

Full Synod: First Day

Friday 5 July 2002

THE CHAIR *The Archbishop of York (Dr David Hope)* took the Chair at 3.30 p.m.

The Chairman led the Synod in prayer.

Welcome to Anglican and Ecumenical Guests

The Chairman: These are our guests for this group of sessions of the Synod, unlike the eight ecumenical representatives. I should like to welcome them. They are Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Britain, Rt Revd Idris Jones of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Rt Revd Jürgen Johannesdotter of the EKD, Most Revd Karl Sigurbjörnsson of the Church of Iceland and Mr Gudmundur Thor Gudmundsson of the Church of Iceland. The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference are still at the Conference; they will be with us this evening. (*Applause*)

I should like to invite the Bishop of Iceland to address the Synod, to convey a message of greeting from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iceland and to make a response on behalf of the ecumenical guests.

The Bishop of Iceland (Most Revd Karl Sigurbjörnsson): Your Grace, members of Synod, I am grateful and privileged to address the General Synod of the Church of England on behalf of the ecumenical guests, to express our thanks for your invitation and to bring greetings and pledges of prayer from our Churches.

Coming from Iceland, it is very special for me to be here in York because York holds a special place in the history and the memory of our people and country. In the tenth century a ferocious Viking – a terrorist you would call him today – was held captive here in York by the King and only managed to save his neck by composing in one night a monumental piece of poetry in the King's honour, a poem ever since considered one of the highlights of our colourful heritage. Later, the sons of this heathen and terrifying Viking became leaders of the Christian Church in Iceland – which is another story, or maybe not. The baptism of the heathen terrorist, the conversion of those who are cruel and terrifying, and the reshaping of a culture by the Spirit of Jesus Christ: is that not a story that stands before us all as a challenge and a compelling vision now in our day and age?

Furthermore, I want to use this opportunity to convey the appreciation and respect of the Church of Iceland to our sister Church of England. We are proud and happy to

share in the Porvoo communion, which is probably one of the greatest ecumenical achievements of recent years, and to share in that communion a common vision for the Church, working together and worshipping together and learning from each other in a common endeavour to build bridges and enhance understanding between Churches of different traditions and thus to strengthen the witness of the Gospel of Christ in our world.

Last but not least, I want to use this opportunity to bring our greetings and extend our deepest respect and gratitude to Archbishop Carey for his unfailing ecumenical commitment and pastoral leadership in the Church of Christ. In the name of our Churches, I thank him and bless you all with the words of 1 Thessalonians: ‘Grace be to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.’
(*Applause*)

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. I think that I can assure you that you will be free to leave York at the end of the sessions this July. We shall not have a repeat performance!

Welcome to Young Adult Observers

The Chairman: As is usual in York, we welcome our young adult observers. Some of them are seated on your left-hand side, but they are probably not all here yet.

You are very welcome once again and we hope that you will participate very fully in these sessions at York. We greet you. (*Applause*)

Introduction of New Members

The Chairman: We have some new members of Synod: Revd Captain Paul Allinson (Durham); Mr John Ashwin (Chichester); Revd Susan Booy (Oxford); the Bishop of Dorking (Rt Revd Ian Brackley); Revd Dr Simon Cox (Blackburn); the Bishop of Swindon (Rt Revd Michael Doe); the Archdeacon of Canterbury (Ven. Patrick Evans); Revd David Felix (Chester); the Archdeacon of Totnes (Ven. Richard Gilpin); the Archdeacon of Auckland (Ven. Ian Jagger); Dr Philip Jeffery (Chichester); the Dean of Carlisle (Very Revd Graeme Knowles); the Bishop of Bath and Wells (Rt Revd Peter Price); Revd David Robertson (Wakefield); the Archdeacon of Berkshire (Ven. Norman Russell); the Archdeacon of Hereford (Ven. John Tiller); and the Archdeacon of Manchester (Ven. Alan Wolstencroft).

We welcome you all. (*Applause*)

Progress of Measures and Statutory Instruments

The Chairman: I report to the Synod that the Church of England (Pensions) Measure has been withdrawn from the Ecclesiastical Committee. The Synodical Government (Amendment) Measure has been found expedient by the Ecclesiastical Committee. The Clergy Discipline Measure has been submitted to the Ecclesiastical Committee. The National Institutions Measure 1998 (Amendment) Resolution 2001 was laid before Parliament and came into force on 1 January 2002.

THE CHAIR *Mrs Margaret Swinson (Liverpool)* took the Chair at 3.50 p.m.

Appointment of Chairman of the Audit Committee

The Archbishop of York (Dr David Hope): I beg to move:

‘That Mr Ian McNeil be reappointed as Chairman of the Audit Committee for a period expiring on 31 July 2004.’

The Chairman: This is a formal item and I put it to the Synod.

The motion was put and carried.

Appointment of Secretary General

The Archbishop of York: I beg to move:

‘That Mr William Fittall be appointed as Secretary General.’

It gives me great pleasure to move this motion.

At its meeting on 1 March the Archbishops’ Council agreed the process for appointing Philip Mawer’s successor. It approved the formation of an appointments group, chaired by me, to include a balanced cross-section of Council and Synod members: the Chair of the House of Laity, Dr Christina Baxter; a Prolocutor, Canon Webster; a Synod member, Dr Thomas-Betts; and Council members Canon Paver and Professor Toyne. It also agreed the composition of the interview panel: the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Bishop of Guildford; Canon Webster; Dr Thomas-Betts; Mr Whittam Smith; First Church Estates Commissioner; and myself. The Council’s human resources director and the Archbishops’ Appointments Secretary supported these panels.

Council members were asked for their views on what should be included in the job specification, and the appointments group considered a draft. This draft was sent to

DBF chairmen, diocesan bishops and diocesan secretaries. Furthermore, all General Synod members were circulated a short paper reporting the Archbishops' Council of 1 March in which it was stated that any queries should be addressed to the Council's human resources director. Search consultants were appointed by a small sub-group who interviewed four firms with specialist expertise in recruiting senior people for the not-for-profit, public, Church and commercial sectors. The post was advertised in the Church, minority ethnic and national press.

The appointments group was presented first with a long list of 22 candidates and then with a long list of 15 candidates, which was reduced to a shortlist of six. One candidate withdrew just before the interview, having secured an alternative post nearer her home in Cheshire. Five candidates were finally interviewed. These candidates had already been screened by the search consultants for match against the job specification, undergone psychometric tests and had references taken up. They were invited for an hour's interview during which they were required to deliver a presentation at the beginning of the interview.

The panel unanimously selected William Fittall from this high-calibre group. The second notice paper describes William Fittall's past work experience and his involvement with the Church at parish level. Suffice to say that his current post, supporting the Prime Minister and the Northern Ireland Secretary in managing the Northern Ireland peace process, has given him invaluable experience of balancing diverse views and beliefs and shown him to be an inspiring servant in a complex situation. He has during his Civil Service career been private secretary to Douglas Hurd, Peter Brooke and Patrick Mayhew.

His wish to undertake the role of Secretary General is fuelled by a deeply held commitment to serve the Church, both through leading and supporting the staff of the Church at national level and serving this Synod and its boards and councils, and also by continuing Philip Mawer's work of growing partnership with the dioceses.

William is married to Barbara, a nurse by training, now working with the Audit Commission on improving value for money in the National Health Service; he met Barbara when he was organist at Christ Church, Fulham and she was a choirgirl. They have two sons, the elder of whom is in his first year at Christ's, Cambridge, reading Natural Sciences; the younger has just completed his A-levels and hopes to start training as a doctor in the autumn. William plays the organ and, with Barbara, sings. When time allows they enjoy classical music and attend concerts and the theatre. William is hoping to get to the Synod later on this evening; he is presently away in Belfast. I think that he will be staying over until Monday so members of Synod will have the opportunity of being able to meet him more informally.

We are, I believe, extremely fortunate to have attracted the interest of so many high-calibre people in our search for Philip Mawer's successor and particularly so in having secured William Fittall.

The Chairman: This item is open for debate. I see no one standing.

The motion was put and carried.

Report by the Business Committee (GS 1444)

The Dean of Derby (Very Revd Michael Perham): I beg to move:

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

It is a heavy agenda before the Synod over the next few days and members may have mixed feelings about that; the reality is that the Synod has made an important decision, as a norm, to meet only twice a year but has not yet entirely appreciated – nor have the boards and councils entirely appreciated – the corollary of that important decision: that we must have less business and more expeditious business. Until we have learned to slim the agenda with which the Synod wishes to engage there will continue to be immense pressure on our time together. This pressure accounts for the fact that, for the second year running, the York group of sessions is beginning earlier than dinner-time on the first day. The Business Committee regrets that and tried hard to avoid it; the fact that it has happened twice does not mean that we have accepted its inevitability every year, and the firm intention is to revert to a later start next July. We could only have begun later by sacrificing the study groups which many think are an important part of our life here together in York or by trying to dissuade the Convocations and the House of Laity from their intention to meet separately. As it is, we have delayed until November a number of debates that some were pressing to have in July simply because of the pressure on the agenda. Further pressure beyond what is set out in the tight agenda is emerging as amendments continue to abound for several debates, and I will, if I may, Madam Chairman, return briefly to them a little later.

First, the content of the agenda before us: it is diverse, much of it is of considerable public interest, and it is outward-looking rather than inward-looking. Catching contemporary events when the planning has to be done far in advance is difficult, but we believe that we have achieved that, even if the downside is that we cannot always get the background papers to members of the Synod as quickly as we would like.

A word about Private Members’ and Diocesan Synod Motions. It has been our clear intention always to give these as much priority as possible, and we would, all other things being equal, wish to schedule at least two of each at each group of sessions, especially to reduce the present backlog. At this group of sessions we have allocated both a discrete slot tomorrow for George Kovoov’s important mission-oriented motion, which comfortably heads the list of Private Members’ Motions, and also a longer slot on Monday when we hoped that, in addition to two Diocesan Synod Motions, we would be able to take a further Private Member’s Motion on the

Abortion Act. I have to confess that those motions already look under threat because of the plethora of amendments to earlier business.

The amount of time that we can spend on those motions also depends very much on how many of the deemed legislative items need to be taken. We have already had notice of requests for debates on two of the Fees Orders, and the deadline for giving notice has not yet expired. It may well be, therefore, that, in order to regulate the business on Monday and Tuesday, I shall be proposing some changes in rubrics. Members may, however, be assured that time for the resumed debate on the appointment of bishops will be given priority.

Before leaving the question of Diocesan Synod and Private Members' Motions, it is worth reminding the Synod, especially in the light of some of the difficulties that we encountered last November, that those with such motions waiting in the wings, so to speak, must always be on standby, aware that their motion might be debated at short notice if a gap suddenly arose; we draw attention to this in paragraph 12 of our report. It has happened so rarely in recent years that we were all caught out by a series of unusual circumstances in November; in response, we have restated the procedure that all proposers of Private Members' and Diocesan Synod Motions must always have oil in their lamps.

Members will have seen that the Business Committee itself has a number of items to present, not only this report and that on the dates of future groups of sessions, but our report on Questions and on the synodical government follow-up. We wanted to get those matters which, although important in themselves, look inwards, out of the way this afternoon so that the agenda can quickly change gear. However, as you will have seen, the number of amendments to consider casts some doubt on that aspiration and we may have to ask the Synod to complete them later in the group of sessions.

This evening, after the introduction to tomorrow's study groups, we move to what we expect to be the first of a series of debates on constitutional issues. This is not the debate that we had originally planned. Parliamentary government, with an emphasis on the second chamber, was our intention, but the publication of the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice* made it timely, and we are grateful to the Board for Social Responsibility for producing the background material at short notice, which enables us to get this debate on the regions off the ground. The debate on the second chamber will come before the Synod in November or February. The timescale of debate on that issue nationally is now very different from what we imagined a few months ago.

Tomorrow brings the first of the two periods for legislative business, and I will be moving a variation in the order of business in order to allow the Legal Officers (Fees) Order to be taken as the first item of business, to be followed by the reintroduction of the Pensions Measure by the Legislative Committee. This is followed by a debate on the review, chaired by the Bishop of Guildford, of how the boards and councils can best be structured; this forms one of the contexts of Monday morning's debate on the

2003 budget, but our hope is that tomorrow members will concentrate on the structures and leave the finances for Monday.

The afternoon tomorrow brings the debate, introduced by the Bishop of Peterborough, on the Anglican–Methodist Covenant. This will be preceded by a presentation by the Bishop of Bristol, who was co-chairman of the conversations. Sunday brings twinned debates on the report from the Urban Bishops' Panel and, to fulfil the promise made to Synod, the future direction of the Church Urban Fund. Although it is not indicated in the agenda, the Presidents have invited Stephen O'Brien, the Vice-chairman of CUF, to address the Synod, which he will do immediately after the conclusion of the debate on the take note motion introduced by Dr Giddings.

We then have another item in fulfilment of Synod's request when the Bishop of Rochester and his colleagues will give a presentation on work in progress on the work of the House of Bishops' working party on women in the episcopate.

Sunday night is a novel time for Questions but there seems to be agreement that Questions are better on a night other than the first. Saturday evening is not available to us; Sunday is.

Monday brings us to the second tranche of legislative business and it looks as if we will need it. As I indicated, the Business Committee will consider how best the rest of that day's business may be accommodated. The Archbishops' Council's annual report and budget follows, and I have already referred to the Diocesan Synod and Private Members' Motions that follow on that day. We then have the second look at marriage law review, with a specific recommendation to the Synod which I believe indicates that we were right to have a consultation rather than a formal debate on this issue at the previous group of sessions.

Members will be aware that we had originally planned to have a debate on Israel–Palestine at the previous group of sessions until the tragic events of 11 September led us necessarily in a different direction, but the topicality of the conflict in Israel and Palestine continues unabated and we are able to bring this debate to this group of sessions with some updated material from the Board for Social Responsibility.

Tuesday brings one uncontentious item of liturgical business. More contentiously, or so it would seem, we then have a major item in the House of Bishops' report on marriage in church after a divorce.

We will be saying goodbye to a number of people at this group of sessions, in particular to Sir Philip Mawer and to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and we have provided time to do that in a fitting manner.

I have been asked to say something about recording abstentions. Our Standing Orders do not permit the recording of abstentions. This is why chairmen do not usually invite

people to indicate abstentions. Not everyone is happy with this, so the Business Committee has been asked to consider a change in practice and in the Standing Orders, and we will discuss this at our next meeting and report back to the Synod at the November group of sessions.

Worship grounds and supports everything that we do here. We have a new chaplain, Revd Mark Bonney. He will be pleased to talk about the arrangements for worship with members. There are some innovations. More of our worship is here in the Central Hall. As an experiment, the early morning service of Communion on Tuesday is being held here in the hall rather than in Heslington church. I am told that the staff have brought up 15 chalices from London for that occasion; clearly, they are confident that we shall want to worship together that morning in much larger numbers than have usually gathered in Heslington church. I suspect that it is outside my brief to encourage members to reward their confidence.

In conclusion I would like to invite the Synod to reflect for a moment on what constitutes a good debate. As I understand it, we are here to legislate for the Church and sometimes to try to express the mind of the Church. We are not here to indulge a passion for public speaking. Sometimes the chairman of a debate apologizes for the fact that so many people want to speak that it will not be possible to call them all, but in very few debates does the chairman *need* to call them all. What constitutes a good debate is a sufficient number of speeches for Synod to hear the range of arguments, to be able to identify the issues and to reach a mature judgment. That is as likely to be achieved by 10 good speeches as by 30 not-so-good ones. Quality, not quantity, is what is needed.

When the timing of a debate goes wrong it is usually because the Business Committee has failed to anticipate a large number of amendments. Amendments take time. A large number of amendments can reduce the debate on the substantive motion to something less than adequate. Amendments can be very important – in the debate on the composition of the Synod it is by working through the amendments that we shall discover the mind of this assembly – but the Synod is not well served when an amendment is put forward simply to guarantee the proposer of the amendment the right to speak in the debate or when the amendment will have much the same effect as another amendment or when the proposer could, by a simple conversation outside the Synod, have their concern dealt with by an assurance from the proposer of the motion. If we are to do our work well in two groups of sessions a year and indeed if we are to have better debate, we need to develop a culture that uses amendments sparingly and looks in a debate not so much for as many speeches as we can fit in as for sufficient contributions to enable us to understand the issues and cast our vote well. Without that change of culture the business of the Synod will be all but impossible to manage and the reputation of the Synod will not improve.

Mr Frank Knaggs (Newcastle): First, a waiver: although I am a member of the Business Committee I shall be speaking in a private capacity. My concern is to do with the

efficient use of time by Synod and how, in particular, presentations impact on our business. I want to suggest that presentations could become more productive if we improved the interaction between members and the presenter. I want to illustrate what I mean by referring to the Anglican–Methodist Covenant which we shall be debating tomorrow, but this observation applies to all presentations.

There are a few questions. What will be in the presentation that does not appear in the report already? If there is nothing new, why bother with a presentation? If there is something new, why is it not in the report? Second, what is in the Anglican–Methodist Covenant that has not been agreed between our Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland partners? If there is nothing new, why bother with a bilateral agreement? If there is something new, why does it not apply to all our ecumenical partners in CTE and CTBI? If Synod agrees to continue with the dialogue, is it an open-ended agreement? If so, how much will it cost per annum to service? If not, at what point do we say, ‘Enough is enough’?

These questions, and perhaps many more, may or may not be answered tomorrow. It is more likely that we will get answers to questions that have not even been asked. It would be disappointing if the presenter merely repeated what was in the report anyway.

May I suggest a mechanism which could avoid this muddle? When it is known that a presentation is to be given, members should be asked to send in questions on that topic so that careful consideration can be given to them and they can be responded to by the presenter. Synod could then expect the presenter to respond to those particular concerns. By this means a meaningful and informed presentation could be given, and it would also save us all precious time and expense.

