter-Faith Concerns in the Anglican Communion, International Family Network, The Anglican Indigenous Network, Anglican Peace and Justice Network, The Anglican Communion International Refugee and Migrant Network, International Anglican Women's Network and the International Anglican Youth Network.

Other network connections

There are a range of institutional connections which could be loosely called networks which contribute to the tentacles of attachment between provinces in the Communion. The influence of Trinity Wall Street, though principally financial and grant making in one sense, nonetheless provides a network of connection. The same is true of the Primate's World Development Fund with the Canadian church. There are a range of educational connections through scholarships and training and publishing. There are partnership connections, both formal and informal, through dioceses and provinces across the Communion. Furthermore, there is the global reach of the Mothers' Union, less noticed than some other things but probably significantly more important than some of the things mentioned even in the Virginia Report.

Then there are the mission agencies and their continuing networks. In the nineteenth century these were powerful networks and the influence of the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) or Church Missionary Society (CMS) was often much more significant than that of the local bishop for any missionary working in a colonial diocese.[13]

Religious orders span the Communion, cross the provinces and provide connections of some considerable significance. Meetings of the provincial secretaries, though informal, nonetheless also contribute, in the words of the Primate of Canada, as the 'glue of the Communion'.

It may be possible to draw some kind of distinction between these missing links and the four vehicles that are the focus of the Virginia Report but such a distinction is not attempted in the Virginia Report. Even if such a distinction were able to be made, a consideration of a smaller number of vehicles as in the Virginia Report, without seriously taking account of the context of other vehicles by which the Anglican Communion is held together, must lead to a significant distortion of the picture. In the case of this report, it certainly does.

Some questions

The historical and theological picture of Anglicanism

The Virginia Report appears to assume, but does not argue, that Anglicanism is a post sixteenth century phenomenon. Prior to that it seems to be the view of the report that Anglicanism was simply part of Western Christianity, that is to say part of the Catholic Church. There are some gestures in the report towards the conciliar movement but not a lot of discussion about the pre-sixteenth century elements of Anglicanism. As a consequence the models that are used tend to be taken from nineteenth and twentieth century images. This is particularly true in my view in regard to episcopacy, primacy, ministry and those matters which are given logical priority in the life of the church, namely its ordered structures rather than, for example, its dispersed life.

It seems important to recognise that Anglicanism is a regional particular of Western Christianity with a much longer history than simply the last four hundred years. In some respects it is similar to the tradition within Western Christianity of Gallicanism. Gallicanism has had an intermittent history as a style of Western Christianity that has shown a degree of independence, local colour and commitment to the spiritual conception of the life of the church. The work of de Lubac and his colleagues in the twentieth century is an example of the revival of the Gallican tradition. The movement for clerical relief in regard to certain kinds of responsibilities, aired at the Council of Constance and at the Council of Basle in the fifteenth century, are examples of the force of that same Gallican tradition. In one sense the difference between Gallicanism and Anglicanism is that Gallicanism stayed within the Roman framework and for political reasons Anglicanism did not. The movements towards centralism in the papalist/conciliar conflict in the fifteenth century led to the demise of Gallicanism or at least its significant suppression under a centralising papalistic conception of the Roman communion. Anglicanism, in its conciliar form, was suppressed by the legislation of the English Reformation. It is a more complicated matter, however, because that very legislation provided the possibility for sustaining conciliar elements of both theology and ecclesial thought within the life of the 'empire of England' through the strained mechanism of the Royal Supremacy, which established a layman as head of the church.[14]

Two things were going on in the English Reformation — on the one hand there was a religious revival which was part of the movement in Western Christianity of renewal which saw its expression in the Continental Reformation, as well as other earlier movements in Eastern and Central Europe. At the same time, there was a legislative, state initiated revolution effected in order to secure political independence for the ecclesiastical law which Henry wanted to be able to command. The sixteenth century Reformation is, therefore, a coalescence of religious revival out of a long northern tradition of Christianity and social thought occurring hand in hand with a political revolution. Because the Virginia Report seems not to be able to see past the sixteenth century, the images it uses for its ecclesiological conceptions are drawn from the modern period both of Roman Catholicism and of English Christianity which, each in different ways, significantly distort the longer tradition of British Christianity which today we call Anglicanism.

For example the imagery of Primacy is drawn in distinctly modern terms. However, the modern primacy of the Bishop of Rome is the consequence of centralising developments in the fifteenth century which are mirrored in the emergence of kingdoms and centrally ordered states. The extreme case, which was exported to South America, was to be found in Castille.[15] The transition from feudalism to modernity had many faces and the emergence of nations and centralised authorities over large areas was one of them.[16] The transformation of the papacy, reflected in the conciliar conflicts, is part of this broader transition. This transition was intensified in the nineteenth century as the papacy tried to respond to the challenges of late modernity and secularism. But it is these later images of primacy which inhabit the horizons of the Virginia Report. There is a long history of a place for metropolitical oversight in both western and eastern Christianity, but it is not quarried in this report.

As a consequence, in my view, the report in this respect is insufficiently rigorous in its conception of Anglicanism and, to that extent, is potentially seriously misleading about its character and actually limited in its interpretation of that character.

The presenting context

The presenting context offered by the report is that of pluralism and post-modern dispersion (chapter one). If we assume such a characterisation is fair, the question still remains as to what kind of response one might imagine to be appropriate for the kind of phenomenon we are talking about here, namely the Anglican Communion. Historically, times of uncertainty and flux, such as that portrayed in the post-modern interpretation of our present situation, have generally tended to move people in the direction of what the Greeks call 'tyrannos', what we today would call strong command structure organisations and leadership.[17] More recent management theory, however, has tended to point to more transitory alliances defined as loose connections for the purposes of collaborative activity in regard to short- or medium-term projects. In other words, centralised structures in this stream of organisational theory is regarded as the antecedent model which is not appropriate to the present environment which in that literature is beginning to be described as post-corporate.[18] Whether these proposals are right is not the point. The point is that consideration of these questions does not appear in this report and it is therefore not surprising that a sustained discussion about the nature of the unity that is being sought in relation to the proposed solution is not undertaken.

