

Fifth Day

Tuesday 12 July 2005

THE CHAIR *Mr James Humphery (Salisbury)* took the Chair at 9.15 a.m.

Revd Canon Mark Bonney (St Albans) led the Synod in prayer.

Farewells

The Clerk to the Synod (Mr David Williams): There will of course be a time for more farewells later this morning, but I must make three particular farewells: two are ecumenical and one is part of our staff team.

The first is to express our congratulations to Colin Williams, the Archdeacon of Lancaster, on his appointment as General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches. Colin is a member of the Meissen Commission so is already engaged considerably in European ecumenical affairs; he is also a member of the Council for Christian Unity. Congratulations. (*Applause*) We wish you every blessing in your new ministry and work.

I now turn to the far corner and Michael Bochenski, our Baptist representative. Reference was made by Bishop Stephen yesterday in the debate on women bishops to Michael's contribution to the Synod but I would like formally, on behalf of Synod, to congratulate Michael on his appointment as Rector of the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary, which is in Radosc near Warsaw in Poland. We wish you well, Michael. (*Applause*) Again we wish you every blessing in your new ministry.

Turning to my right, this is not an ecumenical farewell but a farewell to an honorary member of our staff team in the central secretariat. Robin Stevens will be retiring in a couple of weeks' time as National Stewardship Officer. Of course for many his more prominent recent role has been that of the panto dame in the revue. Robin does a lot of work behind the scenes. He is responsible for many of our Powerpoint presentations and for that unseen and sometimes unsung work of liaising with Church House, the Corporation of the Church House and York University in all sorts of technical matters: lighting, sound system and so on. Robin has sorted out a lot of problems that members have probably never been aware of. Robin, we shall miss you. (*Applause*)

Thirty-ninth Report of the Standing Orders Committee (GS 1578) (resumed debate)

The Chairman: So we return to Standing Orders, which I like to think has been the golden thread holding this group of sessions together. We have two items left, Item 24 dealing with speech limits and Item 26 the annual report of the Audit Committee.

SO 21

‘Leave out Standing Order 21 and insert

“Length of Speeches

21. (a) Except as provided by paragraphs (b) and (c) of this Standing Order or by another Standing Order, the speech limit shall be five minutes;

(b) the speech limit shall be ten minutes for the opening speech of the mover of a motion;

(c) the Chairman may at any time lengthen or shorten the speech limit without any motion being moved and shall inform the Synod of his decision” .’

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth (Ven. Adrian Harbidge): I beg to move:

‘That this amendment be made with effect from Wednesday 13 July 2005.’

Welcome to today’s episode, hopefully the final episode, of the thirty-ninth report of the Standing Orders Committee. We have achieved a lot, believe it or not, on the various occasions that we have met like this, and we now move on to the speech limits. I am tempted to say that if any member missed any of the previous episodes there will be an omnibus edition on Radio 4 at 12 noon called *Just Five Minutes* or *Just Six Minutes* or *Just Eight Minutes*.

In its debate in July last year, Synod made clear its view that the time normally allowed for speeches should be reduced. Geoffrey Tattersall stated in the ‘take note’ debate earlier on that, in the light of that debate, both the Business Committee and the Standing Orders Committee believed that the speech limits which were likely to gain the greatest overall support of the Synod were ten minutes for the mover of a motion and five minutes for all other speeches. The proposed amendment simply seeks to achieve this. I stress that the Chair on any occasion will have discretion to lengthen or shorten the speech limit as in SO 21(c).

The Chairman: I am going to proceed straight to Item 52, the amendment by Mr Sutcliffe. I do not see Mr Sutcliffe. Is he in the chamber?

Revd Paul Collier (Southwark): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Mr Sutcliffe cannot be here today and I have offered to move his amendment on his behalf.

The Chairman: Would you therefore please move his amendment?

Revd Paul Collier (Southwark): I beg to move as an amendment:

‘In the new SO 21(a) *leave out* the word “five” and *insert* the word “eight”.’

I shall try to be at least as helpful as Tom Sutcliffe.

This amendment is offered once again to give Synod a greater range of choices on the standard length of speeches. I have to say that my own personal view is that we do not actually need to alter this Standing Order at all. Chairs do have the discretion; it is my opinion that they are not shy of exercising that discretion and that they exercise it extremely helpfully. On occasions, it is often useful to have a couple of longer, more thoughtful contributions at the beginning of a debate, and then obviously it is appropriate to move to the usual five-minute speech length quite soon, depending on the number of people who have put in to speak. If the decisions that we have made about amendments put some downward pressure on the number of amendments that are tabled, it seems to me that there will be less need to reduce the length of speeches.

So I would really urge Synod to reject the first part of the Standing Orders Committee’s proposed amendment, Item 24, but in any case please pass this amendment of Mr Sutcliffe’s which is suggesting that the default time for length of speeches be eight minutes, not five minutes. It is just a concern that if we always start automatically with five minutes, it will lead to a trend not to have the longer speeches at the beginning of a debate, which are often helpful; but obviously I leave it to Synod to decide.

Dr Carole Cull (Oxford): I want to ask Synod to resist very strongly both this amendment of Mr Sutcliffe’s and the next. I believe that the Standing Orders Committee has got it exactly right, particularly because it has given the ultimate discretion to the Chairman, and over this group of sessions, in particular, we have seen how well our Chairmen can exercise their discretion.

When I began my ministry as a Reader I cut my teeth on sermons at eight o’clock that were to last two minutes and 30 seconds, and no longer; I can assure members that all of us preaching those short sermons found it perfectly possible to make a three-point sermon meaningful in that length of time. I serve as the Church of England representative on the Baptist Union Council. (It is a strange feeling to be the Church of England representative on something like that.) They discuss exactly the same issues as

we discuss and in exactly the same depth; they do not have a speech limit in their Standing Orders, and rarely in my experience has anyone spoken for more than two or three minutes; yet their debates are as deep as ours. I believe that five minutes is perfectly adequate for people to make speeches without repetition, hesitation or deviation, and that is how the Baptist Union manages it, because if somebody has said what you want to say, you do not say it again.

I believe that the Standing Orders Committee has got it right, and I think that the ultimate discretion lying with the Chairman is actually the way in which we in the Church of England would wish to proceed; so I urge Synod to reject both amendments and vote very firmly in favour of the Standing Orders Committee's proposal.

Revd Dr Alan Hargrave (Ely): We have to bear in mind that what we are talking about here is what is normal. It is quite clear that Chairs will have discretion to lengthen or shorten speech limits but we are talking about what we can normally expect. The purpose of this is to increase democracy. How many debates have we attended where a large number of people have been unable to speak? They have no chance to speak, even for 30 seconds, because they are never called. If we have a normal speech limit of five minutes, we will regularly allow more people to speak, and that has to be good for democracy.

The other thing about a five-minute speech limit is that it is then clear to people when preparing their speeches that they are writing a speech that is going to last five minutes or less; they are not then left with the awful problem of the speech limit suddenly cut from ten minutes to five minutes and they are scribbling out paragraphs and wondering what to leave in.

It is important that we go for the five minutes and resist this amendment.

Mr Brian McHenry (Southwark): I was thinking earlier this morning that Our Lord would have no difficulty with a five-minute speech limit since most of his remarks were delivered in far less than five minutes; the possible exception to the rule is the Sermon on the Mount, but there must always be an exception to any rule.

Like Dr Hargrave I support this very warmly, thinking back to my early days on the Synod: you know, the frantic preparation for Synod meetings, anxiously coming to the Synod with one's thoughts which one wishes to share with members, and, I am afraid to say, so often putting the speeches back into the bag, or the rubbish bin, because time has been taken up by the grandees – dare I say it – such as the officers of the Houses, with their ten-minute slots. It is very much in the interests of ordinary members that we go down this road.

In the House of Laity, by the way, we have introduced the 30-seconds rule, thanks to Dr Christina Baxter's example!

What about the point that the rule is unnecessary because this is what we are already doing (think about yesterday's women bishops debate)? Well, is that not what often happens? Certainly in my experience as a litigator in the courts and tribunals, practice often precedes formal codification. Indeed, is this not what happened with the doctrine of the Church? You work it out first of all and then decide that you need actually to write it down. That is what we are going to do here. We are going to recognize our increasing practice, but at least we will be establishing a norm. It is terribly important for the new Synod that we go down this road.

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth, in reply: I want to thank all the members who have spoken as it were on my side, on the Standing Orders Committee's side. Really the question we are asking is whether we want more people to be involved in our debates or whether we want to legislate to have fewer people involved. Synod a year ago said that we wanted to have more involved and spoke of five minutes. The idea of having an eight-minute limit or indeed any other limit that is a little difficult to remember is just going to make things complicated. I would resist Paul Collier's amendment and urge Synod to vote with the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr John Freeman (Chester): 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.

The Chairman: We come now to Item 53, the second of Mr Sutcliffe's amendments. Mr Collier, do you wish to move this?