Mr Peter Smith (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich): In *Reports of Proceedings* of recent years and, I dare say, earlier, a number of suggestions have been made as to how we might re-order the manner in which Synod does its business, especially the non-legislative part. In November 2000 Revd William Challis, in the debate on the agenda, said, ‘We are still conducting nearly all our business here in what one might describe as a quasi-parliamentary manner.’ Last November, again in the debate on the agenda, Mrs Rachel Moriarty raised the issue of opportunities for members to speak. She suggested that consideration be given to all speeches from the floor being restricted to five minutes. Miss Rosalind Fuller, in a telling contribution to the same debate, raised the difficulties that she and some other young members feel in wanting Synod to be more accessible. The Dean of Derby in his response to the debate last year accepted the validity of the comments made.

There are concerns within both the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. It may be that there are members of the House of Bishops who similarly have reservations as to the manner in which we do at least some of our business. I am looking forward to the Bible study to be followed by the introduction of *Shapes of the Church to Come* later

this evening. The discussion groups tomorrow give opportunities for members to contribute in a way that addresses Mr Challis', Mrs Moriarty's and Miss Fuller's concerns. Often the debate on the agenda tends to criticize the Business Committee for leaving this or that out, so I want to thank the committee for the time tabled for the discussion groups on the shape of the Church to come. St Edmundsbury and Ipswich diocesan synod at its first session of the current triennium split into buzz groups to find out if there are certain common wishes or aspirations of its diocesan synod members. A common theme which emerged is to have fewer set-piece debates and more work in discussion groups. Members felt happier working in that format. Last week I was at USPG's residential council meeting at Swanwick. A substantial part of the business over the three days was done in smaller groupings, with only those matters which had to be taken in plenary sessions taken before the full council.

General Synod is different from both the mission agencies and diocesan synods. General Synod when in its legislative role has to function, to quote Mr Challis, in a quasi-parliamentary manner; but are there other items on our agendas which might be dealt with, at least in part, in smaller groupings? For instance – I use this purely as an illustration – could a debate such as the one scheduled for Sunday afternoon, *The Urban Renaissance: a discussion paper for the Church of England*, also be in the form of discussion groups reporting back after an introductory overview to set the scene?

I raise this for further thought, as a member of this Synod for some nine years. The last quinquennium was largely occupied by the drafting of *Common Worship* and the previous quinquennium with the ordination of women to the priesthood. This quinquennium sees other issues coming to the fore. Would Synod be doing a greater service to the Church of England that it serves if, in some of its discussions, more voices could be heard? The Business Committee has produced a balanced agenda for this group of sessions, some of it involving internal Church matters but a large part outward-looking: the Middle East, renaissance in our urban areas, regional government *et cetera*: a good agenda. Will the Business Committee give further thought as to how future business could be debated in Synod to take account of members' concerns?

Mr David Wilkinson (Derby): I have been on Synod for seven years now and we have never had any opportunity to consider the progress of the Anglican and Roman Catholic discussions. There was a rather coy fringe meeting during the previous quinquennium, but I would not want this quinquennium to slip by without any proper debate. Documents are produced at regular intervals and they only help to convey the impression that the conversations are best likened to two Sumo wrestlers locked in an embrace in which neither can move. Perhaps the bulk of the wrestlers makes much movement impossible, but some report to Synod and the subsequent discussion would hardly pull the mat from under their feet. We were prevented in the last Synod by the quantity of liturgical business from even debating the Private Member's Motion on *Clarifications*. Will the Business Committee use its influence to encourage CCU to be more forthcoming on this matter? Questions on this subject are too easily side-stepped.

Despite the ever-increasing mass of business, I hope that Synod will feel that this is a matter of importance which deserves its attention.

Mrs Dorothy Chatterley (Carlisle): Page 14 of the report and paragraph 32: ‘The Synod is now asked to take note of the report and to initiate a process of study and evaluation throughout the Church of England.’ Then on pages 7 and 8 of the agenda I find no mention in the rubric of the existing ecumenical Canons. So I would like to ask that there could be some clarification here. There is much confusion in the dioceses about what is being changed by the Covenant.

Mr Timothy Royle (Gloucester): I welcome very much the cautionary words that the Chairman of the Business Committee gave us just now about the use of amendments and the sorts of speech that are made. I suppose that after all these years I am a rather old hand in Synod, due to be finishing at the end of this quinquennium certainly, but I have to remind the Chairman that if people use amendments to speak it is partly caused by the sense of frustration that those who are presenting motions have their own agenda. Over the many years that I have been here I have rarely found proposers willing to take on board issues, which I or others have felt strongly about, that need to be put into the motion to give it the right sort of balance.

Bearing in mind the huge amount of paper that is descending on us at the moment, which it is virtually impossible to get through completely anyway, and then having to contact the mover of a motion in order to see whether he or she will accept one’s amendment before having to put it to the Synod, I acknowledge that there are problems over this; while the principle is there, I would hope very much that we could find some way of being able to communicate quickly with the mover of the motion, share one’s concerns with them, see if they would move an amendment altering their proposals, and go on from there. I am sure that that would be very constructive.

The other factor is the length of time that one is given in which to speak. Chairing another body, as I do, I know how difficult it is to chair large bodies like this and achieve a balance in the debate, but in three minutes, which happens often, and sometimes in two, it is virtually impossible for people to marshal arguments. They can only give one or two punchlines, and that does not make for the sort of in-depth debate that the Chairman looks for. I hope that the Business Committee will consider this and give guidance to the Chairman accordingly.

Mrs Shirley-Ann Williams (Exeter): We have heard about being succinct in our debates here so that we can further the business of the Synod. I would ask the Business Committee to look at furthering the business of the Synod in the deaneries and dioceses and parishes by giving us longer warning and more time to consider things coming from the Synod. We have until May 2003 to report on the Methodist conversations – and of course it is not a new subject – but really to research with people in the parishes who have not thought about this perhaps for a few years or those to whom it is new, it is not very long.

The Chairman: Mrs Williams, you are speaking to an item that is coming further in the agenda. Could you please make your point?

Mrs Shirley-Ann Williams (Exeter): Will the Business Committee give us due warning of things coming up with a few dates, so that people can get these into process back home, so that the business may be furthered?

Dr Christina Baxter (Southwell): I wonder if the Chairman of the Business Committee might reflect on paragraph 43 of the report, which refers to GS Misc 678. I know that we asked for background information, and I am grateful for that; but, as a Synodsperson who obviously has a particular view about this matter but who likes to hear balance, I feel some regret that this paper is so much in one direction. Yet the debate is only halfway through. Did the Business Committee really intend to try to influence us, as it seems to me to read, by only giving one side? I realize that the Church of England has only one history, but we might at least have had some statement or suggestions of what possible ways forward might be available or something else in the other direction. I wonder if we might avoid such a one-sided presentation if we ever have to ask for it in the future, please.

The Dean of Derby, in reply: I thank all those who have spoken for their contribution. I thank Mr Knaggs for what he said about presentations. I have to admit that the Business Committee is not over-keen on presentations, especially if they turn out to be just an excuse for a speech outside a debate. There are occasions when a presentation enables us to assimilate information in a way other than through a straightforward speech, and those presentations are sometimes helpful to the Synod. The Bishop of Bristol, I think, will have heard what Mr Knaggs said and we look forward to his presentation tomorrow, which will no doubt take it all into account! The particular suggestion, that people should be encouraged to write in with questions when there is a presentation, we will follow up. It has been done sometimes in the past and there is no reason why it should not be done again.

I thank Mr Smith for his support for the agenda this time. He asked whether we might not do rather more of our business in small groups; the Committee will look at that. There can be items of business that could be taken forward in that way, but whenever we do anything along these lines we must bear in mind the need not to create systems and structures that make more work for the staff. Since becoming Chairman of the Business Committee I have become more and more conscious of the need to protect our much smaller staff from additional work. That does not mean that Mr Smith's suggestions necessarily involve more work, but it is an important consideration.

Mr Wilkinson asked about Roman Catholic relations and for a debate on that. There is a Question from Bishop Buchanan on Sunday night about the report *The Gift of Authority* and when that will be debated. I do not know the answer to his Question but we will all hear it on Sunday night, and I hope that that will then give a timetable

to enable Mr Wilkinson to know when there will indeed be a debate on Anglican–Roman Catholic relationships and conversations.

Thank you to Mrs Chatterley who spoke about the Anglican–Methodist Covenant. I have to confess that I did not get her point entirely. I apologize: it was my fault. I will talk to her afterwards and gather what it was and find out the answer. I am sorry that I did not quite catch it.

Mr Royle described my words as cautionary, which was a nice way of describing them, but went on to mention the sense of frustration that people sometimes feel; he hoped that we might be able to find a way of involving proposer, Chair of debate and others in conversation that would avoid some formal amendments when there is actually an easier way forward. I am sure that, as part of its reforming programme, the Business Committee will look to anything that could loosen up that kind of process.

I thank Mrs Williams. Her point about notice to the dioceses when matters are referred from this Synod is not, strictly speaking, a matter that falls within the remit of the Business Committee; it is for those who bring the motions to the Synod. However, they will have heard what she has said. We know that there have been recent examples of matters sent down to dioceses for consideration very fast. I can only say that my own understanding of why that has happened is that it has been important to get some joined-up thinking on a number of quite diverse matters, all of which are urgent because they involve finance; but the point is well made.

As for Dr Baxter and the paper produced for the debate on the appointment of bishops, the paper was written by the acting Secretary General, and I know that his intention was to be even-handed and to provide an analysis rather than to present a particular picture; but obviously Dr Baxter, and maybe others, feels that he has not succeeded. That was, however, his intention.

The motion was put and carried.

Dates of Future Groups of Sessions

The Dean of Derby (Very Revd Michael Perham): I beg to move:

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

With one notable exception the Business Committee has done precisely what the Synod asked it to do in regard to dates for our meetings in 2003, 2004 and 2005. The one exception is this: although the Synod voted in November against an amendment which requested the inauguration of the new Synod always to be held in November, at the group of sessions held in reserve for urgent business, the Committee believes on

reflection that there are good reasons to continue to have the inauguration of Synod at a November meeting.

Our two reasons are set out in the paragraph on page 27 of the annex to our report. One argument relates to continuity, the other to elections and appointments.

I invite the Synod to approve the dates set out in paragraph 4 on page 26.

The Archbishop of York (Dr David Hope): I had not intended to speak on this item, but I refer to Annex A, paragraph 4 and the proposal for 2005 that the Synod meets from 31 January to 4 February. This is in relation to the January residential meeting of the House of Bishops. I am advised that in 2005 it is likely that the House will meet from 10 to 14 January, which leaves only 17 days before the meeting of the Synod. Not only will this tie up members of the House out of their dioceses for nearly a fortnight within a four-week period; it will also make it difficult for any business which may require amendment – for example, a working party report coming before the House ahead of its appearance at the Synod – to be processed in the interval between the House's meeting and the Synod's. We also need to bear in mind that the February sessions would be the main winter sessions, the previous November sessions being held only if required, and also that, with 2005 being the end of a quinquennium, there is almost bound to be particular pressure to get business to the Synod. I wonder if, therefore, in these circumstances, there is not a case for the first 2005 date to be reviewed. While I quite accept that the Synod has agreed that it would normally be the rule that it would meet before Lent, I wonder whether, in 2005, 14–18 February, for example, might not be preferable.

The Chairman: I see no one else standing.

The Dean of Derby, in reply: The Archbishop of York makes a good case but I have only just heard it and therefore it is difficult to do other than to say that it would be wise perhaps to put against the dates that are there the word 'provisional', if we promise to come back to the Synod as soon as we can with the possibility of a revised set of dates for that particular meeting of Synod. It would be foolish, I think, to hold up the whole process of approving these dates in general, but equally it would be foolish to change the dates here at this moment without some careful consultation about the implications. However, the point is well made and, if the Synod will approve these dates, I will give an assurance that we will go back and look at that one again and circulate information as soon as possible.

The Chairman: Dean, can we just confirm that we are therefore moving the dates as set out in the paragraph with the word 'provisional' next to the 2005 first group of sessions date?

The Dean of Derby: If you will accept that and if people will understand my assurance that 'provisional' means that we are looking at it again, then that will be helpful.

The motion was put and carried in the following amended form:

‘That this Synod approve the dates of groups of sessions to the end of 2005 as set out in paragraph 4 of Annex A to GS 1444, with the insertion of the word ‘provisional’ before the dates 31 January to 4 February 2005.’

THE CHAIR *Mr James Humphery (Salisbury)* took the Chair at 4.35 p.m.

Questions: Report by the Business Committee (GS 1456)

The Dean of Derby (Very Revd Michael Perham): I beg to move:

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

The Business Committee and its predecessors have, over the years, received many representations about a possible improvement in the way in which Synod’s Question Time is regulated. GS 1456 sets out proposals for change and invites the Synod to give general endorsement to them, subject to voting on the amendment that has been tabled.

Members will understand that there will be a need to change Standing Orders before some of these proposals can have effect. The business of changing Standing Orders will itself require a process in Synod. Those changes which do not require a change in Standing Orders will be implemented if the Synod’s vote this afternoon gives them a fair wind. The proposed changes are set out in paragraph 10 of GS 1456. I will, if I may, comment very briefly on each recommendation in turn.

In (i), the proposal is that each member’s entitlement be reduced to two Questions. It is our view that the rights of members are not unduly curtailed by this, and the number of Questions to be dealt with at each group of sessions will be kept within reasonable and manageable grounds. In (ii), while retaining a discretion with the Chairman of a session to respond to the mood of any particular occasion, it is the Business Committee’s belief that the momentum of Question Time would be helped if there was a general understanding that no more than two supplementaries would be allowed to any Question. The Chairman’s discretion would of course come into play when a number of Questions had been grouped together for a single answer.

In (iii), there is an ambiguity in the present Standing Orders about the notice period for Questions, which can lead to uncertainty about the deadline for submission of Questions as to whether it relates to the actual date on which Question Time is taking place or the first day of the group of sessions. The position will be clearer to members

and administratively secure if the deadline is fixed in relation to the first day of the group of sessions.

In (iv), a strict interpretation of the current Standing Orders precludes an answer to a Question if the chairman of the body concerned is not available, by reason of illness or whatever. In practice, we have long allowed a nominated member of the body to answer on its behalf, and often that person is better placed to answer than the chairman. The proposal is that this be put beyond any doubt in a revised Standing Order.

In (v), the corollary to the previous point is that, for the future, the notice paper should specify who will answer on behalf of a body and why.

In (vi), although the Business Committee wishes to preserve the spontaneity of supplementary questions to oral answers, it sees no reason why written answers should not be available as soon as Question Time is reached.

In (vii), the fairly recent imposition of a time limit on the length of answers makes no provision for leeway when a number of Questions are answered together. There are times when a complex issue which is being raised from a number of quarters and with a number of different facets to the answer is best dealt with by a comprehensive statement of the position. Such a statement might exceptionally transgress the one-minute rule. A comprehensive statement of this kind, which provides a reply to several answers, could on occasion be preferable to a sequence of short, separate answers.

In (viii) and (ix), at present Questions are answered on one occasion in each group of sessions and in strict rotation, though on at least one recent occasion Question Time had to be adjourned to a second slot. The proposal here is to separate Questions into three categories: the Archbishops' Council and the Houses of the Synod; the Secretary General and the Clerk to the Synod; and other bodies. The intention would be that Questions to the Archbishops' Council, the House of Bishops, Secretary General and Clerk to the Synod would always be taken first but that other bodies would continue to rotate, as they do at present, though more rapidly by taking three bodies forward each time rather than just one.

In (x), the proposal is that answers should be made available on a website as well as in written form.

In (xi), we are proposing that, subject to a suitable amendment of Standing Orders, there should be provision for written answers to Questions between groups of sessions on named dates, midway between February and July and between July and February. It would only be possible for this to be done by written answers but it would give members the opportunity to elicit information which would be on the public record, without having to wait until the next group of sessions. This is particularly important if we are moving to a model of two groups of sessions only in a year.

In (xii), there is a proposal for a formal mechanism for a member to withdraw a Question, which there is not at present.

Members will have the opportunity to debate some of these issues briefly now and later, when the Standing Orders Committee brings proposals forward. Subject to votes on the amendments and the Standing Order changes, members may expect to see these changes being introduced from the November group of sessions onwards.

I conclude with two factors that need to be held in balance. First, the opportunity to question is an important right of the Synod if there is to be proper accountability. Second, at the very same time as we have been reducing staff and therefore demanding more and more of those whom we employ in Church House, we have Synod by Synod increased the number of Questions, each of which entails the staff in significant additional labour. In other words, Question Time is crucial but so is some reform of it.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of five minutes.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): I welcome this report and I am very happy to see that the practicalities have been outlined to us so that we actually know the process that is gone through; I find that helpful. However, it also makes me very aware, as the Dean has just said, that there is tremendous pressure on the staff, especially at this time of cuts, and that it is up to us to help to do something about it. I wonder if it would be helpful if the closing date for Questions were altered a little. I noticed that this year the agenda came out with the fifth circulation, which was on 14 June, giving us a closing date for Questions of 26 June. That is not very long before the papers have to be prepared and it is not giving anyone any time in which to formulate answers and go through all the practical things that are in the report. Circulation number four came out to us on 14 May, four weeks earlier. In that circulation we had things like press notices, the York booking form reminders, a lot of papers on fringe meetings; there were lots of bits and pieces. I wonder, if we had been asked with that circulation for Questions to be put in by 10 June or even earlier, whether that could have helped with the timing and made life a little easier for the staff.

I wonder also if perhaps we might – and we have heard this from the Chairman of the Business Committee – be a little more careful about what we do and how we do it. I have noticed that often we get very similar Questions session after session. I call them ‘hobby horse’ Questions and I think that I have been guilty of doing this myself: my particular hobby horse has not been mentioned for a while and I just want to keep reminding people about it. I wonder also if there may be something that we can do there: if a Question has been answered, say, within the previous two groups of sessions, the questioner could be referred to the *Report of Proceedings* rather than asking a Question yet again, but also, having been referred to that Question, the questioner could be given the opportunity to re-phrase what they wanted to ask. I am looking not to making more work but to trying to cut down the number of Questions requiring full answers.