Issues in the presenting context

I think there are a number of issues which are raised by the presenting context in the Virginia Report which require more significant analysis and critique than the report has given. They are listed briefly below:

- Authority. The report appears to be hierarchically focused. But is Anglicanism adequately characterised in that way? Where in this is there respect for the conciliar or synodical tradition in Anglican theology and the notion of dispersed authority? The fundamental underlying reason, in my view, for the English Reformation was a conflict of instincts about the nature of authority. The need for King Henry VIII to have a divorce was simply the occasion for the expression of a conflict between Henry and the Pope carried on in the same "imperial" coinage. At the theological level, however, the conflict arose from a combination of a conciliar instinct together with some strands of northern European humanism that made impossible the acceptance of the centralised and singular notions of authority emerging in the new papacy. The question therefore of authority, a conciliar tradition and instincts for a dispersed authority are actually quite fundamental to Anglicanism and appear to be glossed in this report.

- Laity and church community. It seems to me that the church as a community of the baptised is logically prior to the issue of ministry and order yet that appears not to be part of the thinking represented in this report.

- The nature of the church's community life and the way in which its institutionality exists to serve and foster particular kinds of community life appears again not to be adequately examined, yet it is critical given the kind of post-modern context and the inter-relationship between political and community questions which lie in the furniture of this report.

- The relationship of theological truth in the cultural tradition is present but not adequately recognised. History seems to me to suggest that the spirit of democracy and the conciliar conception of ecclesial life came into contact with each other in the emergence of synods in Anglicanism in North America and Australia. The ECUSA Constitution follows in remarkable ways the broad outlines of the American Constitution. There was a considerable overlap in the people involved in the creation of each. In the nineteenth century, both in Canada and Australia, it was clearly the spirit of democracy that had a significant influence on the shape of the synods that eventually emerged in each of those countries. That in itself raises a question which the report is directly concerned with but which it hardly unravels to any degree — namely, what is the relationship between that which occurs in, indeed may be said to be revealed in, the working of the providence of God in the events of history on the one hand and the understanding of the character of God and of theological principles revealed in the sources of the Christian tradition, principally and supremely the Scriptures. That is a question that called for judgment in relation to the ordination of women as priests. Indeed it was at stake in many questions in history that Christians have had to confront, for example slavery, the very idea of an ordered ministry, the character and understanding of Christ as fulfilment of Jewish expectations. There is a fundamental theological issue here that appears to me to be unexamined in the Virginia Report. Why ought one not to assume that the providence of God has led to the diversity or the pluralism or the post-modernism that is the context within which the Virginia Report is seeking to work? If the matter was approached in that way then one would be forced to ask the question more rigorously — what kind of unity ought we to be looking for in an entity such as the Anglican Communion. The really important issues that the Virginia Report seeks to address are not really addressed in the report itself because the way in which the question is shaped has been prejudiced in one direction without examination or justification. What, indeed, might be the view about the providential emergence of bishops as bishops of dioceses defined by territory from the earlier circumstance where they were bishops of communities of people?

- An issue that is on the surface in all of this and which calls for significant theological and social analysis is the issue of conflict. This report is concerned with diversity and there are certainly questions about that in relation to the nature of Anglicanism and the life of the Anglican Communion. But related to that, and often arising from not only the character but also the prosecution of those diversities, is the issue of conflict. That question appears to me not to be analysed and in so far as any direction of an answer is offered it is offered in an assumed direction of increasing institutionalism of a centralising and clerical character. That may be the right way but this report does not appear to me to have demonstrated that it is.

Closing remarks

It is undoubtedly the case that the Virginia Report seeks to address a critical question. It makes a useful contribution to what should be a continuing debate. It raises issues that are important not only for relations between the constituent parts of the Anglican Communion but also for the nature of ecclesial life and ecclesial structures within provinces, indeed within dioceses and indeed, at the micro level, within parishes. We should therefore be grateful to the report for bringing up on to the table the question, even if the approach to that question is insufficiently rigorous and its suggested answers to the question too narrow.

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6. The document produced by the Canberra assembly can be found in the official report, M. Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia*, Geneva: WCC, 1991.

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8. 'Documents of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, November 28-December 8, 1985', Rome, 1986, 1985, p. 35.

9. See for example, E.C. Bianchi and R.R. Ruether (eds), *A Democratic Church: The Reconstruction of Roman Catholicism*, New York, Crossroads, 1992 and E. Hill, *Ministry and Authority in the Catholic Church*, London, Cassell, 1988.

10. The story is conveniently told in Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office*, Oxford, Mowbray, 1988.

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13. See H. Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies: A Study of Anglican Colonial and Missionary Expansion 1689-1850*, London, SPCK, 1952.

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15. See the illuminating exposition of Claudio Veliz, *The New World of the Gothic Fox: Culture and Economy in English and Spanish America*, Berkeley, Univ of California Press, 1994.

16. In general see R.J. Holton, *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London, MacMillan, 1985. Interesting use is made of this transition in the recent collection of essays by J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, and G. Ward (eds), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, London, Routledge, 1999.

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18. See the excellent summary of the state of the debate in D. Limerick, B. Cunnington, and F. Crowther, *Managing the New Organisation: Collaboration and Sustainability in the Postcorporate World*, second edition, Sydney, Business & Professional Publishing, 1998.