Revd Paul Collier (Southwark): I beg to move as an amendment:

'*Leave out* the new SO 21(b) and *insert*

“(b) Depending on the pressure of business and the nature of the subject, the length of the opening speech of the mover of a motion shall be fifteen minutes, twelve minutes or ten minutes, at the Chairman's discretion after appropriate discussion having been communicated to the mover in advance.”

and at the beginning of the new SO 21(c) *insert* the words “Subject to paragraph (b)”.’

I am sure this already happens but it is perhaps useful to put it into Standing Orders that the Chair of the debate checks out with the person moving how much time they need. It was a little bit worrying in the debate on euthanasia that the Bishop of St Albans

appeared to be running out of time at the beginning of the debate when obviously it was very important that we heard all his opening remarks. Really, all this hopes to do is offer a useful practice by which a little bit of negotiation can take place before the debate so that an appropriate length of opening speech is agreed between the main mover and the Chair.

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth: I urge members to resist this amendment. This negotiation happens already. It is so unnecessary for us to try putting anything extra into Standing Orders. Please resist.

Mr Barry Barnes (Southwark): I would ask Synod to resist this amendment. Things have improved. When I first came on Synod ten years ago, some of the opening speeches, where they were dealing with reports, meant that you were virtually getting the report read back at you, and you wondered what on earth was the point of having read the report in the first place. Things have improved, but I would have thought that if the speakers know that they have ten minutes in which to open that should be quite adequate. I therefore urge members to resist this.

Mr Paul Boyd-Lee (Salisbury): I was tempted to look seriously at this amendment because of those words at the end of it ‘having been communicated to the mover in advance’, because we did have this classic example here the other day of Tom Sutcliffe coming into this chamber, not knowing how long he had to move whatever amendment he was going to move, in that complex series of amendments. However, the way this amendment is worded really does not help us at all. ‘Telling in advance’ happens already: you come in here and the Chairman says that there are two minutes or whatever to speak. What I am saying is that there needs to be perhaps a little more liaison somewhere along the line.

I think I will also vote against the whole motion when it comes before us because I do not think that it achieves what Synod wanted originally. What they wanted was that some speeches did not go on as long as they are currently going on, but the way we have it here is that, although we have altered the guidelines, at the end of the day it is still the Chairman who actually decides, and Synod is in the hands of the Chairman as to how long the speech goes on for. It seems to be contradictory: yes, we have speech limits on these various times but the Chairman still decides. I think that it would be simpler if we just left things as they are.

Mr John Freeman (Chester): 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 Gavin Oldham (Oxford): In my view it is worth considering a standard speech limit

of just three minutes unless a request to speak has been lodged beforehand or when the speaker requests more as he or she begins, which could be five minutes or ten minutes, with an explanation why. Anyone who is going to speak for five minutes or more really has to do quite a bit of preparation beforehand to do so and I think that they are in a position to be able to put that request down. This way, the Chair could seed longer speeches more easily throughout the debate, give more confidence to those who had done a lot of preparation on a shorter speech that they would be able to deliver it, while allowing more people to speak and more contributions to be made throughout the debate and giving a better balance.

Mrs Margaret Condick (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich): I am going to be referring to the proposed SO 21(c). I have no problem at all with the concept of flexibility, which I approve; what I want to question is the words used. Since the General Synod debate in February last year I have been delighted to find inclusive language being used in all motions. I was therefore surprised at the words chosen in part (c): ‘Chairman’ and ‘his decision’, especially given the many excellent women Chairs of debates whose services we appreciate.

I originally thought that this language was an oversight. I now fear that I may be going to be told that it has deliberately been chosen to be consistent with the rest of the Standing Order. If so, I ask why it has to be consistent. I am not sure that being consistent should be a higher virtue for the Church of England than concern about upsetting people.

This language goes against the decision made by this Synod a mere 17 months ago, so I make this request: would it be possible, please, to reword part (c) using gender-neutral language before it is finalized?

Mr David Warner (St Albans): Just to talk about (c), and I would urge that especially the person who makes the opening speech does get in touch with the Chairman. We had that example, did we not, with Christopher Herbert: really, they ought to have got together beforehand and for the Chairman to come to an agreement as to how long that first one should be. That seems a very good thing, because there are occasions when we have asked a speaker to come back again when he needed more time than was officially allowed.

I do like (c) and I think that we should go ahead with the whole of the amendment.

Mr John Freeman (Chester): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth, in reply: I thank everyone for their contributions.

May I emphasize that the Standing Orders Committee is very much a responsive Committee in that we wait for you to offer suggestions to us, preferably in writing. So I ask Mr Oldham to put his ideas down on paper and get them to the next Standing Orders Committee, and we will happily discuss them.

As regards gender-neutral language, we have agreed on previous occasions that when we are talking about amending legislation it is asking for trouble if we alter just one bit of the Standing Orders referring, possibly, back to another bit that has not yet been altered. One day we will get round to tidying up the whole of it.

To Mr Warner and his point about people getting together before debates, I think that Synod has heard you. I know this happens usually. May I encourage all who plan to speak to talk to the Chairman in advance.

Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin (London): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Just for the record, there was agreement the other evening about the timing. I just wanted to make that point.

The motion was put and carried.

SO 96

‘Leave out paragraph (b) and insert

“(b) The Archbishops’ Council’s Audit Committee shall cause a report of its work and proceedings during the year in question to be laid before the Synod before the end of June in the following year. The only motion to be appended to such a report shall be ‘That the Synod do take note of this Report’.”.

The Archdeacon of Bournemouth: I beg to move:

‘That this amendment be made with effect from Wednesday 13 July 2005.’

The effect of the deletion of the existing SO 96(b) will be that the Business Committee, acting pursuant to SO 4(a), will continue to decide whether annual reports should be debated by the Synod but that, if it decides that there should be no debate, a member will still have the right to call for a debate. That is picked up by SO 96(c). The reason for the new SO 96(b) is that it is necessary because the Audit Committee, since it is a body answerable to the Synod through the Archbishops’ Council, does not fall within the existing SO 96(b) and (c). Accordingly, at present, if the Business Committee does not include a debate of its annual report no member of Synod can call for such a debate. The Audit Committee believes – and the Standing Orders Committee concurs with this view – that Synod ought to have the right to call for the Audit Committee’s annual report to be debated, as it was last night; and the proposed amendment so provides.

The Chairman: I see no one standing.

The motion was put and carried.

The Chairman: Now, members of Synod, you have been waiting to hear this for a long time: that concludes this item of business. (*Applause*)

THE CHAIR *The Bishop of Sheffield (Rt Revd Jack Nicholls)* took the Chair at 9.48 a.m.

In the Spirit of the Covenant: Interim Report of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant

The Chairman: This being the final item of business of the quinquennium and it being the end of term, I am going to indulge myself by relating my favourite ecumenical story before the debate begins. It is about Cyril Smith, the MP for Rochdale, who was associated with the Unitarian Church in Rochdale which unfortunately was gutted by fire. He wrote to all the local Churches and asked them to contribute to the rebuilding of the Unitarian Church. Everyone replied, apart from the Roman Catholic priest, who was not quite sure about supporting the rebuilding of the Unitarian Church and so wrote to his Bishop, Thomas Holland. Thomas Holland replied after a while to Cyril Smith: ‘Dear Mr Smith, Thank you for your letter. I am afraid the Roman Catholic Church cannot contribute to the rebuilding of the Unitarian Church in Rochdale, but please will you accept the enclosed cheque towards the demolition of the old one.’

We welcome three representatives from the Methodist Church: Professor Peter Howdle the Methodist Co-chair of the Joint Implementation Commission and a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, Mrs Susan Howdle a member of the Methodist Council and Legal Adviser to the Methodist Church, also a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, and Revd Peter Sulston, Co-ordinating Secretary for Unity in Mission for the Methodist Church and the Methodist Co-convenor of the Joint Implementation Commission. (*Applause*)

The Bishop of Peterborough (Rt Revd Ian Cundy): I beg to move

‘That this Synod commend the report for study in the Church of England.’

I am delighted to bring before the Synod the first report of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. Together with the Methodist Conference, this Synod set up the JIC two years ago when it endorsed the Covenant itself, and mandated it to monitor and promote the implementation of the Covenant. I speak today both as chairman of the Council for Christian Unity and as Co-chair of the JIC, and I am delighted that my Co-chair Professor Peter Howdle, together with other Methodist friends, is in the gallery today. In addition to Peter and me, the JIC is a small

working group of five members from each Church and an observer/participant from the United Reformed Church. Although we were appointed two years ago, the inevitable difficulty of finding space in the diaries of busy people meant that effectively we have had 15 months in which to do the work represented in this report. It is therefore intentionally a record of work-in-progress, of unfinished business. The JIC intends to bring further reports to Synod and Conference before its initial term of service expires in three years' time.

The report begins by exploring the biblical theology and the spirituality of covenant. This attempts to fill an acknowledged lacuna in the *Common Statement* of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and will, I hope, both clarify and support the commitment that our two Churches made. It goes on to highlight examples of good practice in the local, regional and national implementation of the Covenant as an encouragement and example. Much is already happening and more could be done if we all followed the lead that some have taken. The second half of the report focuses on three of the faith and order issues that were identified in the *Common Statement* as needing further work.