I hope that what I have said is a little bit helpful. I do like the fact that we should only ask two Questions. It cuts us down and makes us think more clearly. I go along with most of the report's recommendations but I would like us to have that little bit more concern for the staff and the pressure on the staff so that they have a little more breathing space.

Mr David Webster (Rochester): One other long-time member of the General Synod who has died since we last met is Canon Paul Welsby, whom many of us will remember as a stalwart of the Synod in the 1970s and early 1980s, both as Prolocutor and as Chairman of the then Business Sub-Committee. Those of us who were members of the Synod that long time ago will wish to pay tribute to his memory.

In Paul's time, as paragraph 7 of the report makes clear, there were relatively few Questions, which surprised me then and surprises me even now, even though we have rather more Questions today. I speak as one who, since becoming a member 27 years ago, has nearly always tabled the maximum permissible number of Questions at each group of sessions; this means that, given a mix of two or three groups of sessions a year over that period, I have probably asked over 200 Questions, which may be a somewhat dubious record; perhaps it merits a financial statement under SO 98 as to the cost of all those Questions. Probably the only other person who comes close to it is the Bishop of Woolwich. The bulk of the Questions that I have put down have been for the reasons set out on page 2 of the report, particularly paragraphs 5(a) and (c): holding officers, boards and councils to account, and a means by which information may be made more readily available to the public.

Like many other questioners, I have known occasions when not all my Questions have been reached, and I want to pay tribute to the Synod staff over the years for the very efficient way in which answers to the Questions, whether reached or not, are distributed to the questioners. I am sure that many members will agree with me when I pay tribute to the care taken by the legal staff and other Synod staff in handling the Questions, often suggesting to questioners a more appropriate or clearer wording of their Questions and sometimes relocating the Question to a more appropriate body.

Having heard what one or two others have already said in the debate, I wish to encourage members to put down Questions because I believe that this is a very important part of the work of the Synod; and though we do not want to involve the staff in too much work I believe that this is far more important than some of the other matters which are dealt with in the Synod.

I go along with most of the recommendations in the report, but I have a grouse. It is unfortunate when the bulk of papers from the Synod office are sent out to members so close to the Questions deadline that it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to table Questions relating to them. This time, for instance, it included the report on telecommunications aerials in church buildings, the report of the religion in broadcasting group, and the latest issue of *Unity Digest*. I hope that Malcolm Taylor and his team will bear this in mind.

This leads me to my final point: I am sorry that the Business Committee has not looked at the possibility of allowing at least a few topical Questions on matters of importance which have arisen in the time since the deadline for submitting Questions. It is sometimes galling if Questions cannot be asked on highly relevant issues because of the deadline. We do not need something such as they have in the Other Place, where we might be asking the Archbishop what he will be doing that day before putting the topical question (although it might provide some revealing answers). Just a few Questions relating to the immediate present would be welcome to many members of the Synod.

Revd Dr Richard Burridge (London University): I am very grateful for a discussion about Questions. When I first came on Synod, Questions was the one thing that I understood fairly quickly, in the sense that it is something that people may have seen in Prime Minister's Question Time or whatever. It is important for members of Synod to be able to ask Questions and find out what is going on. I enjoyed doing it when I first joined the Synod. Some of those involved on the platform got their revenge, when the convention was brought in of letting others answer Questions, by making me answer some addressed to the committees and so on in the Ministry Division that I was on, and I then saw the other side of it; I too want to pay tribute to the staff for the way in which they produce answers to the Questions very rapidly and cope with the pressure that they are under.

The Business Committee has given us a tremendously helpful review of the subject and I find most of the ways forward as proposed in paragraph 10 eminently suitable, particularly from (iii) onwards. However, I am a little anxious about 10(i) and 10(ii) on the limit on the number of Questions and on the limit of supplementaries. That is because Questions serve another purpose in addition to the three mentioned in paragraph 5 of the report: they allow members of Synod to express a strength of feeling on a particular issue or on issues of concern which are not otherwise being discussed. The number of Questions being tabled and supplementaries asked gives those involved in the business a real sense of the strength of members' feeling, and it also allows for the hobby horse method mentioned earlier. I wonder if the two restrictions in 10(i) and (ii) might curtail the right of Synod as a whole and of individual members to raise those sorts of issue.

I would, therefore, like to ask the Business Committee, in moving to legislation on this, to consider whether in 10(i) the best way of doing it is really to reduce the number to as few as two. Another way of doing it – apart from making the limit three or four or something – would be to see if there are particular Synod members who are asking lots of Questions over a period of time (going back to the hobby horse); one could make the limit x over y period of time, in other words stop the same thing being asked over several sessions.

My concern about the two supplementaries is this: by the time you have allowed the original questioner one, you only have one other supplementary and, if you really are

trying to gauge the strength of feeling, that one is not enough. That is my anxiety too over Bishop Buchanan's amendment that we shall come to later, because that will also entail a large amount of work. I wonder whether that would not require a change to Standing Orders. So I would ask the Dean to look again at 10(i) and 10(ii); I think that the rest of the proposals are eminently suitable, and I consider Questions to be an important part of our business.

Dr Carole Cull (Oxford): One of the things that brings frustration to members of Synod during Questions is not the amount of time spent on the answer nor the number of supplementaries but the amount of time that elapses between Questions when people are changing places. Because of that, one of the things that I want to flag up as being of concern for me is (iv) on page 10, about the fact that somebody other than the Chairman will answer particular Questions. If a board or council has 15 Questions and it decides that every alternate one shall be answered by someone else, we lose a lot of time. I just want to flag that up as an issue, that although it is clearly right that in certain circumstances somebody other than the Chairman is better equipped to answer a Question, and to deal with supplementaries to that Question, this should not be thought of as a normal thing to do but that normally the Chairman should be fielding the Questions, so that we do not get these constant changes of people rushing up and down, and wasting time in Question Time by doing so. Some of the chairmen try to encourage people to sit close to the microphones but it does not always happen.

Following on from Dr Burridge, the other item that I would like to pick up is the limit of two supplementaries. Would a better way of doing it be to put a limit on the amount of time for supplementaries? It is quite possible for supplementaries to be very short and to be answered very quickly – someone will say 'Yes' or 'No' – and if we have only two supplementaries it may be that nothing actually transpires; but if we had it so that we said not more than two minutes' worth of supplementaries, or something like that, and if the first and second supplementaries were very quick, the Chairman could move on to a third. Given that the Chairman has to gauge the mood of the Synod, that is a very difficult thing to do, and I wonder if we can think back through that to accept that just two supplementaries could be very restricting in certain circumstances.

Mr Gerry O'Brien (Rochester): I am in favour of reform and I welcome this report and the helpful suggestions that it makes. There are four points that I would like to query briefly. The first is that paragraph 5(b) states that one of the purposes of Questions is a 'means of eliciting information which would not otherwise be in the public domain or easily accessible so that it may be referred to in Synod debate'. We have traditionally had Question Time on the first evening of a group of sessions, that is, in advance of most of the debates. Over the past year it has moved, for various reasons, to the second evening of the sessions, and this time it has moved to the third evening, by which time the group of sessions is more than half over. It means that there are whole areas of debate to which Question Time has ceased to be relevant by the time Questions are asked.

I would urge, please, that, whatever the difficulties may be, we do not leave Questions to the third day of a group of sessions. If that were to happen in one of the shorter groups of sessions we might find Questions as the last item on the agenda, which would be regrettable.

Second, in paragraph 10(i) we read, ‘The number of Questions which may be tabled ... should be reduced to two.’ Whatever we say we should have been doing, over the past few years we have tended to have three groups of sessions. There have been some occasions when we have had only two, but as often as not we have had three. That means that individual members could ask up to nine Questions, and we are now proposing to cut this down to four. Such a provision will have very little effect on most members of the Synod who ask no more than four Questions in a year. There are a handful who ask more than two Questions at each group of sessions, but I think that the number affected would be remarkably small. Just glancing down the Question paper this time I notice that the Chairman of the House of Laity has three Questions, but what purpose is served by restricting our Chairman to asking only two Questions? I am sure that she has plenty of friends who could ask the third, if need be. So is this merely a means to clip the wings of members of Synod who lack sufficient friends to ask any extra Questions for them?

I agree with what has been said about supplementary questions. Again, how often is the number of supplementary questions a problem? I am almost certain that perhaps two-thirds of the Questions that we get on Sunday evening will not attract any supplementaries at all. As the last speaker said, some supplementaries are very short and quick. If we cut it down to merely two supplementaries, one of which will be asked by the original questioner, are we not in danger of severely restricting the opportunity for members of Synod to show that they have a concern about the issue being discussed?

Finally, in (x), we are talking about putting copies of the answers on a website as soon as possible after Question Time. I really welcome that – it is moving us into the information age – but I want to make a plea that we do not just put the answers to the actual Questions on a website but also the answers to the supplementaries, because it is helpful to have the precise answer that was given when you are referring to it in, say, reports back to deanery synods and so on.

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Dean of Derby, in reply: Mrs Williams made a couple of suggestions. She wondered whether we should set the deadline for the closure of Questions somewhat earlier to help the staff. That is kind of her, but we would lose something in terms of

topicality; indeed, a later speaker asked that the deadline should be even later than at present. Our feeling is that if we bring in these written Questions between groups of sessions, at those six-month points, that will mean that a number of Questions are asked between the sessions and this ought to reduce somewhat – perhaps not greatly but partially – the number of Questions that are coming in at the last minute and so the staff will be able to cope with the present sort of deadline.

Mr Webster was one of those who would like an opportunity for Questions to be asked on important, topical matters even after the present deadline. I am advised that the Presidents can direct that a Question be allowed at very short notice if it is a matter of great importance and interest. (I probably should not have told you that.)

Dr Burridge, I think, forgets that in what we have said there are words like ‘normally’ and ‘discretion’. There is not a discretion in our proposals about how many Questions people may ask, but people do have friends in the Synod and if they really are that passionate to get a third Question asked they will find a way of doing it. In terms of supplementaries, we are saying that the norm should be two supplementaries. Of course there will be occasions when the Chairman will respond to the mood and the atmosphere and allow an extra supplementary if the matter is of great importance.

Dr Cull made a point about the time wasted in people getting to the microphone to answer Questions. I am quite surprised that she has said that because my impression is that people are rather good about lining up ready to speak and that there is rarely a delay; but we can remind people of the need to be ready. Dr Cull is certainly right that it is not our intention, by loosening up the rules, to end up with a situation where, if there is a series of 10 Questions to a particular board, 10 different people should give the answers. The assumption is that it will normally be the chairman of that board, but our present rules do not actually allow anything else and we need to bring the rules into line with our current practice.

Mr O’Brien made a number of points. I do not want to respond to each individually because, in a sense, he is defending the present system, which he is perfectly entitled to do. I would like to respond to his particular point about the website. Yes, it would be possible to put up the answers to the supplementaries and that would be helpful, but there would be a delay before that could happen because it would have to wait for the transcript of Question Time to be made. So it could not be as instant as putting up the original answers.

I feel that what Mr O’Brien is saying is ‘It ain’t broke. Don’t mend it. All is well. We don’t need these changes.’ I do not think that all *is* well. We all come away from Question Time enormously frustrated, more often than not; we do need some changes, and these proposals are designed to make Question Time more satisfactory. I hope that Synod will go with them.

The motion was put and carried.

The Dean of Derby: I beg to move:

‘That this Synod invite the Standing Orders Committee to introduce changes to the Standing Orders reflecting the recommendations contained within the report.’

The Chairman: I remind Synod that a five-minute speech limit is still in force for this debate.

The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘At the end *insert* the words “but also to include provision for questions and the answers to them to be circulated to all members in advance of the relevant session, and for questioners to have the right to give notice of a supplementary question, which would be included in an order paper (but without prejudice to the existing entitlement of other members to ask supplementary questions)”.’

I am in serious mood: not over-passionate, but not simply wanting to be a figure of fun on this one. I believe strongly that Questions are there for accountability purposes and I regret anything, whether it is the number of meetings a year or whatever, that cuts down the opportunity to make management accountable; and, as David Webster said, I do occasionally ‘use’ Question Time. However, there is a serious blockage to this accountability factor and my amendment is designed to meet it. There is the sheer lack of time of course, which means that some Questions are not reached and there is no possibility of supplementaries, but my real problem is about the chanciness of supplementaries. The Dean has talked about spontaneity. It is the spontaneity of a kind of party game or *One minute, please* or something of that sort, where the answer has been devised to make sure that the questioner cannot come back with a penetrating supplementary; the questioner then has to listen very quickly to the way in which that answer is framed in order to find the weak point in it and go for it; and the person who is answering from the platform has to pick up that supplementary very quickly, get off his back foot and come back aggressively to deal with the questioner.

I enjoy these sorts of party game – I play them – but it is not the way that a Christian assembly ought to function. It has been made over-adversarial in the interests of spontaneity. All the answers to the Questions exist. Sometimes, because I am a bishop, I can look over to my neighbour and find out the answer to my Question in advance, and that will help me with my supplementary; but I must not really be looking at it because the game is on and you must not see it before the time comes.

I have said this over the course of about 15 years to various Business Committees and they have done nothing with it. I now ask the Synod – my first chance ever to do so – to let us have a serious tabling of Questions, a making public of answers, a chance to ask a serious supplementary that relates to the Question and has been thought through

before it is posed, and then let us get to the bottom of the matter at issue. There can still be spontaneous supplementaries from the floor, no doubt, in the light of the answer that is given; there are various ways in which that can be handled and I have made suggestions in writing; but it would save a lot of time in reading out that which could easily be available in writing, and would render therefore all the other restrictions that are being proposed unnecessary.

I hope that the Synod will go with me. I am sure that the Dean will give a sort of nod in my direction and try to dismiss me, but I hope that the Synod will do it.

The Dean of Derby: I am sorry to disappoint Bishop Buchanan but we are not very enthusiastic about his proposal. He is quite right to say that he has put this proposal forward before. The Business Committee has looked at a whole series of ideas and brought them today, and this is not one of them because we were not convinced by it, as much as anything because of the resource implications and staffing implications of having all this information circulated to the whole Synod in advance and then having further work to prepare answers to supplementaries of which notice has been given.

Bishop Buchanan calls what happens now a party game and adversarial. It is not often very adversarial – perhaps when it is it needs to be – and it does not feel to me like a party game, but it is up to Synod to decide. The Business Committee is not setting out to oppose this strongly, but it would be wrong to say that there was great enthusiasm for it.

The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan): On a point of explanation, Mr Chairman. I speak from memory but I accepted some changes by the secretariat to the form of my amendment. I think that I actually asked that the questioner be told the answer, not that it should be circulated to all members. I was perfectly happy to have that change made but it seems a bit unfair to have my amendment shouted down on the basis of the text that the secretariat themselves produced. I do not mind whether they are all circulated to everybody in advance or not; I just wanted the questioner to know the answer so that the supplementary could come out; and the Questions could be with us earlier in the day, that sort of thing. It does not need to be sent out by post.

The Chairman: Bishop, Synod will have heard that, and the Chairman of the Business Committee will have heard that.

I remind Synod that we are debating the amendment in the name of the Bishop of Woolwich.

Mr Michael Chamberlain (Archbishops' Council, ex officio): Bishop Buchanan's amendment came in at a late stage and it has not been possible to include any comments in the financial memorandum which has been distributed on members' chairs. If the amendment were to be carried, either in the form as it is on the notice paper or even in Bishop Buchanan's clarification, there would be resource implications

at Church House, and, with the existing pressures, that is something that is going to be difficult to deal with.

Indeed, considering the substantive motion, a number of members have commented on that. I think that, before agreeing to Bishop Buchanan's amendment, Synod needs to think very carefully about the resource implications and the additional work for the staff at Church House.

Mr Tim Hind (Bath and Wells): I am confused, and I suspect that a lot of people are. If the amendment that is before us is an amended amendment, we have a difficulty because the amended amendment that we have on our papers actually makes a total nonsense of Question Time. We will have had the answers and therefore we will not need the Questions; we will only have a supplementary fight and that makes a nonsense of the whole of Question Time. I therefore want to resist the amendment on our piece of paper for that reason, and that reason alone.

A second thing arises from what Michael Chamberlain has just said, and that is that the financial implications of merely allowing the questioner to see the answer beforehand are vastly different from posting it to everyone else. We need to know exactly what is to be debated here. If it is what is on the paper we should resist it.

Dr Christina Baxter (Southwell): There are some important issues here and we are in some procedural difficulties. I believe that what Colin Buchanan says he wanted is a good idea. I cannot understand why it is that when a person is going to give an answer to a Question they have to have pretty well the booklet of all the answers, not just the two sheets of their answers, which is currently produced, and that does seem to me to be a waste of paper and of time. It seems to me also that, in the interests of being able to ask a supplementary, to provide those who are going to have their Question answered with one sheet with the answer on is a very reasonable and modest request. However, I cannot vote for that in the amendment because it is not what the amendment is asking.

I wonder if the Business Committee might like to reconsider the question and bring it back to us in the Standing Orders that will need to come to us anyway, so that we can have some more conversation among ourselves, have a debate when the Standing Order business comes to the Synod, and really explore this properly, because I believe that Synod might well be helped by those who are asking Questions having the one simple page of answer. I do not think that that has very large resource implications. It certainly is not, if everybody who is going to answer a Question does not from now on have the whole booklet, with all the answers in, which they certainly do not need.

The Chairman: I think that we are witnessing some of the problems which sometimes arise when amendments which appear quite long on paper come quite late in the preparation process. I thank Dr Baxter for her constructive comments and, with the leave of the Synod, I would like to call the Chairman of the Business Committee again to comment briefly on the matter that we have just discussed.