The first looks at the differences of practice in our Churches with regard to the symbolism of the eucharistic elements and their reverent disposal after Communion. To some this may seem a minor or even trivial issue; in fact, it cuts deep into the psyche of many of us, and the fault lines run within as well as between our Churches. The JIC believes that together we need to go back to Our Lord's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, where the broken bread and the common cup are critical norms. There is a challenge here to both our Churches that will assist convergence in the future. The increasing use of a large single wafer in many Anglican churches is, I believe, in line with our thinking.

The second faith and order issue is eucharistic presidency. The diocese of Sydney has succeeded in making this a live issue for Anglicans in recent years, and to inform the debate and clarify the position of the Church of England the House of Bishops produced the statement *Eucharistic Presidency* in 1997. It is also a live issue in the Methodist Church where temporary dispensations may occasionally be given for non-presbyters to preside in situations of proven eucharistic deprivation. The report provides two discussion papers on this issue, written by consultants to the JIC, setting out the position in each Church. Our aim is to help our Churches to understand each other better in order to clarify the obstacles to closer unity. In the light of these papers we are already beginning to look at ways forward.

The third area concerns the interchangeability of ordained ministries. Once again we provide a description of the theology and practice of our Churches and an analysis of the issues, in order to assist deeper mutual understanding and clarity about the obstacles. We are very aware that progress towards interchangeability is affected by three areas where our Churches are engaged in further reflection and decision: the nature of the diaconate, the role of women in senior positions of oversight, and the exercise of personal *episkope*. We have once again described the present position. We

have also looked at similar issues in relation to lay ministers – that is not yet in the report – and we will want to make proposals about those matters in a future report.

While this is an interim report I believe that we have made significant progress and that the report will further our convergence and encourage further collaboration in our shared mission. It is a serious engagement with our colleagues and provides a basis for taking our commitment further towards the time when our unity in Christ can be fully expressed.

So what do we want the Synod to do with this report? Two years ago 91 per cent of the Synod voted in favour of the Covenant. I hope that the Synod will follow that up by strongly commending this report for study and response throughout the Church of England. What then do we want our Church to do with the report? The JIC hopes that it will be studied by clergy and laity, preferably by Anglicans and Methodists together and not of course excluding our other ecumenical partners. We want dioceses and parishes to emulate the good practice flagged up in the report and to take the Covenant to heart in a deeper commitment to doing together all those things which are already possible under the current Canons and Standing Orders of our Churches.

We would also like to receive considered responses from all and sundry that will inform the work of the JIC. To further the implementation of the Covenant we ourselves will shortly be running ten regional roadshows – and I have recently written to diocesan bishops about these – and we will also be undertaking further work on the unresolved differences between our Churches in the area of faith and order.

I commend this report to the Synod.

The Chairman imposed a speech limit of five minutes.

Mrs Elizabeth Fisher (Birmingham): In the days when my children were small, every long journey was punctuated by the same refrain: ‘Are we nearly there?’. The question would be asked within moments of our setting out and then roughly every ten minutes unless, by chance, they fell asleep. ‘No,’ I would reply, with varying degrees of patience, ‘it’s a long way yet. Sit back, enjoy the scenery or read a book – but don’t get woozy’. At the time, my husband and I would wonder at the children’s apparent lack of any sense of distance, still less of what it requires to travel over a long journey; but the truth is that they were voicing, with a *naïveté* both comical and irritating, the same impatience that their parents felt but had learnt to suppress. In truth, all of us long for journey’s end, to be reunited with friends and family from whom time and distance have separated us.

We know that the Anglican-Methodist Covenant was a long time a-coming. Many of us have often felt like my sons and have asked, ‘How much longer? Are we nearly there? Has unity not arrived yet?’, and what is the answer today? It is ‘nearly, but not quite’. After so long on the journey, no wonder some may be asking if we cannot move faster, and some may even be thinking that this report is too boring and is making them rather

woozy, but the journey to unity cannot bypass the time and the care which it takes. We must be both resolute and patient in working together with the Methodist Church to overcome the obstacles which the report has highlighted and which at present prevent our having a united, interchangeable ministry. We must try to understand one another's practices over the disposal of the eucharistic elements because such issues cannot be speedily resolved by somehow forcing others to change their practices. It is important to state our remaining differences and chapter 6 is a helpful mapping exercise that shows where we are over presidency at the Eucharist.

The Church of England has faced this concern already with our French partners and the Reuilly *Common Statement* and, in fairness to our French friends, we must maintain our integrity in ecumenical dialogue in these islands: we cannot say one thing to one set of friends and another thing to another set of friends. So we must still travel a little further, even if it means travelling a little more slowly than some of us would like.

Without the readiness to go this extra mile, the benign affirmations of the motions we passed in 2003, recognizing one another's ministries as instruments of grace, remain the friendly language of strangers; but we are called and destined to be once again members of one household, and it is worth both the resolution and the patience which is needed to get there. Our destination is not shared services and shared ministry but interchangeable ministry, and that is a vital aspect of the visible unity.

So the setting-up of the Joint Implementation group was vital, and it is why its work is not to be rushed. Anyone living in Birmingham, as I do, knows that journeys take the time that they need, especially given the state of the roads. The motion today allows us to consult our maps and chart our journey carefully, and allow our Church to study the report at all levels.

Last Thursday I spent some time picking the ripe raspberries in my garden in order to make jam. The picking was excellent, the fruit succulent, so I warmed the sugar and warmed the glass; but I cannot make jam unless I reach setting-point. That is the crucial thing. Years ago I used to use the method which the cookery books call the spoon and saucer test: you had to wait to see if the jam, once put on a cold saucer, would set. If you bottled too soon, it would not gel. Nowadays I have a cook's thermometer. All I do is put the thermometer in the pan and wait for the red line to get to the right level, that says 'setting'. The Joint Implementation Commission's report has given us as it were a jam thermometer to allow us time in our Churches to realize that we are approaching setting-point. I commend the report to Synod; it is a good tool for us in our churches. (And I would have liked to bring some of my jam for you to try!)

Revd Brunel James (Ripon and Leeds): To echo the previous speaker, why are we not nearly there yet? I stand before Synod today as something of an angry young man or, at least, a considerably irritated one. Before I was even able to walk or talk, this Synod had the opportunity for full merger with the Methodist Church but, to our everlasting shame, the opportunity was blown. Now I have two children of my own and we are

really not much further on. If we are serious about being the national Church of this nation, not some narrowly defined, neat and clean sect, then we absolutely must acquire a sense of urgency about this matter. It is especially true here in the northern province where really the Methodist Church was more of the established Church than ourselves, in both numbers and dignity and credibility.

So, first, I want to say to Synod that we have an historic debt to pay. When the great revival, led by Wesley, broke upon England, the Church of England was unable to accommodate the energy that he released within its structures. Wesley was able to meet and reach the mass of the people that we were indifferent to and indeed have remained indifferent to throughout most of our history. He had a transforming effect on this country where we failed to have such an effect. We had the opportunity to incorporate Wesley's great legacy into the historic mother Church in the high days of the ecumenical movement all that time ago, and our failure left the Methodist Church in a most invidious position. If the Methodist Church has declined in numbers and energy over the past 30 years it is really our fault. They set aside a clear Nonconformist identity by agreeing to unite with us. They were there, standing at the altar, and we failed to turn up.

Second, beyond that negative background there are great and wonderful positive opportunities to be grasped. Just to give one small example, in my own parish we are working together with our Methodist friends towards doing joint outreach work to local families and children, and that is hugely important in our area. It is hugely important because the people going to the Methodist and Anglican churches are mostly the grandparents of the children and families that we want to reach; we have missed the people in between. So there are strong latent identities to be either Anglican or Methodist which we have to overcome in order to bring the people who have turned away from both our Churches back into contact with us. If we try to do outreach with limited resources separately, we fail; if we try to do it together, we have a strong chance of success because we can get beyond those old entrenched prejudices. We can show a new unity, a positive face of the local Church that people will want to buy into.

Finally, I want to say that there are so many excellent ministers within the Methodist Church. If we can see the positive benefits of having a vision for attaining full visible unity in the near future, we will be in an immensely better position to impact this country for the gospel, as Wesley did and as we seek to do, and to build a really strong, really credible national Church to reach the people of this country.

The Bishop of Rochester (Rt Revd Dr Michael Nazir-Ali): I speak from my background in a united Church where Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Lutherans have come together. I speak also with some experience of a number of ecumenical dialogues and warm relations with the Methodist Church in the south-east. I welcome this hard work done by the Joint Implementation Commission, but I have some questions.

Our other ecumenical agreements on the Eucharist – ARCIC, the Orthodox, the

Lutherans – involve us in a definite understanding of the presence of Christ in the gathered community of president and worshippers, in the receiving of the consecrated elements and in the elements themselves. Do we have agreement with the Methodists on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist which is consonant with these other agreements? Second, in the light of our formularies – for example, the Preface to the Ordinal – Anglicans are bound to say that the ordained ministry is not simply an extension of the priesthood of all believers but that ordained ministers have, as the Articles say – Article XXVI, for instance – commission and authority from the Lord and speak in his name. Once again, other ecumenical agreements into which we have entered recognize the particular way in which the ordained ministry relates to the priesthood of Christ as head of his Body, the Church. Does the Methodist insistence on lay presidency, for example, in the Deed of Union retain a view of the ordained ministry which Anglicans could not share? Third, do Methodists and Anglicans agree in their interpretation of how the nature of the gospel is related to the ordering of the Church? In particular, does this apply to a common recognition of the apostolic teaching and prophetic role of the bishop? Can there be interchangeability of ministries unless there is fundamental agreement on the nature of the ordained ministry, even if there is outward conformity, for example, in historic continuity? Finally, how does being in covenant relate to acknowledging the Scriptures as normative for Christian faith and life? Are we committed to reflecting on pressing moral issues together and waiting for the mind of the Church to emerge before decisions are made by one partner or another? How can this commitment be given practical form?

Like so many others I of course welcomed the Covenant, but have we really got substantial agreement on these other matters?

Mr Roger Godin (Southwark): A swansong, so please be gentle with me if I am slightly provocative.

In the 1970s, when we sought organic unity, I supported the scheme and shared the embarrassment of effectively jilting our brothers and sisters from the Methodists. That is why in this place a couple of years ago I felt that I had to be one of the very small minority voting against the Covenant proposals. That was not to say in any way that I was against unity, but I feared that we might be saying Yes to a nicely crafted set of words that seemed to ignore the key issues. I feared that we would yet again go along the marriage path only to find that we were incompatible on marriage day. It is some of those issues that are now coming to the surface, what the Methodist Conference described as the non-negotiable points. So before coming to Synod I felt I should check out the feelings of Methodists, which I did by talking to a member of the Methodist Conference – a backbencher, I might say – and then by joining worship at a well established LEP.

As I spoke to the member of the Methodist Conference – by the way they have mandatory three-minute speech limits – I have to say, paraphrasing the words of a well known Methodist, that my heart was strangely moved by some of the signs of improving

relationships which undergird the total working of the Covenant. There are some wonderful signs of joint activity or, at least, signs of non-competition and mutual respect. Here, it seems to me, is where paragraph 3.2 of the report expresses what I feel: ‘The prime value of an Anglican-Methodist Covenant . . . lies in the climate of presumption which it has put in place whereby joint working in mission and ministry should increasingly now be the norm rather than the exception’. That is happening. However, in an LEP in another part of the country all they could say was that, really, the Covenant made no difference, probably because they thought themselves already well ahead of the game, and with no local initiatives.

In the last debate I raised a point that I have made several times, that in my view real unity is only when we can meet at each other’s centres of worship and share in their way of doing things. To me the disgrace of Church disunity is that barriers are put up to sharing the bread and wine because one party believes that that is the only way to do things. When Jesus prayed that they may all be one, surely his thoughts were on relationships between his disciples in mission. Denominations had not happened. So I welcome the JIC report because it is good that the key differences in ministry and sacrament should be highlighted now; but when I read some of the minutiae of chapter 5 I begin to wonder what planet we are on. We said earlier that we should go back to the Institution. When Jesus said ‘Do this in remembrance of me’, do we really believe that he was insisting that we should always drink from one cup, that the liquid should not be above a certain alcoholic proof, or even that it should not be wine at all, and the bread should be of master baker quality or that he was contemplating nice-looking wafers? The report makes much of one chalice, but this morning I guess we will not all drink from one chalice. To be blunt, what did Jesus say about having only one person with particular qualifications as head of the table? All I hear him say is ‘As often as you meet together, do this in remembrance of me’. So does it really matter – and I say this as gently and tactfully as I can – how we remember Jesus? At the LEP service we drank Ribena from two separate chalices and ate some pieces of bread broken off a roll. The visiting preacher I spoke to said that using two chalices would be objectionable to his congregation, who insisted on separate glasses. Yet do these differences really matter? There is as much symbolism in drinking from separate cups, if we look for it, as a sign of fellowship as in using one cup. Why can we not recognize and enjoy the knowledge that there are different modes of celebration?

Please do not let us spend hours and hours trying to bring uniformity instead of unity where it matters. I am just staggered that anybody should worry about the legality of using communion cups (page 45). The legality? This is legalism where grace should abound. The other commandment was to go out and make disciples. That is what we should be seeking in unity: we are meant to be out there evangelizing with our fellow-Christians of whatever persuasion, not fiddling while Rome burns, or the Church of England, come to that.

The JIC emphasizes in so many ways that there is a long, hard road ahead, and ironically it was that which impressed my Methodist Conference friend. She, like me,

feels that an enormous amount will be achieved by low-level co-operation and probably not much by tackling big issues better dealt with by grace and love than legalism and legislation. My plea is that we do not waste time on peripherals and law, and that we get on with joint working in mission and ministry.

Miss Sue Booth (Lichfield): I was delighted to see that the interim report sets out so very clearly our differences. I am sorry that the Commission has not yet looked at the problems that crop up concerning the Establishment of the Church of England. Two years ago at the Methodist Conference in Llandudno, when discussing the Conference, the only person who got really hot under the collar and red in the face was a chap who was really bothered about the Establishment. I suggest that, as happens so often, the difficulty arises because there is a lack of understanding on one side and inconsiderate action on the other.

A story, and I have changed it to protect the guilty. A young Methodist teacher was asked to set up a meeting with a view to forming a Christian group in school, so he organized an open meeting. He was astonished, on arrival at the meeting, to find that the local vicar had taken over. After all, the school and its pupils were in his cure. Should the teacher, the Methodist, have spoken to the vicar? Should the vicar have had the courtesy to talk to the teacher? I leave the answers to you.

The two words ‘Anglican arrogance’ appear appropriate all too often. They were not used on Saturday afternoon around the Hind report, though they might have been; and Establishment seemed useful when we were talking about *Presence and Engagement* on Sunday. I have a Roman Catholic friend who says that arrogance is the wrong word; it should be ignorance. Often I think it is discourtesy and inconsiderateness.

Talking about the Prayer Book, C. S. Lewis said that once you had learnt the steps of the dance you could enjoy the dance. Once we have learnt what each of us means by certain words, we can enjoy walking the pilgrim path together. So I trust that the Commission will look at Establishment soon and give us all an explanation, as clearly as it has done of other subjects, of what it really means.

Revd Dr John Hartley (Bradford): I am also chairman of Churches Together in North Bradford, and it was in that capacity that I was the first person to extend an invitation to Colin Buchanan to preach when he moved to our part of the world, which he did at Roman Catholic Mass as part of our joint celebrations. I want this Covenant to succeed, and when I stand before Synod to move an amendment it is with that aim that I move it.

I would like to speak about the good and bad points of this report and then explain my difficulties with the motion and explain how my amendment meets them. The good points are on pages 1–35 – the many examples of the way that our different Churches are working together and the way in which these stories can be got out and used as encouragement to others to do that – and also in chapter 4, the Guide to Good Covenanting. I was particularly encouraged on page 34 by the remark that ‘change is

inevitable' and that 'it is hard to imagine any significant mutual giving and receiving . . . if none of the partners notices any change in the way they order their affairs'. That is right, is it not?

What is the bad part of the report? Well, the rest of it, really, which is the lowest common denominator method of ecumenism.

When I returned from my honeymoon we lived in a house with a large bathroom which came with my wife's job. I washed my hair and then I discovered that my wife had put the shampoo on the shelves at the other side of the bathroom, so I had to get out of the bath with wet hair, traipse across the bathroom and recover the shampoo. The next morning my wife berated me for having moved the shampoo which meant that when she washed her hair in the basin she had to trek across the bathroom floor to recover the shampoo. I always wash my hair in the bath and she always washes hers in the basin. Those of you who do marriage preparation know that there is an easy solution to this: let us buy two bottles of shampoo and have one at each side. That is what this document says. It says the Methodists find the Anglican wafers difficult to accept. Well, let us have one loaf. The Anglicans find the Methodist cups difficult to accept. Well, let us have one jug but pour it out into lots of cups; I am sure the ecclesiastical silverware people can manage it. There is a dispute about how to get rid of the leftovers; let us solve it in a way that is acceptable to both partners.

That is great as far as it goes, but it does not go a long way. You see, I discovered that winter that my wife likes to sleep with the bedroom window open, even in the depths of winter. I like it closed, to keep me warm. There is no way that you can have the window open and closed at the same time. If you think you can make a marriage work by finding a mutually acceptable solution like that, you are on a sticky wicket. There is no way that we can make communion wine both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. There is no way that we can have lay presidency and not have it. There is no way we can have interchange of ministries and also not have it. What this book does is expect us to be able to solve all our problems with the two-shampoo-bottle method, and it does not work. It leads us down that path and it says that with a bit more talking we can make this work, chaps. You know you cannot; you cannot make a square circle; there are many things that you cannot do.