The Dean of Derby: Thank you, Mr Chairman. There is clearly some confusion. I apologize to Bishop Buchanan: I have not seen his amendment in any form other than the one that we have all seen today. The staff explained to me that there was just a misunderstanding and they did not realize what it was that Bishop Buchanan was proposing, and what I said earlier was on the basis of what I thought he was proposing, as set out on the notice paper. If he is happy – or even if he is not happy – to withdraw his amendment, I am willing to undertake that the Business Committee will return to what we now know he is proposing, sympathetically look at it and bring back a proposal relating to it at the next group of sessions.

The Chairman: I call Bishop Buchanan to reply to those comments only.

The Bishop of Woolwich (Rt Revd Colin Buchanan): I would be extremely grateful. It is quite difficult to rewrite it on the hoof and I do not think that the Synod ought to be asked to do it. I am at serious risk of being defeated when it is not what I wanted to propose in the form in which it comes. If there is a chance of having it brought back on a level playing field at some point further down the line, I would be very grateful indeed. I cheerfully withdraw on that assurance.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

The Chairman: I see no one else standing. I do not think that the Dean needs to reply? Thank you, no reply.

The motion was put and carried.

THE CHAIR *Mr Anthony Archer (St Albans)* took the Chair at 5.10 p.m.

Review of Synodical Government Follow-up: Report by the Business Committee (GS 1441)

The Chairman: Welcome to Bridge. It does not seem a year since we last wrestled with this important material, but time flies when you are having fun. We have much to cover. Members will need GS 1441 which underpins these two items and to which the Dean of Derby will refer as he introduces the debate. The seventh notice paper deals with some corrections. We are scheduled to finish this session at 6.15 this evening, and that we will do. Whether we will complete the business this evening remains to be seen. I do not propose that we rush things. If we need more time the business managers will tell us when that will be. (That should not be taken as an incentive to filibuster.)

There are 10 amendments to the second of our two items. I propose that we have a succinct take note debate on the first item, and this will be the opportunity therefore

for general observations and any matters in GS 1441 that are not the subject of amendments. When that is complete we will move to the next item. The amendments fall into three broad groups: Items 38 and 39 together deal with the overall size of Synod. Size matters. We will therefore need a mini-debate on that area initially, and it will be helpful to know the mind of Synod on this issue before we get into the detail of the further amendments. These fall into two groups. Items 40–45 deal principally, though not exclusively, with archdeacons – an endangered species – and we will conclude the amendments by returning to two matters that we discussed a year ago: retired clergy and a youth council.

In view of the volume of material that we have to deal with I shall impose a five-minute speech limit from the outset.

The Dean of Derby (Rt Revd Michael Perham): Last July the Synod spent a morning discussing the recommendations of the review of synodical government follow-up group, chaired by the Archdeacon of Tonbridge. It was a complex matter to debate in any circumstances, and it is evident from the correspondence that the Business Committee has received that a fair number of people found that way of dealing with the recommendations in Archdeacon Rose's report less than satisfactory. It must, however, be recognized that this is a complex subject, and it is not easy to elicit the mind of the Synod, when opinion is divided, in such a way as to give clear instructions to a drafting group.

To cite one instance, no amendments had been moved in respect of the recommendations in the Rose report about retired clergy, and yet there was a powerful speech which, from the applause that it gained, clearly commanded a level of support against those proposals. In the absence of an amendment, however, the Synod's formally recorded view is that those provisions should be included in the draft legislation. Another instance is the overall size of General Synod. The Rose proposals were for a modest reduction in overall size to below 500; a successful amendment by Mr McHenry by implication raised the overall size of the Synod to much about its present level, yet strongly worded correspondence after the debate indicates that there are those who continue to favour a more drastic reduction in the size of the Synod. No amendments had been moved to that effect, so the Synod is on record as favouring a membership much as at present.

One of the most vexed issues in the correspondence after last July's debate was the number of representative archdeacons that there should be in the Synod. The Rose group had proposed one per diocese; the effect of amendments passed by this Synod was to reduce the number to nine. It is evident that a fair number of members – not all of them archdeacons – believe that there should be a higher number of representative archdeacons.

Of course Synod needs to bear in mind that last July's debate was but the first round in a phased process which will include all the stages of legislative business, including

revision in both committee and Synod, so nothing is set in concrete yet. On the other hand, the group which will draft legislation can only do so on the basis of Synod's latest formally recorded view. The Business Committee was persuaded, both by comments made immediately after the debate last July and by the weight of correspondence that it later received, that before a drafting group is set to work further clarification should be sought on a limited number of issues. These are set out in the three sub-sections of paragraph 8 of GS 1441. A number of amendments have been tabled and these will test the mind of Synod on particular issues.

The Business Committee takes no view on the merits of any of the amendments. Its purpose in bringing forward this debate is to allow the Synod the opportunity to clarify its instructions to the drafting group. The aim is to give the legislative drafting group a clear sense of the Synod's mind on these three issues. It needs a coherent and consistent set of instructions.

I end by making it clear that when draft legislation is brought back to the Synod it is not beyond change; there will be opportunity for all members of Synod to make submissions to a revision committee. The final pattern of legislation will evolve during the legislative business procedure.

I ask members not to reopen today other elements of the Synod's membership – they appropriately wait for the report of the drafting group. I ask those proposing amendments to work with me in helping the Synod to emerge with a set of consistent preferences. The most crucial issue is the first: indicating what size of Synod. If we are content, despite all the slimming-down round us in almost every other area of the Church's life, to keep the Synod membership much as it is now, pressure on special constituencies (whether established ones or newly proposed ones) is not extreme; the drafting group can tinker with the membership. If, however, we vote for a slimmer Synod we need to recognize the implications for the size of present special constituencies and that each new constituency that we create makes it more difficult to deliver the objective of a slimmer General Synod of the Church of England. My own limited aim this evening, Mr Chairman, is to keep holding before you the implication for the whole picture of the way the Synod votes on particular amendments.

Revd Dr Richard Turnbull (Winchester): It seems to me important in this debate that we establish the right principles with which to approach a variety of debates that are before us in these sessions about structure. In particular, before becoming immersed in the details, it is essential that we hold before us the vision to which the whole of the Church of God, of which the Church of England is part, is called and to submit all our structures to that vision. That vision has been summarized elsewhere by the Archbishops' Council as sharing in the mission of God for the world, working for God's justice and peace, growing together in the love of God and living and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. It is that Gospel vision against which all our structures at every level of the Church should be measured and tested. There is a

great deal of danger in a piecemeal approach in which all sorts of special interest groups defend their position but in which we lose sight of that wider picture.

We need to remember this as we debate not just synodical government but the Guildford Review, regionalization and the annual report of the Council, among other things. The debate we are having now itself forms part of a much wider picture. I want to draw out for us three theological questions which I hope will guide us.

The first is to recall the biblical witness as to the nature of the Church. Paul talks about a group of people united by one spirit (the Holy Spirit), one faith (the apostolic faith) and one body (the Church). We are interdependent and individually gifted by the anointing of the Holy Spirit for the service and the building-up of the people of God to equip the saints for mission and discipleship. The second is how we shall embrace the challenges and discussions around *Shapes of the Church to Come* to inform and infect all our debates, all our structures and all our decision-making. What will flexibility and locality, embassy and hospitality, mean in the context of a debate on synodical government? What will it mean in the context of our episcopally ordered Church, synodically governed, a national Church? The third is how all our structures – including the structure of the Synod – serve the development of biblical leadership for the Church at every level in the twenty-first century.

How might we apply those principles to this debate? First, we need to ask very serious questions about the size of the Synod. We need to be much more radical. It is at least questionable whether a Synod of this size equips or stifles the mission of the Church. There is a question to be asked about who should be here in each of the Houses of the Synod, including the House of Bishops. The same question needs to be asked of every level of Church structure throughout the Church. Second, recognizing the need for accountability to the whole people of God, we should be very wary in this debate of the special pleading of special interest groups and special constituencies.

Third, we need to plan to increase our effectiveness as a Synod. Some of these things have begun to emerge in earlier debates. We are here to serve the Lord and to labour in the national arena of the Church, and we need much greater rigour over the business that comes before the Synod. We need to commit ourselves, through developing further the work of the Appointments Committee, to making best use of the God-given gifts among us and in that way contributing to the development of leadership at every level in the Church, including future national and episcopal leadership.

Fourth, we need to recognize that new ways of working need to extend beyond this Synod to the central structures of the Church, to the Church Commissioners, to the dioceses, to each parish, to the House of Bishops.

This contribution has been deliberately general to try to keep us focused on those principles when we come to discuss the details so that we do not get into the sort of trading-off that we got into last time. Let us keep focused, if you like, with Gospel

eyes; let us not defend our own positions; and let us not listen to too much special pleading. Rather, what we need to do is to commit ourselves under God to work together in this place effectively and competently, with a single eye to his glory rather than our personal agendas.

I hope that we will keep these principles firmly in mind as we go through some of the detail a little later in the debate.

Canon Glyn Webster (York): In being asked to take note of this report, which I am happy to do, I would however like to invite Synod into an unusual experience, that of expressing sympathy for an endangered species – our archdeacons – and one that needs our protection.

Archdeacons, described as the eyes of the bishop, have been compared by some to prison or income tax, a cruel and painful necessity. I would prefer to compare them to something more basic, like drains. After all, they look after our drains, do they not, or make sure that we do. Like drains, archdeacons are essential. Like drains, when they work well we never notice them. Like drains, though, when they are bunged up or over-run the consequences are dreadful. Their work is largely unremarked and it consists of stoking the boiler-room of Church administration: boring, yes; detailed and meticulous, yes; essential, yes; glamorous, I do not think so. I do not want to be an archdeacon.

As matters currently stand they will not be represented in a reformed Synod in anything like the way they are now. I think that that would be sad, so it is my view that the archdeacons' constituency ought to be substantially reconsidered. For all that we like to think that what we are doing here is glamorous, at the cutting edge, vibrant and breathtakingly exciting, the bulk of our work too, like that of archdeacons, is looking at the detail of the ways in which the Church, both as an institution and as an agency of the Holy Spirit, attempts to organize itself. Taking archdeacons out of this equation, reducing their presence here in this place, would, I believe, be a mistake because, in the first place, it would deprive the Synod of much parochial and pastoral expertise and experience. (I know that it is there in other places too, in the parochial clergy.) It would also deprive this place of some degree of entertainment. Who better, after all, than archdeacons to invite a bishop to live in the real world, especially when an archdeacon is inviting his own bishop to do so?

Second, the decisions that this Synod make ultimately work themselves out on the ground, for better or for worse. The changes that we effect to Church life here become part and parcel of the archdeacon's working life far more quickly than for any other group of people in Synod: faculty jurisdiction, other issues surrounding the care of churches, finance, the discipline of clergy. Third, we would lose the collective wisdom of our archdeacons, that blunt, common-sense scepticism and realism, as well as their enthusiasm, a necessary part of the scrutiny process of the legislation that we prepare.

Fourth, finally and of great importance, this Synod needs advocates as parishes increasingly find the opportunity to question and criticize what is done here, what it costs and to what effect; a diocese without archidiaconal representation here on Synod would find it difficult to convince its clergy and laity that the centre, the administration, the support structure, really does understand what it is all about.

So archdeacons are necessary and we should recognize that; we need to have them as a protected constituency, even if we do decide that they should not stand in the usual way as proctors.

Professor Anthony Berry (Chester): I listen with interest to this debate, and I want to make two or three fairly brief points. One of them is that this is partly an essay in organizational design, and, as I was reminded by one of my distinguished academic mates, it is a temptation to think that you have a mechanism when actually organizational design is about human organism.

So there are two underlying thoughts: one is a logic of efficiency which we can pursue, and the other is the logic of what we might call sentiment. The logic of efficiency leads us down pathways of ‘what works?’, ‘can we cut the costs?’, ‘can we do it quicker, faster, better?’ The logic of sentiment leads us towards values, participation, involvement and inclusion. If we are looking at the delivery of a bus timetable, the logic of efficiency seems entirely reasonable. If we are looking at the efficiency of a governance body that is to do with policy and strategy, the logic of efficiency has to give way to a logic of inclusion, participation, sentiment, belief, value, pluralism, Dr Burridge, rather than unitarism, and the involvement of difference rather than an attempt to manage it up or in a very tidy way.

To give a simple example of this, I have much enjoyed reading paragraph 5, as I suspect that Mr McHenry may have, and I was reminded of a conversation that my wife and I had about a tree. There is a tree in the garden and she proposed lopping off some branches. I opposed this. I was given by her the casting vote, so the tree has remained, but she said to me, ‘When you decided to vote against lopping off the branches explicitly, did you perhaps implicitly decide that I would be permitted to chop down the rest of the tree?’ I had to admit that the distinction had not occurred to me; I thought that the tree, being there before, had some kind of existential stance on the matter and was not really a piece of postmodern irony, ready to be dispensed with in the subtleties of a logical debate about explicit and implicit presence. It would seem to me that if there was a substantive existence of a body and an amendment was proposed to cut its legs off, and the amendment was rejected, you could not explicitly claim that the people who voted against it actually had the view that they were implicitly voting for something else – unless, as I look around, I think, ‘Well, it is Friday and we’ve all been busy, and none of us in the last debate knew what we were doing anyway, and that far from this being a tree or a body it was a construct in somebody’s mind.’

To take this back, lopping off the odd branch is of course about efficiency, but in terms of governance or identity or this issue of sentiment this lopping-off of roots is an entirely different matter. What we are about here is asking whether these things are actually the roots of the Church and the roots of our belonging together and the roots of the way we work together. This would turn the construct of special pleading not into something that one would dismiss but into something to which one should listen with considerable care, rather than pretend that a point of view of either a group or a sect or a club or even archdeacons is something that we should necessarily ignore.

So I want to offer a quite different view about this. In a later paper there is a greater plea for lightening of structures and all that, but what we are dealing with here is the necessity for sentiment, for participation, for involvement and for pluralism; I think that we should hold to that and sustain ourselves in our variety.

Sir Patrick Cormack MP (Lichfield): I have nothing against the general size of the Synod and I have certainly nothing against archdeacons, but I would like the opportunity that is presented to us to be taken to the full because what we should be concerning ourselves with is not just the composition of the Synod but the electorate of the Synod. I am increasingly concerned that this body does not adequately and accurately represent the man and woman in the pew, those who will be in church on Sunday morning in Staffordshire, in the Lichfield Diocese and all over the country. I believe that we would be failing ourselves if we did not take this opportunity – and the Dean has told us that nothing has been cast in stone; I am very grateful for that – of looking at the electorate.

My ideal would be that everyone who is on an electoral roll and has been on it for a year should have the opportunity of voting for a General Synod member. I know that there are difficulties and financial implications and that it has to be looked at carefully, and I know that it was looked at some 10 years ago, but I believe that we must examine it again. We are all of us concerned about the separation between those who govern the Church and those who go to church. It really is vital, if we are to see our mission revived in the twenty-first century, to engage the sympathies and the active participation of all those who go to our churches Sunday after Sunday.

In my own small parish where I am churchwarden there are just two members of the PCC who are on the deanery synod and have the opportunity of casting a vote for General Synod, yet we have, small as we are, somewhere between three and four hundred on the electoral roll. What we should be doing is in our parishes trying to increase the size of the electoral roll, and one of the things that we could be saying to people, in encouraging them to make that commitment to church membership, is that they too will have a vote, and that, just as people on the secular electoral roll have a vote for their secular representative in Parliament, they will have a vote for their elected representative in the Church's Parliament. The logic is impeccable. I know that there are implications, and I realize that they must be looked at very carefully, but I

would urge everyone involved with drafting this legislation to consider this point very carefully and report back in November.

Mr David Warner (St Albans): There are three points that I have been mulling over on looking at the annex and the numbers in it. The first point is small, and it arises when I look at the prison service and see that it is one current and one proposed and I compare it with the armed services; I cannot remember why the latter went up from three to seven but it seems to me that the prison service needs to be better represented, as one of the most important things that any society does is to be really certain what it is doing when it puts somebody in prison. It could well be that the figure for the prison service should go up rather than remaining the same, just to make quite certain that we have the prison service represented, including, for instance, the probation service.

My second point is the big query that I have over this business of none of the universities having theological input or having a constituency that places them there, but transferring this to archbishops' appointees. The Archbishops' Council already has six appointed members. Suddenly to transfer the theological input into the Synod from those who have elected their members to represent them and transfer it to appointees of the two archbishops raises a big query in my mind. I can well understand that archbishops should indeed have the ability to appoint one or two – perhaps one each – but there ought to be an input from a completely different source, and not an internal one.

Then the archdeacons business: we keep on talking about it as a constituency, as though it was the same sort of thing as the deans and suffragan bishops. It was not; it was making certain that there was someone representing each diocese to carry forward the legislation and make an input into it. It seemed to me to make absolute sense not to have the bishop as the only person there by right, and to have someone who would see that the legislation was brought forward and would be the bishop's right-hand man. It seems absolutely swingeing to say that in future there will be 35 dioceses who shall not have archdeacons in General Synod. At the moment we have one from each diocese, and one or two others can be elected, with a strong steer presumably that, having got one in, the others stand down; but it is possible. It seems amazing to me to go from making certain that you have an archdeacon there to saying that 35 dioceses shall not have an archdeacon at all. If we really are going to go down that route, perhaps we can put the archdeacons back into the clergy pool and let the dioceses decide whether they want an archdeacon there or not.

Revd Simon Killwick (Manchester): This debate has a feel rather like the *Star Wars* films: a new one comes out every year. I am not sure whether this year's should be called *The Return of the Archdeacons* or *The Archdeacons Strike Back*; it depends on one's point of view. It means that it is necessary for the same arguments that were put forward last year to be repeated. One thing that has been said already is that the Synod at least purports to be a representative and democratic body, a representative body of

the Church of England. The Church of England is a very broad Church and therefore it is necessary to have a large-sized Synod in order to represent the range of opinions and traditions that exist in the Church of England. I would therefore support keeping the size of the Synod at something like it is now so that it represents and includes the range of opinions and traditions in the Church.