Now to the motion, which says 'this Synod commend the report for study in the Church of England'. I spoke to Paul Avis and others and they say that what it means is 'commend for discussion'. We do three things with reports, do we not? We either take note of them, which does not commit us to any view about them; or we commend them; or we approve them. 'Approve' means that we wholeheartedly support; 'commend' is somewhere in the middle. I want to commend the first part of this report, which gives the instances of good practice, but I do not want to commend this business of going along with the two-shampoo-bottle method of unity. My amendment is designed to let us say that we commend some of it, the rest we are happy to discuss, but we do not really even want to put our names to that discussion part at the moment. In case

members are wondering about this, I wrote down Bishop Ian's last statement. He said, 'I commend this report to the Synod'. I am not able to accept a commendation of this report.

I ask for support for my amendment from Evangelicals because, after all, pages 51–74 is very partisan in its statement on Anglicans. I ask for support from liberals because you know that there needs to be more give and take. I ask for support from Anglo-Catholics because the treatment of Alwyn Marriage in this report is as bad as the treatment of David Day. I ask for support from those with a sense of historical continuity because we need to repent of our history as well as acknowledge it. Bishop Ian, I even ask for your consent because I do not think that you believe some of the things that you have put your name to in this document!

The Bishop of Lincoln (Rt Revd Dr John Saxbee): We in the diocese of Lincoln never make jam and very rarely visit the bathroom, so I will keep this as much to the point as possible, the point being disappointment, actually, with regard to this particular, long-awaited document, maybe because we had, some of us, misplaced expectations of what the Joint Implementation Commission was about, although were they so misplaced as it says on page 1: 'the report is meant to help Anglicans and Methodists in England both to make the Covenant a practical reality now and to chart the direction in which we need to move'? I think that we were rather hopeful two years ago that by now we might be receiving some quite specific guidance as to how we can grow together in ways that honour our traditions, without needing to go on revisiting ground that many of us feel we have negotiated already and are ready to move on to other ground.

One of the frustrations that we have had in the diocese of Lincoln – and I speak out of the diocese that produced John Wesley and, in penitence, alienated John Wesley, and therefore we have quite an interest in our part of the world in ensuring that we go together with our Methodist friends as quickly and as practically as possible – is that this Covenant seems to have been a Covenant without content. We were looking to the JIC to provide some content on which we could go forward in a practical way. There is some really useful and fascinating stuff in here, descriptive of all sorts of interesting things, and we have heard some of them referred to already. Good words when backed by goodwill can get us so far, but we need to get further faster. That is all I am really here to try to say to Synod.

Pace Mrs Fisher, I do not think that we need to take as much time as we seem to be asking of ourselves and of others, but at least the fact that the pace seems to be slow from the JIC point of view has encouraged us to be creative for ourselves. For example, just as Harry Potter departed for Hogwarts from Platform 9¾, we have invented Canon B 43½. It is a creative bit of work. We have had to do it ourselves, and maybe it is right that we have to do it ourselves. If the JIC will then adopt what it sees going on locally, that will become the report of three years hence. I wish, however, that we had known that in advance because I think we have rather been waiting for something more from the JIC than we have got. We have examples of shared oversight in the diocese of

Lincoln, particularly a circuit and a deanery virtually working coterminously now. We have good examples of mutual representation on key groups, and that is beginning to develop more and more. We have an urgent agenda – urgent – in relation to buildings. We have countless villages with an Anglican church and a Methodist chapel, those chapels closing at a rate of two or three a month sometimes, and yet we have no co-ordinated policy as to how we are going to capitalize on, and turn into a virtue, that rationalization of our buildings. We could do that if we had much more incentive to work together on these things. We have now both of us, in the Methodist district and in the diocese, mission initiative funds: the district advance fund and the diocesan initiatives fund. We are talking half a million pounds a year here, available for mission initiatives; and until we have some clear guidance as to how we can together make those initiatives combined efforts, particularly in new housing areas, the Covenant will remain a Covenant without content. We have made progress in terms of sector ministry, which is now run ecumenically under Lincolnshire chaplaincy services.

I simply wanted to share with Synod a degree of disappointment and some frustration that this report does not really scratch us where we itch. OK, so we are scratching our itches for ourselves, not a pretty image but it is one which seems at the moment to be delivering something. We would have liked to have the JIC report either backing what we are doing or even giving us some creative ideas that we could have added to the ones that we have developed for ourselves, but I would not have felt that I had done my job here in Synod if I had not aired that frustration on behalf of myself, my colleague who is chair of the Methodist district, and those chapels and churches across Lincolnshire who are desperate to turn this Covenant into something that significantly makes a difference to the kingdom of God and the Church of God where we live and work and worship.

Mrs Elaine Storkey (London): We have heard a lot about marriage and had lots of exciting stories, so I thought I would tell another one. A young vicar was in his study when his six-year-old daughter ran in with glowing eyes and said, ‘Daddy, what’s a lesbian?’ So he took a very deep breath and, with words like accountability, transparency, mutual respect flashing through his mind (having been to a recent Synod), he explained to his daughter factually and as carefully and patiently as possible the answer to her question. She seemed quite amazed at the antics of grown-ups and then said, ‘Can I go next door and play?’ ‘Yes, off you go’, he said. He watched her as she skipped down the drive, knocked on the door of the house next door, was admitted by a smiling lady into the house. Feeling rather pleased with himself that he had got through a tricky situation with great skill, he went to brag to his wife sitting in the next room having coffee with the churchwarden (a woman); he elaborated the story in great detail, only to be met with some coolness from his wife. ‘Did I do something wrong? Did I say something?’, and she said, pouring the coffee, ‘No, it’s just that Sophie was in the room when Margaret came and explained that the two ladies who’ve moved in next door are Wesleyans’.

We have to ask the right questions before we get the right answers, and that is true of the report in front of us. We have had two sets of questions already. We have had one set

from the Bishop of Rochester, excellent questions that we need to be using in order to interrogate the whole issue of unity with the Methodist Church, and we have had another set of questions from Roger Godin, also very important questions, and the two do not quite fit together, because they are a matter of priority and precedence. Then we have had another set of questions in this amendment by Dr Hartley. I just really want to respond to that because I think it is very disarming of Dr Hartley and actually not quite right to suggest that at the heart of this is an incompatibility and that, going back to the marriage idiom, our union or lack of union with the Methodist Church is about shampoo bottles or the incompatibility of open or closed windows within a marriage situation. I really do sympathize enormously, Dr Hartley, with you and your marriage situation and I can recommend very good counsellors and therapists, but at the end of the day I want also to make the point that incompatibility never ruined a marriage, only withdrawal of love and hardness of heart. In fact, the most incompatible people end up married to each other: the night owls with the early risers, the gregarious with the solitary. There is no end of permutations that the human race can think up in order to have two people together for better, for worse, in sickness and health, until death parts us.

At the end of the day, Dr Hartley failed to tell us if he is still married to his wife, and this is the point I want to leave us with: what is it about our union with the Methodist Church that matters fundamentally? It is not the incompatibilities, it is not those kinds of question; it is the love, it is the faithfulness, it is the commitment, it is the desire to grow together, to be one, to nurture one another and to proclaim the visible unity of Jesus Christ.

The Archdeacon of Oakham (Ven. David Painter): During the 1980s I was vicar of a parish in south London which was a local ecumenical partnership with the Methodist Church. The Methodist minister who was my colleague for just about the whole of that time had a strong radical and prophetic streak in his personality and style of ministry. Like all prophets, he could be an uncomfortable person to work with at times, but, my goodness, he taught me a thing or two about the values of the kingdom of God, and I am conscious of a profound debt that I owe to him for the gifts and insights that he shared with the rest of us. In times of frustration or disagreement he would ruefully refer to the effortless superiority of the Church of England and, although that phrase did not, I think, originate with him, I have called it to mind not only during today's debate but in the one which we had on the Covenant itself exactly two years ago in this very place. We were then, and we are now, a Church needing help, a Church in which we were saying terrible things to and about one another and were showing a marked reluctance to listen to one another and accept those who disagreed with us as brothers and sisters in Christ. We have so much to learn from the Methodist Church which, in a number of instances, has grappled more successfully and lovingly than we have with issues that we find so problematic and divisive. Yet I recall little acknowledgement of that in the debate two years ago, and it does not seem to have surfaced all that much in things that have been said and written in the two years since then. Rather, I get the impression that we in the Church of England think that we have conferred a favour on the Methodist Church by

agreeing to enter into a covenant with them, whereas, if anything, it is the opposite which is the case.

This leads me to the report before us this morning. There is much in it to be welcomed, as previous speakers have acknowledged, including the instances of good practice set out in section 3 and the Guide to Good Covenanting in section 4. There is not a lot, though, about the need to examine closely our lifestyles and presuppositions as a Church and very little about the kind of humility needed if the Covenant life is to become a reality. Fully two-thirds of the report is given over to questions about the kind of bread and wine to be used at the Eucharist, about their disposal and about who may preside at it. These are important issues, of course, and it would be silly to claim otherwise; but I have some anxiety about the steer which the Joint Implementation Commission has given us in placing these matters before us at this stage. My fear is that we shall become bogged down in these important but essentially secondary issues and that this will obscure the overwhelming need for us to face ourselves and ask the hard questions about ourselves to which I have already referred. As we know only too well from experience, it is easier to discuss issues of Church order and structure – yes, and liturgy – than it is to ask what kind of Church this Covenant is giving us the opportunity to become.