Coming to archdeacons, I have nothing against archdeacons as such, and indeed I argued last year that the special constituency for archdeacons be retained. My concern, though, was that, as it is presently, it is not a very democratic body. The problem is that in each diocese you have two or three archdeacons ‘electing’ one of their number to represent them, and to have electoral colleges of just two or three, like this, does not seem a democratic way of going about things in the twenty-first century.

The other problem from a democratic point of view is that if you have 44 archdeacons in the House of Clergy it unbalances the House of Clergy because it means that nearly one-quarter of the House have not been properly elected at all but have been elected by these small groups of two or three. So it means that there is a democratic deficit with the present arrangements. If the size of the Synod was reduced, that would reduce the size of the House of Clergy, and if there were still 44 archdeacons there would be an even bigger democratic deficit.

I therefore urge the Synod to consider very carefully the amendments being put forward today. I believe that there are two very good and sensible ones being put forward by two well-respected members of the Synod: Dr Giddings and Mr Cooper. I would be happy to see either of those go through, but I still firmly believe that 44 produces a democratic deficit, both in the House of Clergy and in the Synod as a whole.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Dean of Derby, in reply: I am grateful, as I am sure other members are, to those who have spoken, but I do not intend to reply to each of those speeches because I see my role in this particular debate as simply enabling the Synod to make some choices.

I would like, if I may, to correct two things that Mr Warner said. He was not to know this, but the information about the university representation was wrong in the document and a correction of it is published on the seventh notice paper. What he is hoping for, namely direct university representation, was what we voted for last time; so he can be assured about that. He also suggested that we were wrong to have begun to talk about an archdeacons’ special constituency as if it were the same as the deans’

and bishops' suffragan and so on. It is important to say that that is exactly, at the moment, what the Synod has decided. We may be reconsidering that but part of why we are having the debate is that the Synod decided last time that instead of there being an archdeacon from every diocese there should be an archdeacons' special constituency of nine. That is how it stands at present, and that is why the amendments that we are coming to in a few moments are important, if that is not what we want.

The crucial thing, the first thing that we must decide, and we move to it now, is about size because how we vote on the other amendments must depend on the size of Synod that we want to create. We have not heard much about size in the course of this debate but we need now to face up to that one: what size Synod do we want? That is the crucial question.

The motion was put and carried.

The Dean of Derby: I beg to move:

‘That this Synod request that legislation be introduced to give effect to the decision made in July 2001, to be drafted on the basis described in paragraph 8 of GS 1441.’

The Archdeacon of Malmesbury (Ven. Alan Hawker): And a member of the Business Committee but speaking on my own behalf, not the Committee's.

Last July we had a debate which was quite useful in indicating to Synod that some of the special constituencies in the House of Clergy were still valued, but a certain confusion arose as well, as is apparent, and towards the end of that debate somebody called out, ‘Where are we now on numbers?’, to which the reply of the Chairman of the follow-up group in her final speech was, ‘I haven't a clue’. In fact, we do know the numbers now, that if we simply apply last year's amendments to the present figures it would reduce the Synod by 25 places to 546 or, if we did it on the basis of what the follow-up group asked for, it would reduce Synod by 91 to 480. However, we cannot do that because 480–490 is the only number that is forbidden as a result of last year.

I believe that there needs to be clarity, and I bring forward this amendment in order to try to achieve some clarity. There is no point in talking about special constituencies – or may I even say the 86.5 per cent of Synod whose tenure was totally secure throughout the whole of the debate last year – until we know what size of Synod we want. The calls have all been for Synod to be reduced – I have heard no calls for Synod to be increased – but the argument of those who talk to us about participation, involvement and representation of groups could lead us in the opposite direction, towards a Synod even as high as 750, in order to meet all the different groupings required. Yet as a member of the Business Committee I know that, at 571, we have constant complaints about the lack of participation which that

number creates in the Synod. People complain that they never get the chance to speak, to make their contribution; they put their names forward on lists and are never called.

So participation is not working in a Synod of 571, a Synod, may I remind members, which is a Synod of representatives. When I was an Evangelical representing clergy in the Diocese of Chichester, which was a real fun activity, I was quite clear, and the clergy knew quite clearly, that I would represent any view from that particular constituency; I would not guarantee to vote for them all but I would make sure that if they needed to be heard they would be heard. I believe that what we want here, whatever the size of the Synod, is a group of people who will represent the variety and the richness of the Church of England, not a group that guarantees that everyone has someone who is just theirs.

So I recommend very strongly that we act fairly radically. As an archdeacon who does not feel particularly endangered at the moment, I have to say that I am aware of the agonies that many of our parishes are facing as they seek to resource the mission of the Church. I am equally conscious of the stresses that the dioceses are facing and I am deeply conscious of and thankful for the sacrifices that the centre of the Church has made in Church House, Westminster. There is one notable exception among those who are facing the pain and the stress and that is the General Synod of the Church of England. If it remains as it is, however good the arguments, I defy members to sell that convincingly to the constituency that we represent; and if we knock it down by the odd 25 or so they will laugh, because that is tokenism.

I would therefore suggest that my amendment gives us the opportunity to say to the Church that we understand, that we care, that we will play our part and slim down the Synod in a way that will not prevent its effectiveness but will indicate our presence with the rest of the Church. To reduce the Synod by between one-quarter and one-third would mean that the Synod would be reduced in size to between 427 and 380. I have deliberately done it in that way. I have not given a specific figure because, having taken the Discipline Measure through Synod, I know what agony it is to be given absolute instructions by the Synod that do not quite work out when you come to the detail. I would like to give a range within which the drafting group might then proceed. I would suggest that that is a figure which allows for a representative and participative Synod; it is a figure which is realistic; and it is not far from the original Bridge proposal of 380 which, I remind Synod, was partly on the basis that we represent, sadly, a somewhat smaller constituency than the numbers which were fixed in 1970 and on which we are now based. Even the follow-up group wanted to reduce by about a hundred.

I put this amendment before Synod to give us the opportunity to do what I believe in my heart we need to do, without damage to the Synod or to the central governance of the Church but showing clearly to the people of our Church that we understand where they are and we stand there with them.

Mrs Penny Granger (Ely): My amendment gives even more flexibility than that of Archdeacon Hawker. I agree with all that has been said in the debate just now about the July 2001 debate being unsatisfactory and about some aspects of the outcome being unclear. This, I think, was partly due to vested interests but mainly because of lack of clarity in handling the debate, how the recommendations and amendments interrelated, i.e. what effect the passing of Amendment A had on Recommendation B. So far today I think that we have had more clarity than we had in the session last July. However, as the Chairman of the Business Committee has said, if we are to proceed today the drafting group needs clear but not necessarily totally prescriptive guidance on points of principle, which is what my first two amendments are intended to achieve.

The position is different from what it was at this time last year. We can no longer say, as the follow-up group report did, that the financial arguments for change are of secondary importance. Church House administration is being squeezed, dioceses are stretched and having to make cutbacks; we all know this. In looking at the overall size of the General Synod, we cannot ignore the other reports. They were touched on by Dr Turnbull earlier, but I want to give the Synod a couple of quotes. In *Discerning the Future*, page 19, 'The need to achieve substantial savings presented us with stark choices . . . we seek to discern the structures that will best serve the Church in future within the resource constraints placed upon us.' In *Shapes of the Church to Come*, which we are to look at later today, 'Lightening our organization and structures, whether nationally or in dioceses and parishes' (page 17). I do not believe that it is right for the Synod now to turn its back on the opportunity to show solidarity with our staff in Church House and to send a strong signal to the dioceses from which we all come that we too are willing to lighten our own structure. In stark financial terms each Synod member costs around £550 a year; this cost falls mostly on the dioceses. So a total membership of under 500 would represent a saving of some £30,000 a year. That may not seem a lot in cash terms but it would show that we are responding to the situation. We cannot afford to go on fiddling while Rome burns.

Last time this was done, some 30 years ago when the Church Assembly became the General Synod, I asked Oswald Clark – some members may still remember him – how people reacted in reducing in size from 746 to 543 (and you can see that we have gradually crept up again since then – and in the Church Assembly there were 85 archdeacons). Mr Clark said that there was little opposition to that since everybody recognized the need for a new structure to meet a new situation. So in that sense there is a closer parallel with our move in the national institutions a few years ago. However, the important point to take from the experience of 1970 is that the new slimmed-down Synod was more effective, not less, and that our opportunity to influence policy in the boards and councils, which is mentioned in the Guildford Review which we are to consider later, would be given to a larger proportion of a smaller total membership. (Maybe members will need to read that in the *Report of Proceedings!*)

I am naturally going to urge the Synod to vote for my amendment rather than that of Archdeacon Hawker, even though I agree with most of what he said and the principle

from which he came; but I want the Synod to vote for mine partly because it gives more flexibility to the drafting group. Under 500 does not actually preclude the range between 381 and 428. However, I mainly want to ask the Synod to oppose his amendment and vote for mine because I think that his reduction, like the original Bridge proposal, is rather too drastic. Not least, it would mean either abandoning the special constituencies altogether or abandoning the principle of a minimum of three clergy and three laity per diocese, which is one that we have stuck to through thick and thin.

I hope that, if my amendment is passed rather than his, the drafting group would go for something like the follow-up group's 494, which preserves both principles, and when we come to the vote I urge Synod to vote for my amendment.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of five minutes.

Miss Jayne Ozanne (Archbishops' Council, ex officio): I would like to ask Synod's indulgence to allow me to speak: I am an appointed member (one of those weird species), and I am here because I have been appointed; I do not believe that I would be here otherwise. I came in fresh, not even having heard of General Synod, about three years ago. My understanding when I read the Bridge report was that the purpose behind it was that we wanted change. I therefore want to speak in favour of amendment Item 38. We recognized that we needed to evolve, to move forward, to transform ourselves into we were not sure what, and therefore we needed a vision. My problem is that in our desire to change I believe that we have only been looking at half the picture.

Any management consultant will share, I am sure, that the greatest difficulty in instigating change is not reorganizing structure but changing a culture. Indeed, without the latter you cannot do the former. It is the ways of working that define an organization, more so than its structure of accountability. As a member of the Body of Christ I believe in a way of working that is based on trust, respect, openness, honesty and grace. I am sure that all of us do. So I wonder how we would, if we were being really honest, define our ways of working here. I have certainly had stories recounted to me of days gone by when we had an old style of working, which was fiefdom-based, where people came to meetings to fight their corner, where representation of various groups was almost more important than ensuring that the right skills and experience were available to that group, where lack of trust meant that people felt they had to be there otherwise their point of view would not be heard, where fragmentation and division became the end result rather than a cohesive, integrated body which can truly work as one.

I want to belong – and I am sure that members do – to a Church where we value people's opinions because of who they are and not because of who they represent. I want to belong to a Church – as I am sure members do – where we trust each other enough to speak for each other, even when we are not personally there. I want to

belong to a Church – as I am sure members do – where, because we are in a relationship with one another, we understand one another, and although we may not be currently doing their job (although we might have done it in the past) we can bring their views to the table. If we truly have this way of working at the centre of all that we do, we would be well able to cut back to a far smaller, more manageable and effective group.

I believe that we need a fresh vision, incorporating a commitment to a renewed way of working, which will enable us to revisit the size of our number. I urge Synod to support Archdeacon Hawker's amendment on the total size of the Synod, which asks implicitly for a fresh vision of how we constitute ourselves, so that we can cut back to a level which I believe we all know, deep down, is what we really need to do.

The Chairman: We are less than two minutes away from 6.15 p.m. so I propose that we adjourn this debate to a time to be announced by the Business Committee.
(Adjournment)

THE CHAIR *Mrs Diana Webster (Europe)* took the Chair at 8.00 p.m.

Message of Greeting from the Methodist Conference

The Chairman: Members of Synod, I have the privilege of introducing to you the President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Ian White, and the Vice-President, Professor Peter Howdle. (Applause)

Revd Ian White (President of the Methodist Conference): Madam Chairman and members of Synod, I am delighted to be here and to greet such a friendly group of people, having just left our Methodist Conference with its standing orders, points of order and matter of delay, which I am sure is not your experience! It is my real privilege and pleasure to bring you the greetings of our Conference, which completed its business about three hours ago.

I am particularly glad to be in this part of England because this is where I began my ministry. It was in this diocese, in its Methodist format, that I began my work back in the 1960s, and at this moment I pay tribute to my Anglican colleague who introduced me to the life of your Communion. Coming from a tiny village as I did, working with my Anglican colleague was a new experience; he enriched me in terms of spirituality, taught me much about liturgy and broadened my understanding of the Christian faith. I am immensely grateful to this brother in Christ who introduced me to that particular understanding of the Christian pilgrimage. I pay tribute to him and to those who have subsequently shared with me during the years, especially those from the West Country whom I see sitting close to the front and with whom I shared a covenant when we were Church leaders in the West of England.

I know, Madam Chairman, that you have an extensive agenda and therefore I will not trespass on your time other than to bring greetings and to say that on Monday the Methodist Conference overwhelmingly agreed to the report presented to us about the Covenant. We agreed to say, ‘Let us walk together, let us pray together, let us talk together, let us listen together, and let us see what we may do for the mission of Christ in this part of the world.’

I bring those greetings and that news and I look forward with interest to your debate tomorrow afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your gathering. (*Applause*)

The Chairman: Thank you. It is very good to have you with us.

Variation in the Order of Business

The Dean of Derby (Very Revd Michael Perham): Madam Chairman, I need to ask, under SO 9(a), for a variation in the order of business. This does not relate to our unfinished debate on the Bridge follow-up before supper; I will bring a proposal about that tomorrow. This relates to tomorrow morning and legislative business. If I may refer members to Special Agenda I on page 22, there has been a request that we debate the Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2002 and, because the mover of that motion can only be present tomorrow morning, we need to ask that that Order be taken first among the legislative business tomorrow. We would take that initially and then move to the Church of England Pensions Measure and on to the Parochial Fees Order 2002. (*Agreed*)

Introduction of New Member

The Chairman: Inadvertently one new member was left out of the greetings earlier, so he may have an acclamation all to himself. He is Canon Clarrie Hendrickse (Liverpool). (*Applause*)

The Bishop of Stafford (Rt Revd Christopher Hill): On a point of order, Madam Chairman. There are two new members from Lichfield Diocese: the Archdeacon of Salop (Ven. John Hall) and Prebendary Lawrence Price.

The Chairman: I am very sorry. I did not know that. Perhaps they will stand and we can greet them. (*Applause*)

Shapes of the Church to Come (GS 1445)

The Chairman: I invite the Archbishop of Canterbury, under SO 95A, to lead us in a Bible study.

The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr George Carey): May I also add my thanks and those of the Archbishop of York to the President and Vice-President of the Methodist

Conference for being with us. We trust that our debate will be as encouraging and positive as yours clearly was.

I have been asked to supplement Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali's address with a Bible study, and the passage that I have chosen is the final section of Acts 2, where we read of the forming of the first Church as a result of Peter's great sermon. I would like to read it to you now from the New Revised Standard Version, picking it up at verse 41: 'So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.'

This passage poses a number of critical questions to our Church today, and before I draw out a number of thoughts from the passage allow me to make two general and very brief observations. First, as we know, the book of Acts is a complex book in which history and theology are intertwined and shaped by the author's intention to show the mission of the Church in a hostile world. Jimmy Dunn in his commentary calls Acts the most exciting book in the New Testament. It tells of the beginnings of Christianity with a vigour and vividness which often leaves the new reader breathless. Its purpose is to describe the spread of this new movement and to show how it was rooted in the kingdom of God preached by Jesus. The second observation is that, concerning our reflection on *Shapes of the Church to Come*, we must remind ourselves that the Church is always in process of renewal, *semper reformanda*, always in process of change and adaptation to changing situations and cultures. Churches that do not adapt die. Nevertheless, the Church is rooted in what it has been given and shaped by the faith that it is commissioned to proclaim.

Holding the tension between faithfulness to what we have received and adapting to new opportunities and challenges is never easy, but God in his wisdom gives us no alternative. So I want to offer five brief reflections to supplement Bishop Michael's theological words which will come a little later. I want members to notice first of all the writer's emphasis upon apostolic teaching: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.' In that teaching the message of Jesus Christ would have been shared and heard, recited and learned by heart. Luke is describing a Church rooted in the apostolic faith, and that same characteristic is found in all faithful Churches through time and space.

Of course this is never a static thing. At consecrations of bishops, at institutions of incumbents, we say in the Declaration 'which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation'. We have to go on relating our faith to our culture,

examining it against the questions of new knowledge and representing it in ways that may connect with our world; but however we shape or teach the apostolic faith we are rooted in it and called to be faithful to it.

So as I muse on the challenges facing the Church today, I long so much for a deepening commitment in the Church of England to being a teaching Church, biblically rooted and not afraid to use our intellect in searching, challenging and hopeful teaching. How may we as a Synod encourage that and strengthen confidence in a bold, sharp-edged Gospel Proclamation so essential to growth? Surely it has to start here in Synod?

The second thing that I want to bring to your attention is that Luke is describing the Church as a worshipping community. At its heart is a commitment to the common life, in breaking bread, in praise and in prayer. Here we find hints of early eucharistic practice and perhaps a challenge or two to some modern assumptions that all worship has to be freshly minted, spontaneous, free worship. No, you will not find that. You will find the Early Church enriched by the traditions, prayers and worship of the synagogue, as we see from many hints in the New Testament itself and as we certainly see in second-century writings.

So as I receive this passage I find myself meditating on the liturgical traditions that we have received and the great need that there is for our common worship to be truly shared among us, but with enough variety for local colour and life to flow through it. Those congregations that are growing are those where liturgy liberates and does not stifle. I am aware – you are aware – of churches where a minimalist approach is taken to worship and where one gets the impression that liturgy gets in the way of authentic worship. I do not believe that to be the case. Worship that is well led and well prepared never gets in the way of faith and an encounter with the living God; it leads us into a deepening experience of God. So I find myself in my meditation asking myself and you too how we may encourage proper experimentation which holds in balance the givenness of worship handed down by faithful generations and the need to express this authentically in the local congregation.