A previous speaker has already pointed out that on page 34 the authors state that change is inevitable. He commended that statement, and I know why they have said that, because it acknowledges the natural human response to change as something to be avoided if possible; but for a Christian disciple the word to use about change in the context of the life of the Church is not 'inevitable', for change is God-given and wholly to be desired. Indeed the report goes on to acknowledge that when it says that the Methodist notion of covenant points to an all-consuming transformation as God works through God's people. Are we ready for that in the Church of England? I doubt it, I doubt it very much, and we will not be, without the humility and the penitent acknowledgement of the need for change that is at the heart of the covenant life. If that is to become a reality, then Anglican superiority, whether effortless or not, will need to become a thing of the past.

Revd Dr John Hartley (Bradford): Before I move my amendment, Mr Chairman, under SO 18(c) I would like to make a personal explanation, which is that I am still married, I sleep with the bedroom window open, I have even learnt to wash my hair in the basin and not the bath, and I have discovered that it is more important to have clean hair than to worry about where it is washed.

I beg to move as an amendment:

'After the word "commend" *insert* the words "the good practice publicized and the issues raised in".'

The Bishop of Peterborough: I hope that the Synod will resist this amendment. I do not

believe that it adds anything, I believe that it confuses a clear recommendation and, although he is a former student, I hope I know my mind better than John Hartley does.

I am, frankly, amazed and somewhat dismayed that he should read this report and conclude that we are advocating what he described as a lowest common denominator approach to unity. Although I was a mathematician, let me change the metaphor and avoid all reference to shampoo, and assure the Synod that the JIC – and the CCU, for that matter – is simply not interested in cut-price, bargain-basement ecumenism. We have sought in this report to be honest, realistic and above board. We have clarified certain differences. We have welcomed trends of increasing co-operation. We are not suggesting splitting the difference on eucharistic practice but asking our Churches humbly and in the spirit the Archdeacon of Oakham has just advocated to go back to Our Lord's institution and talk about what matters together.

I also believe that John has misread the motion. We are asking the Synod to commend the report for study, and the whole sentence matters. It is an interim report about work in progress. We are not asking members to endorse every detail of the discussion but to study it, to let us know your serious and considered response.

We want both our Churches to study the report and not just the good practice and issues raised. That would, I think, exclude the very careful material on the Covenant, would exclude the resources for further reflection about faith and order, and would do this report a considerable injustice. I hope, therefore, having enjoyed the humour with which John presented his amendment, that Synod will reflect seriously and not be tempted to accept this amendment.

Mr Tim Hind (Bath and Wells): I have three sons, and two of them in their early years learnt the piano. One was taught the piano and, as soon as his lesson was over, the younger one pushed him off and taught himself. Later on, he had to be re-taught properly, with the right fingering and so on. This highlights for me what is going on here. I think that we have a very good report and we need to see the whole of it commended for study, but what is actually happening – if we cast our minds back to the early 1980s and 1990s when we were talking about ecumenism and post-operatively giving ourselves permission for the LEPs that we were setting up – what is happening here is that the first part of the report is very much writing the story of what has been happening and the second part of the report seems to me to be writing the script of how we might want the story to continue. If we hold those two things in tension I think we can get this report into context.

Revd David Osborne (Bath and Wells): In one of my parishes we have a very good relationship with the Methodist Church. What I have to say about it, though, is that it is tired. We have been reminded today about how Methodist-Anglican conversations have been going on for a very long time, and I think people are getting tired. One thing that is needed is a jolt. It would be wonderful where I am to have something come down from on high, particularly from the Church of England, and I would happily bring it to the

parishes, for us to consider and discuss. It would encourage everybody involved in this and give us something to get our teeth into.

However, maybe I could put it in terms of a question, but I am not really expecting everybody to put up their hands. How many people here have actually read that report? I do not think that it is the kind of stuff to enthuse the people in my parish. So what I would be looking for is something that draws on that report, draws on all the careful, hard work that has been done but is something, based on that, which we can actually talk about and discuss, which will not give people a sense of tiredness and boredom when they look at it but is something that will be stimulating and exciting and move us on.

Points have been made about doctrine and agreement on all sorts of things. There are all sorts of things that we disagree on, yes, but there are all sorts of things that we disagree on within the Church of England. Is not the process of coming together one of actually talking with each other? To do that we need a resource that will really help us, Anglicans with Methodists, Anglicans with Anglicans, Methodists with Methodists, together to work. I do not think that the report is the document, but we would be helped if we could have, as John Hartley's amendment asks for, 'the good practice publicized and the issues raised in it'. There are lots of issues raised in it. Let us have those, let us take those, let us put them out to our local churches, let us talk about this stuff; but please do not expect them to get their minds round the report as it is. Rather, let us deal with the issues within it.

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.

The Bishop of Dover (Rt Revd Stephen Venner): I want to comment on two paragraphs of section 3 from my perspective as vice-chairman of the Board of Education. It is important that we tell stories of what we are doing together as Churches because experience at all levels, I believe, is that, as we work together on common tasks, so we grow together in the love of which Elaine Storkey spoke so movingly.

Paragraph 3.4.3 of the report refers to the joint appointment of an adviser for further education. Alan Murray is the third such joint appointment for the Church. He is employed within the Education Division at Church House but half his salary and support costs come from the Methodist Church. This practice of joint appointment long pre-dates the Covenant itself but is a sign of the collaboration between the Churches that made the Covenant congruent in the first place. The adviser's work usefully illustrates another theme of the report: as the only national adviser in further education

employed by any Church or faith community in Britain, he consciously serves the wider Christian and faith communities and, as a result, makes the more impact on Government, the Learning and Skills Council and the sector in general.

Paragraphs 3.9.9 and 10 refer to the opportunity that we have for extending the provision of Church schools and to the possibility of joint Church schools. Members will recall that when we debated the Dearing report in 2001 Synod resolved to work together and to work towards and to welcome the possibility of joint ecumenical schools. There are currently around the country just over 50 Methodist schools within the maintained sector, and half of those are joint with the Church of England. As members will know, the Government gave a generous response to the Dearing report in 2001 and welcomed more faith schools. They have actively co-operated with the Education Division and with the dioceses to produce more Church of England secondary schools, now including academies. Some of these are joint Anglican-Roman Catholic schools, and many dioceses are expanding their provision of primary schools. I am pleased to say that there are plans for new joint Church of England-Methodist primary schools, which sometimes include other denominations as well.

As for our Church secondary schools, almost every diocese now has new schools open or planned or within sight. As part of the expansion we would welcome active exploration of the possibility of joint secondary schools. In my judgement this remarkable and wonderful opportunity for the Church has a few more years to run, but it will not last for ever, so we need to seize the day, together.

Finally, Chairman, if I may, a word about school admissions. Our clear policy is that Church schools should be distinctively Christian and inclusive. Ideally they would have space for children from Church of England and other Christian families as well as those of other faiths and none in the community. Most of our Church schools have to make difficult choices. Sometimes that means turning away Christian children to make space for other local children; this is always a very sensitive and difficult issue and is becoming more so for the governing bodies. Individual schools set their own admission policy, having regard to the advice of the diocese. The Church's Board of Education discussed admission policies in May this year, particularly in the light of the Covenant, and the Board suggests that diocesan boards of education should take account of the implications of the Covenant when they are giving guidance to their schools.

Church schools are an absolutely vital element in a mission-shaped Church. Let them be an absolutely vital element of our joint Covenant commitment.

The Archdeacon of Worcester (Ven. Joy Tetley): I hope that we shall welcome this report very warmly indeed, so much so that we do something about it and with it. We are asked to commend this work for study. Pray God that will also lead us to further action.

In a debate earlier in this Synod the Bishop of Worcester, my own dear Bishop, pleaded for theological thinking to be integral to our reviews and reports. Here is a glowing

example of that. How refreshing it is to engage with a theological approach which is such a model of pertinence, clarity and honesty. Equally refreshing is the essential relatedness of that theology to lived-out consequences: this report leaves us in no doubt that a Covenant agreement necessarily requires the active working out of a committed relationship through thick and thin, like marriage. If the Covenant is to realize its potential to flourish and bear fruit, then its implementation has to be worked at and not just subjected to detached study.

All this is thoroughly biblical. Our scriptural forebears did their theology not so much in seminar rooms, *pace* Archbishop Rowan, but on the way, synodically you might almost literally say, by responding to actualities, practicalities, circumstances, which provoked a grappling with who God is and what God requires. They did as it were circumstantial theology, worked out in the often painful crucible of lived experience. That is the kind of study to which I hope this report is inviting us, whether we live in areas where stirring the ecumenical pot is like stirring treacle or whether we are based in a situation of cutting-edge ecumenism. I would just like to encourage the group actively to pursue the agenda set out in bold print on page 21 i.e. that 'our Churches need to clarify for each other our different decision-making processes [and] where responsibility . . . lies'. That is particularly important in relation to initiatives such as RTPs, which have enormous potential for exploring and expressing our Covenant principles and also enormous potential for unwittingly treading on each other's toes. So I would welcome greater clarity on that.