Third, I notice that the Early Church expected transformative experiences to flow from worship and that encounter with the living God. We read that a ‘sense of awe was everywhere’. Lives were being touched and changed. Wonders and signs were expressed among them. This was not a Church struggling to deal with the absence of God but, rather, strongly aware of his presence.

I do not know if you know Harvey Cox’s book *Fire from Heaven*, which came out a few years ago. He recounts the story of a teenager who returned home following a dramatic service to say, ‘Mum! We really had church today!’ Cox calls that ‘primary spirituality’, an awareness that in the ordinary God can speak dramatically. A question for you and for our Church is ‘Do we expect such transformative experiences in our day and age?’ Yet we know it happens; indeed, it happens more frequently than many people realize. Let me give you a personal illustration.

Just 10 days ago a young woman wrote to me with her story. She reminded me that she had written to me 10 years ago about the loss of her baby. At the time she was understandably distraught and she admitted in her letter to having little contact with the Church. I replied pastorally and put her in touch with her bishop, who in turn put her in touch with her parish priest. Ten years had passed since that exchange of letters, and her letter this time was to apologize that she had never told me how the story ended; but she told me a wonderful story of a caring vicar who brought her into the life of the Church, where she found her own faith in Jesus Christ. She said, 'I wanted to tell you the sequel of our correspondence, because in 10 days' time I will be ordained deacon. Thank you to the Church for being there.' Or take a friend of ours, a builder, an ordinary rugged guy living over in Bristol. 'Suddenly', he wrote, 'I have found the real meaning of Christianity. It has revolutionized my life. I want to tell you about it.' We are looking forward to meeting him and hearing his story.

I mentioned expectancy just a moment ago. This passage throbs with a sense of awe and wonder that God was working among them. One of the most important aspects in leadership is whether or not leaders actually believe that things can be different, that organizations can be turned round. I read somewhere quite recently that in leadership 'gifts and abilities count for 25 per cent but attitude is 75 per cent'. I simply do not know how people measure such things as gifts and attitude, but I guess from my own experience that there is a glimmer of truth in that. Give me 100 leaders, ordained or laypeople, who expect to change things, who want to build up congregations and communities, and in the majority of cases they will get things done.

So how do we encourage churches to look for signs of God's blessing? Surely that attitude of expectancy has to start with us?

A fourth characteristic was the way in which the Early Church shared its life and possessions: in verse 44 we read that they held everything in common; they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required. It is a radical expression of following the Lord. Today we find the notion disturbing, over-the-top, decidedly embarrassing. It is not for us, we say. Is that a right attitude to take? How may we repossess the spirit of such early expressions of life in the community, life as one body? Whatever the current financial pressures, let us never forget that, in terms of global Anglican Christianity, the dioceses of the Church of England are very rich, although clearly some are richer than others! As we explore different ways of being Church, how may our sharing in a common inheritance of gifts from the past lead some of us to give up in order that others may repossess?

The passage goes on to talk about the first Christians 'sharing their meals with unaffected joy' or, the version that I read, 'with glad and generous hearts'. Here we find an emphasis on hospitality that Bishop Nazir-Ali draws out in his book. Hospitality is such a wonderful mark of the Gospel. As our riches are shared, so is our faith. Little wonder (verse 47) that they enjoyed favour with all the people. It is always the case – well, it is usually the case – that sacrifice is noted; it is a mark of apostolic Christianity.

My final point comes from the last verse: 'And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.' The emphasis falls on the activity of the Lord. It was the Lord at work, and in Luke that is usually a reference to Christ himself. Whatever the verse may mean in terms of divine activity, it reminds us that we are a Church established through the work of God in Jesus Christ and rooted in apostolic faith and practice. We must never, never assume that the future of the Church is only bound up in what we do. Of course we can shape it; we can spoil it; we may even enhance it; but, whatever we do, it remains the Lord's Church and we share in his work. That is why in my years of ministry – coming up to 40 at Michaelmas – I have never feared for the future of the Church. In the early 1990s, when we were told that the Church of England was finished, I – and, I hope, you – never believed it for one moment, because it is not our Church; it belongs to someone far greater. As long as we remain faithful to that deposit of faith in Christ, committed to the vision entrusted to us, we cannot fail. I do not believe that we can fail.

Whatever shapes of church life we are called to form, we shall find the passage in Acts constantly reminding us that we are a pilgrim body, on the move, constantly engaged in mission and always struggling to keep up with the Lord, to whom our future belongs.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed, Archbishop.

The Bishop of Rochester (Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali): Madam Chairman, I have just risen from my bed of 'flu, which means that my voice is uncertain at best, and it may give up at any time. This may be a huge relief to Synod of course, but my apologies to you.

The genesis of this process lies really in the Archbishop of York bringing people together from the House of Bishops, from the Archbishops' Council and also from the Church Commissioners to see whether the new way of being national institutions could identify a common agenda. Because I wrote the first skeletal paper for this process, I was charged with developing it as it went through separate meetings of the Archbishops' Council, of the House of Bishops and also of the Church Commissioners, and, later on, an historic joint meeting of the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops, with at least some of the Church Commissioners present. That is the background to the paper in front of Synod, GS 1445.

Since the passing of the National Institutions Measure, it has been felt widely that the Church as a whole, and not just the national institutions, needs to gather round a commonly identified agenda. The paper is not really about ultimate commitments which we all have as Christians; I am taking those for granted; maybe that is rash in this Church, though I hope not. Nor is it about specific courses of action: where are the practicalities, people may ask. It is rather about what I have called middle axioms which give directions to the ways in which Christians can express their faith in our times and in our society. The great ecumenist, J.H. Oldham – we are in an ecumenical

phase in this Synod – who coined the term ‘middle axiom’, says that when he uses it, he means the Church ‘discerning the signs of the times and in each crisis of history fulfilling its appointed task’. What is the crisis of history in which we find ourselves and how are we preparing to fulfil our appointed task? In other words, how are we to *be* Church, what are we to do and how are we to do it?

We recognize the missionary nature of the task confronting us. Everywhere around us we hear the ‘melancholy, long, withdrawing roar’ of the sea of faith; while some churches continue to enjoy a vigorous life, there is less and less knowledge of the Christian faith in the population at large. Make no mistake about that. The excuse of a ‘multi-faith society’ is being used to marginalize all religion and especially to remove Christianity from the public arena. This has nothing to do with our friends of other faiths, by the way – these people, our friends, our brothers and sisters, often value the place of Christianity in public life as symbolizing the importance of the spiritual – and everything to do with a radically secularizing agenda which wants to relegate religion entirely to the private sphere, if that, without any means of influencing public policy. I know that many of our debates in the coming days will echo some of these concerns and realities.

In such a situation the Church has to be both responsive and flexible. It must make connections with leading contemporary values such as intrinsic human dignity, the freedom of individuals and communities, and the suspicion of any authority which is merely imposed and not commended by argument or character. Indeed, Christians must, again and again, point out the origins of such values in the Christian faith itself and their fragility apart from their rootedness in that faith. It will be increasingly necessary, however, for Christian communities and Church leaders to be prophetic when there is a failure of justice or compassion and when excessive individualism erodes community or family life.

We will have to be flexible about the structures and patterns of church life. A both/and rather than an either/or culture has to be vigorously promoted here. In the New Testament ‘church’ is both the gathering of the like-minded in the household, for example, and the larger, more diverse gathering of Christians in a particular town or city. (More about that in the women in the episcopate speech.) It is fellowship both among churches of a particular region and of churches across the world. In our terms, this means affirming both congregations and cells, building better relationships with our neighbours in Europe, as we are doing, and learning from the worldwide Church.

Ministry has to be about the recognition and enabling of the variety of gifts which is to be found in every Christian community. Those who have oversight in the Church have a particular responsibility to see that gifts are discerned, people are enabled and the whole body is built up in this way. A feature of the postmodern mood of our society is that diversity is valued. This has immediate implications for worship, as we all know. In many urban, suburban and even rural settings no one kind of pattern will be suitable for all. Some will want contemporary music (Philip Yancey, commenting on some kinds

of contemporary music, calls it ‘two words, three chords and 15 minutes’, though that is perhaps a little unkind!). Some will want the better kind of contemporary music. Others will want more traditional music (where mystery takes precedence even over comprehension!). Of course, not all traditional music is like that. Some will want the depth and resonance of Elizabethan English, others the immediacy of the language as it is spoken today. It is a particular challenge for clergy and lay leaders in our parishes to make sure that all parts of the community are reached by the Gospel in ways that are affirming and not alienating.

I was recently in Nairobi on Anglican Communion business and was struck once again by the sheer visibility of the African Sunday. Worshippers overflow into the street. There are processions and evangelistic gatherings around every streetcorner, and families are able to spend the day together. The Afro-Caribbean communities in some of our cities are making Christian life and worship dramatically visible. I see this in south-east London, for instance. We need to learn from them so that we can be seen when we worship, heard when we witness and effective when we gather together.

Visibility is not enough of course. We need to be a welcoming people – the Archbishop of Canterbury has mentioned hospitality as an essential aspect of Christian mission – making sure that those who come through our doors are helped to worship and deepen their experience of God (and helped to come through our doors first of all, of course). Not only do we welcome those who come to us; we reach out to those in the community who see no reason to come to church. It is urgent for us today to discover where people are gathering. When I am out of a Sunday morning I pass by car boot sale after car boot sale, and I often wonder if I am going to the wrong place. Where are people gathering? Is it a supermarket, a car boot sale, a gym? We must make sure that there is an effective and sacrificial Christian presence there. Sometimes this will be high-profile in terms of a service such as we have in one of our ASDA superstores, or some similar event, but at other times it may just be the opportunity for a quiet word, the passing-on of a book (yes, even Philip Yancey) or a tape of music (of an acceptable sort!).

Whatever we do, the twin aspects of mission – embassy and hospitality, going out and welcoming in – must always be held together.

We must invest in growth and opportunity – you see the ‘both/and’ theme which is being pursued here – wherever and whenever they occur. This is not to deny our responsibility for work in ‘difficult’ areas, but the resources for this will come if we are able to disciple and to motivate those who can give of their time, talents or money. It is important to get away from overly institutional models and to adopt a dynamic view of the Church – the Archbishop has just spoken of the Church as a pilgrim people – which sees it as movements of people seeking to fulfil particular vocations for moving the Church forward and reaching out to the wider community. We need to value more the religious communities, mission agencies and youth and children’s organizations in our midst. They should not be seen merely as ‘para-church’ but as limbs of the Body, carrying out various tasks necessary for the building up of the Body.

Nor are partnerships only internal to the Church's life. As Raymond Fung, that well-known Hong Kong evangelist, formerly on the World Council of Churches' staff, has pointed out in his wonderful little book *The Isaiah Vision*, partnerships in wider society for the sake of the common good also have quite a lot of missionary wisdom about them.

Whatever the future of our relationship with the State, we cannot forget our mission to the whole nation and to each community. This will bear repeating: whatever the future of our relationship with the State, we must remain committed as a Church to a national mission. Anglican structures of presence, worship and witness commit us to the incarnational principle – this is well known – but alongside this we need to learn the pentecostal principle, that we are sent out, in the power of the Spirit, to witness to God's mighty acts in creation and redemption.

Old ways of being Church need to be made more effective, not thrown out of the window; but we need to try new ways of being Church. The large numbers of initiatives in growing churches and planting them are very welcome, but we need to evaluate them and to identify good practice, together. I am looking forward to the work being done by the Bishop of Maidstone's working party, so that we have some reliable guidance on how to plant and to grow churches. The small Christian communities movement is also about making Christians effective together on a human scale; the Bishop of Bath and Wells is an expert in this area and I am sure will speak to Synod about it if you wish.

The presence of a church building and even of a worshipping community inside that building are simply not enough. We need presence in a variety of ways and presence which is potent enough to pass on the gospel. Effective presence will have to do with openness to God's Word, strengthening by the sacraments, love among ourselves and for God's world: in other words, a holiness which not only sustains us in our lives but also opens us up to the world.

I look forward to the discussion of *Shapes of the Church to Come* tomorrow morning and to the questions arising from it. The comments and criticisms made in the groups will, I hope, help to reshape the paper in a way which makes it more effective as an instrument of our common task.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Bishop, for that presentation, in no way impaired by the 'flu, from which we hope you recover soon.

Because the idea of the Bible study and presentation is to set the scene for tomorrow's discussion groups, there is no opportunity now for questions and comments.

THE CHAIR *Canon Frank Dexter (Newcastle)* took the Chair at 8.42 p.m.

Regionalization and the Church: Report by the Board for Social Responsibility (GS 1458)

The Bishop of Durham (Rt Revd Michael Turnbull): I beg to move:

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

I am very much aware that members of Synod have had a tiring day of travel and debate, so I am grateful that so many of you are staying behind and resisting the call of the bars, at least for another hour and a bit. I am going to invite you to do some joined-up thinking because it seems to me that Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali’s inspiring presentation of the past 20 minutes and the Archbishop’s Bible study fit in and knit together very well with what we are discussing now. You cannot think about the shape of the Church to come unless you are also going to think about the shape of the nation to come; and the shape of the nation to come is far too important to leave to the politicians. Each of us is deeply involved in shaping the society to which we belong and bringing a Christian witness to that. So I am grateful to the Board for Social Responsibility for making this debate possible, because political, regional devolution is part of a wide range of constitutional reforms, including reviews of both Houses of Parliament, which the Labour Party promised in its election manifestos. Previous Conservative governments had responded to the need for greater recognition of regional needs and aspirations by the establishment of regional government offices. The first recent Labour Government extended this by establishing national assemblies or parliaments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and by establishing the regional assembly and its mayor in London.

The question of English devolution is a natural progression of these achievements. It is important therefore that the Churches and other faith communities engage with this process at local, regional and national levels. Faith communities as a whole represent a powerful and ubiquitous presence in every locality and, indeed, are partners with the Government and local authorities in seeking to promote regeneration, currently of course through local strategic partnerships. Many Church bodies have also secured membership of the regional chambers which scrutinize the regional development agencies.

We are, therefore, stakeholders in this process and it is important that the Synod, on behalf of the whole Church of England, makes a response to the White Paper by the end of August. My hope is that tonight we may have a well-informed and open debate which will enable the BSR to respond on our behalf. I am very grateful indeed to Dr Cummins for his helpful introduction to the issues involved, and members have his paper and a summary of the Government’s proposals in GS 1458.

A number of factors make attention to the English regions imperative. At the moment there is, frankly, a cat’s cradle of government offices, departments and quangos

offering a confused set of partnerships to a muddled local government scene of counties and districts and unitary authorities. All this is in place and creating a good deal of its own bureaucracy and cost. I accept the Government's arguments that elected regional assemblies will not create more bureaucracy but will streamline and make more accountable what is already there. Indeed, it is quite possible that in the longer term there will be cost savings.

There is at the moment no mechanism whereby each region can take its own strategic overview of its needs. The regional development agencies are doing a good piece of work and doing their best, but they remain government quangos, with accountability only to the Government in Westminster, though scrutinized by their local chambers. It is important that the regions themselves take responsibility for bringing together a strategy which includes the development of skills and training, of employment, of inward investment, of the transport infrastructure and of making policy choices. At the moment there is no local accountability and there is a serious democratic deficit. In many regions, especially those furthest from London, there is a sense of frustration at the remoteness of the decision-makers, many of whom have no knowledge of the particular resources or the needs or the history and culture of the region itself.

Many people feel that there is a disillusionment with national politics, evidenced by low turnouts in both national and European elections. I believe that regional government has the potential at least for creating a new way of doing politics and of providing those who make decisions in the region with a dynamic relationship with the people of the region. Most of the members of the European Community provide models of regional government which sustain a national identity and are strengthened by strong regions. There has been some scaremongering that regional devolution would make us subservient to Brussels, but there is much evidence to suggest that a regional form of government would enable us to be stronger in our engagement with our European partners.

Of course there are some major questions to ask about the details of the White Paper. In particular, I would question whether the block grants which are suggested are anything like sufficient to give a region adequate authority across such a wide band of public interests. I am disappointed that the learning and skills councils are not included in the responsibilities that the White Paper suggests should be devolved. Many regions will have questions about the boundaries of the current government regions. Nevertheless I believe that the regions will be in a much stronger negotiating position to argue these matters once democratically elected assemblies are in place and people have the opportunity to express their views within their own region.

I am also aware that the strength of regional identity varies enormously from region to region. It is significant that opinion polls have shown that those who clearly support devolved government are those who are furthest from Westminster. The Government have made it clear that the choice will belong to the regions themselves and that it will be quite possible for different regions to move at different paces. At this stage, I believe

that it is important for the Government to get a very clear mandate to move forward on the principles of regional government and to prepare legislation, hopefully to be included in the Queen's Speech in November, for referendums to take place where the regions request it. There is, therefore, no question of a sleight-of-hand by the Government acting without a mandate of the people.

Finally, I would like to draw members' attention to section (d) of the next motion. The strengthening of the regions will indeed present a challenge to the Churches, and perhaps the Church of England in particular, to adapt their own structures so that they can engage much more effectively if and when regional assemblies come into being. Here again it links with things that Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali was saying a moment or two ago: the flexibility to be able to respond in a constructive way rather than having our own boundaries and our own walls between our dioceses built so high that we find it increasingly difficult and more complex to engage with secular authorities. In a number of regions ecumenical instruments have now been reshaped to coincide with the government regions. Equally, faith forums have been established on a similar regional basis. A number of Church of England dioceses have begun discussions as to how dioceses within the regions can co-operate more effectively by pooling resources and by enabling the Church of England voice to be heard more clearly. I hope, therefore, that these initiatives may be part of the response that we can make to the White Paper.

I look forward to hearing the views of the Synod on these issues.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of five minutes.

The Bishop of Truro (Rt Revd Bill Ind): Right at the beginning of a debate about regionalization a Government Minister came to the South West to talk about the proposed region stretching from Bristol to Land's End. A Cornish representative helpfully suggested an alternative region, stretching from Bristol to Yorkshire. The Minister, who was not very good at geography, said happily that that would be far too big a region, whereupon the Cornishman replied that it would not be nearly as far as it is from Bristol to Truro. So there is next to no support in Cornwall for the proposed region stretching from Bristol to Truro, but there is an enormously strong local support for a Cornish assembly. Indeed, 50,000 people have actually signed a petition to that effect, that is 10 per cent of the population of Cornwall: an enormous proportion, in other words, for something that is after all constitutional and therefore 'difficult'.

There is, I think, generally agreed a distinctiveness about Cornwall that has a lot to do with its history and its culture, but all this is magnified enormously by the fact that, in spite of health action zones, sport action zones, education action zones and the European funding of Objective One, the county of Cornwall has slipped back to 65 per cent, from 71 per cent, of European average GDP. Tourism, yes, is booming; it would be foolish to deny it, and indeed those of us who have been there will know

that the Eden Project should have been as it were the Dome. However, the tourism is seasonal, the new jobs are low-paid, and there is a major crisis in affordable housing and a looming crisis relating to the care of the elderly. All this leads to an enormous frustration, a sense that nothing is done and that nothing is understood, and the sociologists talk about ‘distance deprivation’. A professor at Plymouth, George Giarchi, actually shows us a picture of Britain looking like a human being, in which case Cornwall is the foot; and he makes the point that if there is trouble in the foot it is always a problem of circulation. In other words, the problem is not in the foot but in the heart.

For some, of course, what this is all about is the righting of an ancient grievance, but for many it is the belief that the centre does not care and does not understand about Cornwall. It was all summed up for me on Tuesday when I was leaving to catch the sleeper train. I had done an ordination at Wadebridge and I told an old Cornishman that I was going to London. ‘That London be a funny place’, he said. ‘It’s a long way from anywhere.’

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Can you give guidance as to how you want the debate to go? Will you want us to speak to our amendments?

The Chairman: No, I shall ask you to speak to your amendments when we come to the next motion.

The Dean of Wakefield (Very Revd George Nairn-Briggs): I want to pick up very briefly the last section of Bishop Michael’s opening speech about the Church responding to the new regional structures and perhaps give a slightly different picture of regionalism from that given by the Bishop of Truro.

When the first White Paper came out in 1998 to begin the debate on what might happen in the regions, a group of us in Yorkshire got together and responded to that White Paper; under the Archbishop of York’s guidance we formed the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, and I had the privilege of being its first chair. We managed to get a seat on the then chamber, now assembly, in our own right as Churches. How did we do it? We pointed out that on an average Sunday some 400,000 people are in church; that is double the number of people who go to premier and nationwide football on a Saturday. We have a joint budget of some £100 million. We have some 3,800 centres of education, worship, culture and social activity, called churches, and some 2,000 full-time paid operatives, called clergy. We produced a map of the social action undertaken by the Churches in the Yorkshire and Humber region, which is quite staggering when you begin to put together the projects which are run by Churches, the number of volunteers *et cetera*. In other words, we were able to demonstrate that we are not a corner shop but a major player.

We, the Churches, are major players in our society. I think that we forget that. People were surprised within the Churches when we quantified what we were doing in our

communities, just as much as politicians were. Indeed, as I pointed out to politicians, if they had the same number of paid-up members as we have, would they not be laughing?

That is just a quick snapshot of what we have been doing and continue to do in Yorkshire to respond, by having a regional-sized organization, to the new Government regional agenda. However, I have a worry in a particular area which I would like to air.

When the regional cultural consortium was formed in Yorkshire and the Humber, as it was in other regions, it put up a draft cultural strategy. If you had read it, you would not have believed that there was anything called 'faith' or 'churches' in this land. No, I tell a lie: there was a picture of Selby Abbey and underneath it said, 'This is York Minster', which the Dean of York was not happy about at all. However, to be fair, when I wrote in, pointing out that we had had a major input into the built heritage (you have to use the jargon or you do not get anywhere), describing the amount of music which is produced and commissioned and performed in places of worship, the number of artists and poets in residence *et cetera*, the number of works of art that we commission – again we are major patrons of the arts and make a major input into the creative, cultural life of our nation – I am glad to tell Synod that the definition of culture used in the Yorkshire strategy now has both the word 'faith' and the word 'belief' in it. I am very glad that that has been done, and glad about the warm response by the cultural consortium to our suggestion.

My concern is that I cannot locate where in Church House cultural matters are addressed. It would be very helpful – I do not mean Bishop Michael because it is not his worry – if at some point it could be established where that sits, and then those of us concerned with cultural life can begin to feed slowly into that.

I hope that I have shown that the Churches can be involved and influence the new regional agenda. We have much to contribute. If we really believe that we are an incarnational Church, we must continue to contribute to the regional debate as it continues to unfold, and I welcome this opportunity for us to do that.

Mr John Higginbotham (Leicester): You may imagine, Mr Chairman, that when I was invited to join the Churches' forum for the East Midlands region, my pulse did not immediately quicken with excitement; and I suppose that many of us view the creation of yet another tier of government with varying degrees of dismay. As a Yorkshireman who spent most of his working life in Sussex and Leicestershire, I have an instinctive support for the counties, particularly the first-class counties. I am in fact qualified to play for Yorkshire myself, not that they have ever called upon my services – yet. Although I represent Leicester I would not claim to be an instinctive East Midlander. The point is well made that our traditional loyalties are to our counties, and many of us feel that the regions are something of an unreal beast.

The Church/State relationship is much under discussion at present. The point of Establishment is not that the nation should be subservient to the Church – a theocracy

– but that the Church should be enabled better to serve the nation; and this will apply to the regions no less than to the nation, should the present proposals become law. We must be quite pragmatic about this. If it is there, we need to be in it and we need to be influencing it. A former Prime Minister said of one of his Cabinet Ministers – and this, I think, applies to regionalization, which may well tempt some of us to hiss – ‘It’s better to be inside hissing out than outside hissing in.’

Revd Dr Julian Cummins, Chairman of the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, has pointed out that Christians need to approach the question of elected assemblies with a theological framework, and his reasons for this are fully outlined in the paper. It is particularly important to stress the incarnational character of Christianity, and it is strengthened in England by the presence of worshipping communities in every part of our land and by our long historic association, particularly in the Church of England, with the structures of government, both local and national. We need to be constantly aware of this. It has been implicit this evening in both the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Bible study and in the presentation that we have had, and much of what Dr Cummins says springs directly from that. There are the questions of subsidiarity, with the implications of interdependence rather than independence; the aspects of justice, equity and community, which are not only at the heart of the Old Testament understanding of a people living under the Covenant but of Our Lord’s teaching as well; and of course he mentions St Paul’s teaching that all parts of the body have a role to play both in building the kingdom and in our human relationships.

It is vital, therefore, that this theological underpinning lies at the root of any approach that we may make to Government, and it is important not just to witness to the faith in public bodies but to show quite definitely the relevance of the faith to the twenty-first century and its problems. This is all part of the rich tapestry of Church and nation which lies deep in the history of the Church of England.

Revd Hugh Davidson (Ecumenical Representatives, Church of Scotland): And therefore from one of the parts of the United Kingdom which have already experienced some of the consequences of constitutional change. We of course are a nation rather than a region; we have been given a parliament rather than an assembly; but I fancy that dissimilarities between the two are really not very great.

In our case devolution happened, in part, in response to a growing demand for it, a demand in which Scottish Churches were very actively involved, both in the shaping of the demand and in the articulating of it; and that demand itself was caused very largely by growing exasperation at the frequency with which general elections produced governments which were very different from the expressed preferences of the Scottish electorate, from a growing perception that the concerns and priorities of other parts of the United Kingdom were, naturally, often quite different from the priorities and concerns of Scotland, and from a frustration at the comparatively small amount of time that appeared to be available for Scottish matters at Parliament in Westminster.

All three of those dissatisfactions have been effectively met by the institution of the Scottish Parliament and I think particularly so because those who drew up the constitution which framed it paid special attention to making its workings as widely accessible to the people in Scotland as they could be.

It seems to me that if regional assemblies are to be brought into being, two things are particularly important. First, any such assembly should be given sufficient powers for it to be an effective agent for change in its region; elected assemblies will only be as good as the people who are elected to them, and I am sure that those who are committed to effecting change and who are passionate about it will only be attracted to serve on bodies where they see a real potential for being able to do that. If assemblies are set up in such a way that they do not have much in the way of powers, people of that sort are unlikely to find their way into them.

The other thing which is important is the method of election adopted for assemblies of that sort. Had the Scottish Parliament been elected under the rules that currently govern elections to Westminster, Scotland would have become an effective one-party state into the foreseeable future. As it was, a method of proportional representation was chosen, so we now have a coalition in power and an Opposition which is numerically very much stronger than it would have been otherwise; and I think that we are already seeing the beneficial fruits of that sort of arrangement in the things that have been achieved and the way in which they have been done.

So from my own experience in Scotland I would venture to commend a positive consideration to the setting up of regional assemblies in those areas where it is thought that they can be given sufficient scope and powers to make real change for the benefit of the region.

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. After the next speaker will you be prepared to take a motion for the closure?

The Chairman: I might be inclined to be grateful to you a little later.

Sir Patrick Cormack MP (Lichfield): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. We have not yet heard a speaker who is opposed to this.

The Chairman: Is there a member of Synod who wishes to speak against this motion?

Sir Patrick Cormack MP (Lichfield) stood.

The Chairman: Sir Patrick, will you speak after Mrs Atkinson, please?

Mrs Janet Atkinson (Durham): Bishop Michael spoke in a national way but I want to speak in a regional way as a North Easterner. You might think that I do not sound like a North Easterner but I have lived there most of my adult life and I call myself a North Easterner through adoption and grace.

When I was teaching in a college of further education, my students were critical of various things about my lifestyle, including the names that I had given my children (which they thought were ‘flippin’ poncey’ – though I express it more politely than they did), my fashion sense and, particularly, my ‘really stupid’ accent. They did not like the way I say ‘I don’t know’. Every good teacher knows when to say ‘I don’t know’ but they said, ‘No, that won’t do. Can’t you say “I dinna knaw”’, and I said that I thought it would sound a bit odd combined with the way I speak normally. So I have to admit that I could not adapt my accent just to please the students, but I did allow myself to be taught a Geordie joke which I will try out on the Synod tonight; the Bishop said that no one would laugh but I think that you, Chairman, might know what I am talking about.

Geordie – your archetypal Geordie – is invited to a royal garden party. He thinks, ‘Canny’, and off he goes. The Queen comes round with a big tray of eats and says to Geordie, ‘Would you like a jam tart or a meringue?’ and Geordie says, ‘Naw, yer right, pet, Ah’d love a jam tart’. (*Some laughter*) Well, a few people got it.

It is very easy when you live 300 miles from London to feel a sort of peasant stropiness coming over you, and this is largely built up, I think, by what southerners think is forgivable ignorance of anything north of – well, very far south. An educated member of my family said, ‘Oh yes, Teesside. It’s somewhere over on the right-hand side, isn’t it?’ She lived in Southampton. If I had said, ‘Oh yes, Southampton. It’s somewhere down at the bottom, in the middle’, she would have thought, ‘How thick Janet is’. Yet people feel able to talk like this.

I have been chairing the Care of Cathedrals revision, as members may recall. When we were planning our meetings, somebody in the team said, ‘If you’re going anywhere really outlandish, like Truro or Newcastle, you have to make an overnight visit, but anyone can get to London.’ So I said, ‘Nonsense. We have an excellent train service’ – this was before we had the accidents – ‘up the North East coast’. So they said, ‘Right, can we start meeting at 10 in the morning?’ and I wondered what time I should have to get up; but I smiled sweetly and said, ‘No trouble at all’, and I got up at half-past five and I got there. It is much further from London to the regions than it is for any of us country cousins to get to London. This is a well-known fact. So it is not surprising that we get a bit paranoid.

I think, sadly, that there is a built-in tendency to feel mistrust of the centre. It happens in dioceses, does it not? The parishes think, ‘What does the diocesan office do with our money, the parish share?’ The dioceses think, ‘Can we afford to keep paying for things that happen at the centre?’ It is not a praiseworthy bit of human nature but it is a very natural thing that we suffer from, and we have to get over it if we, the Church, are going to make a sensible contribution to regional government. We have to have a go at it.

However, regionalization has to be wanted and to be better than what we have now and, sadly, politicians do not enjoy great respect. No disrespect to Sir Patrick, who is going to speak next, but in general the people are rather against politicians and local councillors, again, I think, wrongly. It is sad. So if regionalization is coming in and if the Church is going to have something to do with it, it has to be better than what went before, and I hope that we will bring a wholesome effect so that we are improving it, not just barging in because it is there and we want to get a word in but actually having an improving effect.

I have been reading *North and South*, which is quite relevant to this debate. Part of the problem is that the heroine's father is a clergyman who has lost his faith, and that is why they move to the north. She learns about life in a manufacturing town, and somebody is explaining the principles of how the unions work in the early nineteenth century. He says, 'When it works properly, Miss, it's like Christianity.' I am not saying that we are going to be like the unions, but if we can get a good tranche of Christian spirit into regional government our presence will be well worthwhile. We have to respond positively, we have to get our people in there and then we can let people see that the Church can have a real, genuine, beneficial effect.

Sir Patrick Cormack MP (Lichfield): I am very disappointed that the Bishop of Durham seems to have bought the regional case without the critical scrutiny that it deserves. What I want to say tonight is that we must be careful not to be seduced into some artificial concept. I accept that Scotland is a nation; I accept that the Principality of Wales is a nation; what I do not accept is that England is divided into natural regions. I am very proud to be a Lincolnshire man by birth and a Staffordshire man by adoption. I am very proud to look on the two cathedrals of Lincoln and Lichfield as my mother churches. However, I do not feel naturally a member of the West Midlands region nor of the East Midlands region.

Let us just look at this. What would happen if the Government's plans came into effect? This is not a party point; there are many members of the Labour Party who share my distaste for what is being proposed, including virtually all the Labour members of the Staffordshire county council. What would happen in the West Midlands is this. An artificial region, which would include the rural counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire, would be governed from a regional seat in Birmingham with 25 – yes, 25 – elected members. Is that government close to the people? The inevitable consequence – and the Government admit this – is that the county councils would go or the district councils would go, and it would probably be the counties. It would have to be one or other because they have said that they would not countenance three tiers of local government. So what you would have is a super-regional government, governing from Birmingham. What would those 25 people, probably only one or two of whom would come from Hereford, understand of the needs, the aspirations, the problems of Herefordshire or Shropshire or even of rural Staffordshire? That is what we are talking about, and before we just go blindly into line, supporting this White Paper, let us think for a moment of its consequences: of the

electoral consequences, of the financial consequences, of the consequences of understanding what it is all about.

The previous speaker talked about politicians being held in rather low esteem. I accept that. Yes, we are. Some of the reasons are good and some are bad. You are all politicians; you have all stood for election; you are Church politicians, and Church politics is no purer than secular politics. Being involved in both, I can tell you that. So this is no occasion for being holier than thou on either side. Let us just think of the turnout at elections: 20–30 per cent for local elections at the moment; 30–40 per cent, mostly 30 and sometimes lower, for European elections; even the Scottish people, given their parliament, only mustered 60 per cent, and the Welsh much lower for their assembly. If we have a proliferation of elections we devalue the electoral currency.

What people need in this country is a sense of belonging, a sense of identity. I can identify with the county of Staffordshire and the diocese of Lichfield; I cannot identify with an artificially created region governed from Birmingham. This is nothing against Birmingham. I was delighted to be in the Symphony Hall on Tuesday night of this week, to help receive Her Majesty the Queen on her jubilee tour. Birmingham is a great city; I hope that it will be the cultural capital of Europe in 2008; but it is not the natural arbiter of what goes on in Staffordshire. This is what we must recognize and what we must discuss and debate.

While I have every respect for the Bishop of Durham, I am sorry that he presented it to us almost as if it is a *fait accompli*; it is not, even on the Government's own proposals. Every region will have an opportunity to decide, and so it should; but do not feel that by leaping on to this regional bandwagon you are necessarily serving the cause of either Church or country.

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Bishop of Durham, in reply: I hope not to take the whole of the 10 minutes that you have given me, Mr Chairman, but so good has been the debate that it is worth a few brief responses. I am particularly grateful for the evidence brought by Mr Davidson of the Church of Scotland. It was good to hear him participating in this debate and bringing a positive view from there. I thank him for it.

The Bishop of Truro mentioned the question of size of regions, which will come up in a moment or two among the amendments. He mentioned some incidence of need, particularly with housing and the elderly. The point about the size of regions is to do with a critical mass that actually makes it possible for different parts of a region to be

able to help each other; so I would have thought that some of the needs of Cornwall, which I know are severe, could be helped by being part of a bigger region. I know that this happens even in the South East, possibly the least cohesive of all regions, where, for instance, recently there has been major input through a regional development agency into Hastings, at the behest of the whole region. However, I am well aware, as I said earlier, that at the extremes of the country, notably in Cornwall and in Cumbria, it is perhaps difficult, because of distances, to relate; but when you look at the critical mass which is aimed at, of 3 million to 8 million, Cornwall itself could not really stand on its own. That figure of 3 million to 8 million is derived from the success of regionalism in Europe and indeed in the states of the USA.

I am very grateful to the Dean of Wakefield, speaking from much experience and deep involvement. He asked where the Church is addressing the cultural matters that are cohesive in many of the regions. It is a very good question to ask. I hope that we will not be prompted to set up a new desk in Church House, because I believe that we have 40 or so supreme examples of cultural excellence and teaching through our cathedrals. The Dean of Wakefield will know that. In the North East region we also have a chaplain to arts and recreation, who is doing a very fine job across the cultural board; but, significantly, that is done on a regional basis.