A very big thank-you for this report, and may we take it as an urgent call to action.

Revd Rod Thomas (Exeter): I very much warmed to David Painter's remarks when he urged us to take a very positive view of where we were going and to develop a positive view of where this process is leading, and also when he urged us to be humble in our approach. My difficulty is that I want to argue for something that he might regard as actually trying to clog the works up, but I am not trying to do that.

I realize that the report before us deals with very live issues, as the Bishop said in his introduction. I want to thank the JIC for the work it has done, and I do not want to diminish the importance of the issues raised, but I want to join those expressing some disappointment with the report, that it does not deal with a greater range of doctrinal issues. This is not an attempt to clog the works up. It is an attempt to say Yes, let us have a positive outlook on the future and set before everybody in the Church a vision of where we are going but we cannot get there unless we also acknowledge the issues that have to be dealt with. I feel as though the report in a way is creeping up on these issues rather than laying them out for study by the Church as a whole. Issues have already been mentioned but others that I have mentioned before in Synod would include differences that exist between us over Christians being chosen by God. To me this is a very precious doctrine of assurance but one where I recognize that Anglicans and Methodists do not see entirely eye to eye. In a short debate that I introduced after we had passed the Covenant in November 2003, I and the Synod were given explicit assurances by the

Bishop of Peterborough that doctrinal issues such as these would be fully considered, but they do not appear to be in this study document and we appear to be embarked on a roadshow now which also does not embrace some of these issues.

I would therefore like to ask whether the Bishop of Peterborough is willing to assure us that a future report will be commended for study and response by the Church which will indeed deal with these issues.

Mrs Margaret Condick (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich): I speak as one of the first lay speakers, I think, in this debate.

I work as county ecumenical officer for Suffolk, one of the 50 or so of us in England, one for each county. As county ecumenical officer I am aware of much that is happening ecumenically in Suffolk, and I am also aware from my colleagues round the country that more is happening in some areas of England than others. In Suffolk there is a great deal of co-operation over such things as funding youth work and pastoral care of the elderly, outreach to the community, campaigning on social justice issues, the healing ministry, mission in its various facets and of course one-off special services. These are the sort of things that are done within a well-functioning Churches Together group. I am afraid that so far there are people in congregations and Churches Together groups who cannot yet see the point of the Covenant. They are very happy working with several other denominations and do not want to devalue or upset the others by concentrating on a relationship between Anglicans and Methodists which appears exclusive. We need to find ways to work through this issue.

Looking at what is happening, I am aware of very good relationships at Church leader level, between bishops and Methodist chairs. I am also aware of friendship at local level in small towns and villages with, for instance, the occasional joint Communion service at Pentecost, on the village green – I have helped put up the tent myself – when it seems that the differences explained in the report over the bread and wine can be sorted out and done with grace and good humour. These services bring much joy in the realization that eucharistic sharing is possible. What is harder and not, to my knowledge, happening much yet is regular timetabled joint services accepted by congregations as valid and permanent. This will need a lead set by minister and priests, rural deans, superintendent ministers, archdeacons and diocesan staff. There need to be regular joint meetings of clergy and ministers and joint deanery synods and circuit meetings.

The Covenant needs to enter the mindset of us all. I know that there will be a series of training days, one in each region, to help us in all this, over the coming year.

I very much welcome this report and the care and sensitivity with which it has been written. I also endorse the report's conclusion, that progress on the Covenant will depend on 'how enthusiastically and energetically all that is possible already under the Covenant is taken up and pursued in every area of the life of our two churches'.

Revd Dr Alan Hargrave (Ely): On a point of order, Chairman. Will you consider extending the speech limit for Mr Coates so that we can properly hear a Methodist response?

The Chairman: I was about to do that: a speech limit of eight minutes.

Mr Dudley Coates (Ecumenical Representatives, Methodist Church): – and, like the last speaker, lay. That time limit is incredibly generous, Mr Chairman, by Methodist Conference standards. Thank you.

There has been a lot of use in this debate by other speakers of the analogy of marriage, and I think many members of the Synod know that I am a member of that most basic ecumenical community, an Anglican-Methodist marriage. I am standing here, and sitting almost in front of me is the bishop who sent my wife for selection for the Anglican priesthood and the bishop in whose diocese she now serves. I warmed to some of the things that were said in the use of that analogy by people like Elizabeth Fisher and Brunel James and even John Hartley.

There are tensions in any living marriage. My mother, who was a marriage guidance counsellor, used to say that she did not believe the people who came to her sometimes and said that they had never had an argument. Nor do I. As somebody else said, my wife is an early riser and I am a late riser; you know, you have to work at those things. While I think that if I had been a member of the Joint Implementation Commission I might have chosen to work with a slightly different list of things, all these issues – including some of those which have been raised as things that we need to study further – are issues with which we need to grapple at some level or other.

I should tell the Synod that the Methodist Conference had a much briefer debate than you will have had here – that is partly the way we work – but much of the general tenor and tone was similar. Several speakers spoke of some degree of disappointment and frustration that we were not going further and faster, and I have heard that message here too. However, I ought also to say that we adopted a resolution which sent this report out for study and which specifically encouraged that study to be with other Christians, in particular with other Anglicans, and therefore I very much welcome what the Bishop of Peterborough said in introducing this debate about the desirability of joint study of these issues wherever that is possible.

I should also tell the Synod that we had a very serious and significant debate in the Conference about the possibility that we might actually in the foreseeable future take bishops into our system. That is something which in principle for nearly 60 years we have said we were willing to do, but we have always hung around and waited. We are now exploring, over the next couple of years, ways in which we might actually do that in the foreseeable future. There is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, and I do not quite know how all that is going to work out in our own tradition any more than you know how the decision you took yesterday (which I warmly welcome) on women bishops is

going to work out in your tradition; but we are on a road which might lead to our coming closer together in a number of respects.

Another thing I have picked up from this discussion is some questioning, most notably by the Bishop of Rochester and by Rod Thomas, but by one or two others as well. All I want to say about those questions is that I would ask you not to require of us more than you require of yourselves. On most of the questions that I heard being raised I am aware that there is a range of views within this Church, and my guess is that the views of most Methodists are within the parameters of what would be accepted in this Church; so please do not ask of us more than you will ask of each other.

One or two specific things were raised. To Susan Booth I would like to say that I hope she will read the report that was adopted by the 2004 Methodist Conference on Church, State and Establishment. I and one of those sitting in the gallery were privileged to be on the working party which produced that report. I hope incidentally that the Joint Implementation Commission will comment on it as well. It raises some of the questions which Methodists wish to ask of this Church about the relationship between Church and State. I do not have the full report to hand, and I do not want to go into the detail because this is neither the time nor the place; but there are questions that we would want to pose to you, and that is there.

I want finally to say that I welcome almost everything that has been said in this debate, stories that have been told of good working relationships. I was struck as I listened to the very last speaker by the memory of the occasion, just over a month ago, when I joined part of the pilgrimage across Dorset to celebrate the 1,300th anniversary of the consecration of Aldhelm as the first Bishop of Sherborn; and as we arrived on the top of Bulbarrow on a lovely day, the Archdeacon of Sherborne invited me to read the Gospel at the Eucharist as we sat on the grass. I found that a very moving experience. As many speakers have said, there are many things that we can be doing and should be doing at local level, at the level of Church leaders, at the level of circuits and deaneries, though we have to recognize that our different ecclesiologies mean that we do different things at those levels. I noted what the Bishop of Lincoln said about the relationships between the Yarborough deanery and the Brigg and Barton Methodist circuit. Things can be done. More can be done. There is much, as this report says, within our existing structures which we could be doing. Without wanting to go back to what I said in the debate on the Hind report, I do just want to remind Synod that I said then that sometimes ecumenical or un-ecumenical actions speak louder than words and that sometimes commitment can seem skin-deep. I am sure you could tell me stories where that is true on my side as well – I am not claiming perfection, whatever Mr Wesley may or may not have believed on that subject – but I would plead with every member of Synod, when you go home, to take these issues seriously and to seek wherever possible with your Methodist friends, wherever you live, to study this report together and in a positive and forward-looking spirit.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mr John Freeman (Chester): On a point of order, Mr Chairman. I beg to move:

‘That the question be now put.’

This motion was put and carried.

The Chairman: I call the Bishop of Peterborough to reply to the debate and, in the cause of even-handedness, he too may have eight minutes.

The Bishop of Peterborough, in reply: Thank you, Mr Chairman, and thank you particularly to Dudley Coates for all that he has just said.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this debate. It has been a good debate, it has been informative and it has been helpful to *us*. We have learnt how to set jam, and I am grateful to Elizabeth Fisher for reminding us of the sense of the distance we have to travel but also for reminding us of the importance of consistency, and the differences between shared and interchangeable ministry.