Mr Higginbotham, in a very interesting speech, outlined two areas in which I could totally agree with him. We share the ambition still of perhaps being able to play for Yorkshire, and both of us have a belief in the Church/State relationship, and I was very grateful for that; but I think that he was afraid of the counties disappearing. In terms of sport and culture and many people's identity, strong counties still do attract that identity, but the counties themselves as administrative and government units disappeared long ago, way back in 1974, which was the crucial time when they disappeared.

It is interesting too – and this links with something that Sir Patrick was saying a moment or two ago – to make the comparison between the administrative county of Durham, which has about half a million people and 340 councillors, at two levels, and the city of Birmingham, a unitary authority, which has 1.5 million people (three times as many as Durham) and 100 councillors. That speaks for efficiency for that region.

I was grateful to Janet Atkinson for providing a regional perspective. The North East, in the regional movement, is taking a lead, not surprisingly. It is not just a political thing; it is also a highly economically deprived area that feels that it has been done down by successive governments who have taken away some of our major industries and not replaced them with anything substantial. I must say that that has not improved a great deal with the Labour Government, but a good deal of the blame must fall to Sir Patrick's governments of earlier years. So there is a great, strong feeling in the North East, as I know there is in other regions, like Yorkshire and the Humber, the North West, the South West; I am sorry that the Bishop of Exeter was not

called because he has been deeply involved in the South West in the whole of this movement.

Sir Patrick mentioned finance. I thought that perhaps I had spoken positively about the financial benefits of regional government earlier on. We are talking – as is very clear in the White Paper, if Sir Patrick examines it closely – about still two levels of local government, including the regional government; it is not three levels. Part of what is proposed in the White Paper is that it will be necessary, before a region moves into regional government, for all local government to be in a unitary authority. Some county councils are the right size to become unitary authorities and there district councils will disappear, though not the parish councils. The figures that Sir Patrick gave are very telling of turnout: 30 per cent turnout on a national level in England; 60 per cent for a regional government in Scotland. Does that not in fact indicate a much more intense interest and commitment in Scotland?

One of the things that Mr Davidson brought to us from Scotland was the Churches' involvement. I want to pay tribute at this point to Revd Kenyon Wright who was a forerunner and leader in the movement over many years for the establishment of some form of regional government in Scotland. It was the Churches in Scotland that took the lead, under his leadership. If you read some of the literature of the history of the development of parliamentary democracy in Scotland, you will find Kenyon Wright and many other Church leaders at the heart of it.

I hope that if the Synod is of a mind to pass this motion it will be seen that in England too the Churches have such a concern for the regions and the quality of life in the regions that they will give back to the people something of the democracy that they deserve.

The motion was put and carried.

The Bishop of Durham: I beg to move:

‘That this Synod, noting the growing strength of regional institutions in England and proposals for their further development:

- (a) affirm the contribution made by the Churches to social and economic progress in the English regions and, specifically, the involvement of several dioceses and ecumenical bodies in such fora as the existing regional chambers;
- (b) acknowledge the importance of decision-making being close to those affected and being open, accessible and accountable;
- (c) request the Board for Social Responsibility to respond to the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* in the light of this debate; and

- (d) encourage the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops to consider how far the Church of England should adapt its own structures in the light of the growing significance of regions in England and to report by July 2003.'

The Chairman: Mr Royle, will you speak to both your amendments, please?

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): The motion before us represents a pretty bland response to the White Paper on which, it is quite clear from statements made by the Deputy Prime Minister, they are going ahead and will not change in essence; we would not have reached this point with a White Paper if that were not the case. My two amendments seek to highlight two fundamental questions.

As Chairman of the Cotswold District Council, which is the third largest geographically in the country, I know that communications are difficult enough in this one district, let alone becoming part of a region where it is as far – and I have to correct the Bishop of Truro here – from Tewkesbury in the north to Land's End in the south – it does not extend only as far as Bristol – as it is, incidentally, from Tewkesbury to Gretna Green, if you can believe it, and where, for administration purposes, Cirencester to Exeter is as far as it is to Manchester. Similar comments could be made about proposals for the South and the South East of England, and similar comments have been made by Sir Patrick about the middle.

GS 1458 states that the first reason for the argument for a change of this nature is that the North East and the North West in particular have suffered deprivation over the decades, if not over centuries, and no one would argue with this; but the cause has primarily been because, politically, these areas have not been important to the government of the day, either Labour or Conservative, nor, back in the last century, even the Liberals, when they were in power. This is why I am suggesting that we put the word 'recognize' in place of that rather bland word 'acknowledge'.

I do not necessarily expect this to change under regional assemblies, to be quite honest. Will 25–35 individuals, as Sir Patrick has pointed out, working on a three-day week, driving, in the majority of cases, to regional centres a long way away, be able to be effective? Will a six-member executive be able to attract full-time membership and is that necessarily a good thing anyway, sitting in an ivory tower over unitary authorities? I would suggest that we shall find the officers running those assemblies rather than the elected members.

This brings me to my second amendment, a vital one. There is in my view one overriding constitutional issue here; and remember that we are talking about what is effectively an irreversible constitutional change once imposed, when a regional government is set up. Does it really make constitutional sense to have an arrangement whereby some regions have elected assemblies, together with a pattern of unitary authority, and other regions do not and thus no immediate prospect of change in the

local government pattern, even if that were to make good sense? Is central government likely to devolve real power to a constitutional patchwork quilt? If some regions have elected assemblies and some do not, I think that power is likely to be 'hovered' up from local government rather than down. Then there will be complete frustration because you will find, as has already been mentioned, that there will be a sense that these assemblies are an expensive talking shop.

That brings me to the question of referendums. I was elected in a contested seat by a turnout of some 32 per cent, which is high, I may say, for local government, and about a quarter of my councillors were elected unopposed because they could not find enough people to stand against them. If the Government proposals go through, we could find ourselves landed with assemblies voted in by a tiny number of the overall register of voters, which is what happened in Wales. I submit that any such major constitutional change must be supported by a majority of all voters. I would prefer to see these proposals submitted to the whole nation, if we are really going to go with this, on the principle itself, rather than to individual regions.

Local government does need change; there is no doubt about that. The finance side of it has increased since the Local Government Act came into force. We are still just a United Kingdom but let us be very careful that we do not destroy it for short-term political gain or half-baked ideas that will result in more confusion rather than less.

The Bishop of Swindon (Rt Revd Michael Doe): All those of us who are involved in developments in our own region – and I speak from the experience of the South West region – will be grateful for this resolution and, in particular, for clause (a) which rightly affirms the contribution that has been made by the Churches to social and economic progress in the regions so far. What my amendment does is to seek to build on that for the future.

One of the strengths of what has been developing in the regions up to now has been the involvement of what are generally called social and economic partners. The regional assemblies that currently exist are made up not just of councillors from the local authorities that make up the region but also of people appointed by a wide range of bodies who also have a stake in the life of the region as a whole: business organizations, trade unions, the voluntary sector and what the Government choose to call faith communities.

The new White Paper gives each region the opportunity to have a directly elected assembly. It is suggested that this would be more democratic, and there is clearly great force in that argument; but many of us think that to restrict participation to this method would reduce the representativeness of the new institutions. The resolution before us rightly says that these institutions should be open, accessible and accountable. The evidence of recent years – not least, as already mentioned, the increasingly low turnout at all elections but particularly local elections – is that putting a cross on a ballot paper every three or four years to vote for candidates

selected by political parties is not commending itself to the general public as on its own providing open, accessible and accountable government. What we need is a broader and deeper sense of community involvement, a new appreciation of civic responsibility and some new expressions of civil society; and we are indeed beginning to see some of this round the country in the emergence (not without its teething problems) of local strategic partnerships, where local authorities, albeit democratically directly elected, nevertheless have to work alongside others who have a stake in the local community. As I have just said, we have also begun to see that in the present regional assemblies with the involvement of social and economic partners.

The argument of my amendment is that to remove this wider participation in favour of direct election alone would be to reduce rather than increase real democracy.

How these other partners should be involved is something that needs exploring further, and I hope that in the debate about the White Paper (and this is something on which the Government have particularly requested our comments) this is going to be a matter of real public debate. Perhaps there should be an electoral college to receive nominations from organizations which operate across the region. Some of those will want to commend themselves by the extent to which they contribute to the region's well-being. The Dean of Wakefield has already demonstrated this evening how strong an argument the Churches would have in that respect. Others will want a place because they are seen to represent minority voices otherwise not heard: minority ethnic communities and those who represent the poor are obvious cases in point.

So I want to argue that we should, in amending this resolution, move towards some opportunity for these other partners to continue to be involved. I want to argue that faith communities, whether or not we particularly like that definition, also have a part to play in that way; that the Churches have shown, in what we have at the moment, that we have a particular perspective to bring. It is good that faith communities, whether or not we want to be subsumed in them, are seen to have something particular to contribute over against the rest of the voluntary sector. I hope that Synod will support my amendment, to achieve that aim.

Mr Nigel Holmes (Carlisle): At this Synod last year I moved an amendment to call for a public inquiry into foot and mouth disease. As a result of that, the Church of England became one of the first official bodies to put that view forward.

Once again it is the voice of the rural and somewhat marginalized areas on behalf of which I speak, this time on the real threat which I believe regional assemblies present to local democracy. I am very much involved in local democracy at local level through a parish council.

A minor amendment mine may be, but it is about a major issue and again I feel very strongly about this but in a totally non-party-political way. Indeed, the three North West county councils of differing party control – Cumbria, my own, together with

Cheshire and Lancashire – have spoken with one voice, saying that they believe there to be a real risk that an elected regional assembly, supposed to see more decisions made locally, could exert quite the opposite effect, particularly in the countryside. Such similar concerns are being expressed week in, week out in our local newspapers. There is little appetite for regional government in the rural areas.

Nor does Cumbria fit naturally either into the North East or into the North West. The Bishop of Durham spoke about savings to be made as a result of the introduction of regional government. Actually, in the House of Commons just two days ago John Prescott admitted that each assembly would cost no less than £20 million to set up, and to us they would be very remote bodies. There are many parallels between my area and Cornwall, about which the Bishop spoke earlier. Manchester and Merseyside, being 120 miles away from us, would have the whip hand. About two-thirds of the population of the North West region live closer to Birmingham than to Carlisle, and the 500,000 people who live in Cumbria would have just two representatives on the regional assembly. The proportion of the people who are elected in Scotland is far and away higher than would be the case for the regional assemblies in England.

Our historic regional allegiance – if we have to go one way or the other – is not with the North West because, if you look back a thousand years or even fewer than 10, it has been with the North East: Tyneside, Northumberland, Durham and Cleveland. Carlisle Cathedral is the patron of a string of livings along the route that St Cuthbert trod from Holy Island, Lindisfarne to the Lake District. A millennium and more later, during the twentieth century, we were part of the Government's northern administrative region for economic planning, for industrial development, for the National Health Service, for Northern Arts *et cetera*. Yet we have been surreptitiously switched in the mid-to-late 1990s with no public consultation whatsoever.

The BBC tried to do the same thing by switching regional television coverage from Newcastle to Manchester. That could not be done in an underhand way, and such was the public and council outcry that the service soon reverted to the North East.

Ten years ago, when local government reorganization was last mooted in Cumbria, a postal survey was conducted on the various options. The status quo – district and county – was not printed on the postal ballot form, yet that is what people wanted and they said so by writing on the dotted line marked 'Other'; and that was the overwhelming view that won the day with the Boundary Commission.

At the same time as consultation is going to take place again over the unitary authority implementation, my amendment simply suggests that a similar kind of postal survey to the one 10 years ago could be incorporated in this, on the regional boundaries, because we have to accept that in the North West and North East MORI is predicting that people would vote for a regional assembly. Urban will outvote rural. County councils will almost certainly disappear. So surely it is not too much to ask to be

allowed to indicate our region of choice. There is a practical advantage because the North East has only half the population of the North West and so Cumbria would have twice the number of assembly seats; and the nature of the North East region is markedly more rural than the North West, again more akin to our area.

I have no time to speak about other areas of the country, but after I had a letter in *The Times*, at the time of the publication of the White Paper, the response that I received from across the country showed that we are clearly not alone in being concerned about the boundaries.

So please support this small amendment. Give us a voice and a chance to make a democratic difference.

The Chairman: Mr Royle, I would be grateful if you would propose your amendment.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘In paragraph (b) *leave out* the word “acknowledge” and *insert* the word “recognize” and at the end *insert* the words “but are concerned that the size of certain proposed regions will make this difficult”.’

The Bishop of Durham: Well, who am I to oppose such a public-spirited person as Tim Royle? The problem of size, as I mentioned earlier, is a question of a critical mass, and while I understand some of Mr Royle’s pleadings I would suggest that the best way of addressing this particular issue is when the regional assemblies are set up and running; they can then provide a coherent focus for regional opinion. To try to settle this question would delay things interminably, which I suspect may be part of Mr Royle’s motivation. However, who am I to oppose such an amendment – though I hope that the Synod will.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The amendment was put and carried, 186 voting in favour and 114 against.

The Bishop of Swindon (Rt Revd Michael Doe): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘After paragraph (b) *insert* as a new paragraph

“(c) call for the statutory inclusion of social and economic partners, including faith communities, in any new pattern of regional government;”

and reletter the remaining paragraphs accordingly.’

The Bishop of Durham: I have a great deal of sympathy with the Bishop of Swindon's amendment and, indeed, it gives me the opportunity again to pay tribute to him for his deep involvement in the whole question of regional government and regeneration, but chapter 7 of the White Paper makes the Government's position clear. First, the democratic principle of a wholly and directly elected assembly is a cornerstone of the Government's proposals and to elect people through constituencies is out. Second, the Government want to encourage the participation of stakeholders, like voluntary bodies and Churches, by being elected to the assembly, by being elected to the executive of the assembly, by being active in the committees of the assembly, by being active in civic forums; there will be a number of testing grounds within each region to which the assembly will refer. It is likely that participation in a committee or a civic forum might be more practical and more attractive to many people in business, in the voluntary sector and in faith communities.

That point, added to the difficulty of defining the faith communities or the business community or the voluntary community – how do you define a discrete constituency that will elect to the body? – all suggest to me that we would not get far with this proposal and, on balance, that it is probably better to reject it at this stage but to report the debate that has surrounded this particular amendment.

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The amendment was put and lost.

Mr Nigel Holmes (Carlisle): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘After paragraph (b) *insert* as a new paragraph

“(c) support the principle that, prior to any referendum on the creation of an assembly, people in that region are given the opportunity to express a view on the appropriateness of the regional boundaries;”

and reletter the remaining paragraphs accordingly.’

The Bishop of Durham: As I said about Mr Royle's amendment, the question of boundaries will always be controversial, depending on where you live, especially for those areas on the margins of the regions. It is difficult to see how people could express their views on boundaries before a referendum and election. What would be the mechanism for their expression of those views? However, when the assemblies are in place they will provide a strong negotiating platform, region to region, regions to Whitehall, and so on. To try to reach an agreement on boundaries before the

assemblies are up and running would be confusing and delay the referendums considerably. I ask the Synod, therefore, not to support the amendment.

Mr Holmes talked about remote bodies. May I just answer that question? There is no reason why an assembly needs to be located in any one place within a region. What we are planning in the North East is that the assembly will not have a big town hall; it will move around: it will meet in Darlington, in Durham, in Stockton. People will have access to it and be able to be there.

The question of boundaries is not soluble until you have the assembly in place, and I ask Synod to reject the amendment.

The Chairman: I see no one standing.

The amendment was put and carried.

Mr Tim Royle (Gloucester): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘After paragraph (c) *insert* as a new paragraph

“(d) urge that in any referenda to be held, the relevant majority required should be of all those eligible to vote rather than of those voting;”

and reletter the remaining paragraphs accordingly.’

The Bishop of Durham: I hate to be opposing my good friend Tim Royle again but I think that this amendment will have the effect of closing the door on elected regional government. I am not quite sure how practical Mr Royle’s amendment would be. A better idea might be to encourage the Government – if we are wanting people to get keen on this and to vote at all levels of government – to be more creative in the voting procedures. We have already tried postal voting; we might try email voting; but in the end we cannot force people to vote, and to try to judge a majority against the whole of the electorate makes a bit of a nonsense of the democratic procedures to which we are all committed. I ask the Synod to reject this amendment.

The Chairman: I see no one standing.

The amendment was put and lost.

Mrs Anne Williams (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Bishop of Durham, in reply: I will not delay the Synod with a long response, except that I would just like to thank the whole Synod for a very responsible debate. It is quite clear that there are many members of the Synod who are involved in community life, in local strategic partnerships, in local government, in local community activities of so many kinds. It is important that the message that is carried from this Synod to the Government in our response to the White Paper is one of total commitment to the life of the nation, in the belief that the nation's life and democratic institutions will be greatly strengthened by an assembly in each region.

Thank you again for all the contributions, both those that I have agreed with and those that I have not. All will be reported through the BSR in our response to the Government on the White Paper, and those of us who engage with the Government at a national level on these issues will make sure that a fair representation of Synod's views is made clear.

Mr Allan Jones (Liverpool): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. In view of the importance of the debate, could we have a vote by Houses?

The Chairman: I can so order, though if it were left to me I would not do so. However, if 25 members stand in favour of a division by Houses I must allow it. Are there 25 members standing? There are not.

The motion was put and carried in the following amended form, 264 voting in favour and 67 against:

'That this Synod, noting the growing strength of regional institutions in England and proposals for their further development:

- (a) affirm the contribution made by the Churches to social and economic progress in the English regions and, specifically, the involvement of several dioceses and ecumenical bodies in such fora as the existing regional chambers;
- (b) recognize the importance of decision-making being close to those affected and being open, accessible and accountable but are concerned that the size of certain proposed regions will make this difficult;
- (c) support the principle that prior to any referendum on the creation of an assembly people in that region are given the opportunity to express a view on the appropriateness of the regional boundaries;
- (d) request the Board for Social Responsibility to respond to the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* in the light of this debate; and

- (e) encourage the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops to consider how far the Church of England should adapt its own structures in the light of the growing significance of regions in England and to report by July 2003.'

The session was adjourned at 10.15 p.m.