Mr James, as others in the debate, stressed the importance of urgency, and I want to say to Synod that I share that urgency – I want to keep the momentum going, and so does the whole of the JIC – but it is important to recognize that the Covenant was not a merger, it was a growing together, a relationship, and we are learning from each other and that takes time and patience as well as a momentum and a commitment.

The Bishop of Rochester also reminded us of the importance of consistency, and I agree with him that consistency in ecumenical dialogue is vital; but total uniformity with our partners is not, and that is as true in relation to our Roman Catholic partners as it is in relation to our Methodist partners. The convergence that we have already achieved on a number of the issues that he raised is mapped out in the *Common Statement* itself, and I want to assure him that the JIC will certainly want to do further work on episcopacy in the light of the developing understanding of both Churches. This year’s Conference and this Synod have made important decisions which affect our understanding of episcopacy if they are to be further implemented.

There is also a slight tension between what he was saying and what the Bishop of Lincoln was saying. On the one hand, we do need to make a difference now; on the other, we do need to have a careful discussion of things that divide us.

Mr Godin also argued that we need to seek unity, not uniformity. He actually referred to legalism in the report. I do not find any legalism in the report; I find, rather, an invitation to reflect on a number of matters and to learn from each other.

Sue Booth brought out the important issue of Establishment, as did Dudley Coates in his response just now and, with the Archdeacon of Oakham, also referred to a certain Anglican arrogance. We will want to look at Establishment. The Conference, as Mr

Coates reminded us, debated Establishment last year. It did, I think, in its motion invite us to share the opportunities that we have, as the Established Church, with others, including the Methodists, and that is the spirit in which I think we want to further that discussion.

I briefly referred earlier to the Bishop of Lincoln. Yes, we want to maintain the momentum, but the Covenant, I believe, does have content and we want to make a difference, we want to build on that content and we want to explore further the questions that it raises.

As Mr Coates also reminded us, the subject of marriage has come up quite frequently, and Elaine Storkey reminded us that marriage is based on love and commitment. I hope that our basic commitment to our Methodist colleagues and our other ecumenical partners is not in doubt. I think the 91 per cent vote said that very clearly, but I hope that we will maintain that commitment and be serious about it.

David Painter rightly talked to us about the importance of learning from our colleagues, a theme that I spoke to the Methodist Conference about ten days or so ago. He also reminded us of the inevitability of change and our willingness to change in any dialogue in any covenant relationship. He expressed some concern and anxiety about the weighting of the report: two-thirds concerned with faith and order issues. I want to say to him that it is both/and. We have got to be warm, committed, work together wherever possible *and* seriously address the issues which divide us. I hope that the roadshows will meet some of the queries that he raised and the questions that Mr Osborne raised in terms of needing a jolt. It is a complementary process. It will be much more down-to-earth, much more practical and eye-catching perhaps than some parts of the report.

I thank the Bishop of Dover for his comments and want to commend the work of the Board of Education in working not just with our Methodist colleagues, as you heard, but with our other ecumenical partners in education matters. They set us a good example, and I warmly respond to everything that he shared with us.

Archdeacon Joy Tetley reminded us that study and action go together, and often our action informs our study and our theological reflection. I want to acknowledge that decision-making processes are painful, and I want to say to Dudley Coates that we have learnt, I hope, from what happened over the RTP and hope that we will not repeat it. I cannot make that promise – as you rightly recognize, we all make mistakes from time to time – but let us learn from it and build on it.

To Mr Thomas I want to say that not everything that we have discussed is in the report. We had a preliminary discussion about the issues that he raised at a sub-committee of the JIC the other day and we will certainly want to address that issue and the other issues that are in the *Common Statement* before we complete our work.

Margaret Condick reminded us of the importance of local work and that the Covenant

is open to others. This is a Covenant with the Methodists and in making that Covenant we acknowledge our two hundred years' association with the Methodists – more than two hundred years – but we want to include others in the benefits that are already flowing from the Covenant and we have, in the work we have already done in advising the House of Bishops what is possible under Canon B 43 – and this is partly in response to what the Bishop of Lincoln also said – shown what can be done, not just with Methodists but with a number of our ecumenical partners.

Finally, I want very warmly to welcome Dudley Coates's comments, and I know that the Synod wants to join me in wishing him well as he prepares for his year as Vice-President, which starts in just under a year's time, and to say to him how much we have valued his presence on this Synod and that we look forward to working with him during that vice-presidential year and in the future.

I am very grateful to those who have welcomed the report; I acknowledge that there is work to be done and also that we have much to learn as well as to give. So I hope, as we come to the end of this debate and almost to the end of a debilitating, exhausting group of sessions, that the Synod will give overwhelming support to this motion. We have embarked on an important journey together, and the report marks significant, but not completed, progress in exploring and implementing the Covenant. Let us give our Methodist colleagues our warm encouragement that we are really committed to each other and to our shared quest. I commend the report for study and I commend the motion to the Synod.

The motion was put and carried.

The Chairman: Thank you to all the three bishops, six clergy and seven laity who have contributed to the debate this morning.

Order of Business – Variation

The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr Rowan Williams): The agenda refers to Holy Communion and the closing ceremonies of Synod. It has been agreed that we might vary the order of this so that we actually end with the celebration of the Eucharist. I hope that that will be acceptable to Synod. *(Agreed)*

I hope that it is in order for me now to say a few words preparatory to the formal dissolution.

Closing Ceremonies

The Archbishop of Canterbury: I have only been a member of this Synod for a very small part of the past quinquennium, so my experience of how it has been has been limited to the not uneventful past couple of years; but a great volume of business has been done, and I hope that, as in the lifetime of every Synod, something has been learnt

about how Synod can and should conduct its business as (to quote something I think I said some time ago) part of the Body of Christ, not simply as an arguing and voting committee. So it is an opportunity for us to consider what we have learnt in the past quinquennium, to thank God for what God has done in us, with us and through us in the quinquennium, and to commit the work of the next Synod to our prayers and our concern.

It is also an opportunity for me to express, on behalf of the whole Synod, thanks to those who have made it happen and particularly to the Synod staff and the other staff of the National Church Institutions who have served us so well, especially the Secretary General and the Clerk to the Synod. They have given huge support to many of us in the background, in all sorts of imperceptible ways, and they have worked to process a colossal amount of business, as you will all be aware, so that that business has been dealt with patiently and efficiently. I ask you to express thanks to our staff. (*Applause*)

I could spend a very long time on individual words of thanks to individual members for the contribution that they have made, but I hope you will understand that that is not entirely practicable as we would be here until teatime, and I would be bound to miss someone out as well, and cause offence. So may I restrict words of thanks to just a few people who have served the Synod in a very particular way. There are a couple of names that I would like to mention here. The first is that of Brian McHenry, to whom I believe I accidentally awarded an honorary professorship at an earlier group of sessions. Thank you, Brian, for 25 years of diligent work on behalf of Synod. Brian is now, as I think you all know, going forward for training for ordination and is not standing for re-election to the new Synod. Among very many roles which he has played in the life of the Church of England and the life of the Synod, he served on the former Standing Committee, on the Legislative Committee, on the sometime Crown Appointments Commission; he has been a member of the panel of Chairs, and has also served as chair of the Standing Orders Committee, a role which has particular poignancy in the light of the dramas that we have seen around that in this group of sessions. He steered through a review of the Synod's procedures and has introduced a very welcome breath of fresh air in every area in which he has been concerned. He has also latterly been Vice-Chair of the House of Laity and I can pay tribute to the contribution that he has made on the Archbishops' Council. All in all, Brian has made an outstanding contribution to the life of the Synod and to the Church of England, and it would be wrong not to mention him at this point. (*Applause*)

Two other members of the Archbishops' Council will not be seeking re-election. They too have made enormous contributions to the life of the Church and the life of this Synod. I want to acknowledge with great thanks and great warmth the work of Canon Ian Garden and Revd Dr Richard Turnbull. (*Applause*)

Several members will not be seeking re-election. There is a full list downstairs of those whose term expires. I cannot go through all of them, and once again it would be invidious to try to single out people who have made special contributions because

actually everybody has, but there are three names that I would like to mention because this, I think, will be their last Synod and they have been working in one way or other with Synod since 1970; indeed one of them served before that in the Church Assembly. That in itself deserves some kind of amazed recognition and heartfelt gratitude and uncomprehending admiration for such dedication. The three are Mr Roger Godin from Southwark, Vijay Menon from Chelmsford and Mr Tim Royle from Gloucester. I would like to ask them to stand to be acknowledged by Synod. (*Applause*)

Finally, thanks to all of you. Thanks to those others who are retiring after years of distinguished service, and I suppose the most neutral thing I can say is ‘Good luck’ to those of you who are seeking re-election later in the year. I trust that the example set by this generation of Synod members in terms of prayer, mutual commitment, willingness to learn and willingness to work will be a beacon for those who come after.

Dissolution of the Convocations of Canterbury and York and of the Synod

The Archbishop of Canterbury: In accordance with Her Majesty’s Writs dated the twenty-second day of June in the fifty-fourth year of her reign, the Convocations of Canterbury and York will be dissolved on the thirteenth day of July 2005 and, pursuant to article 3(2) of the Constitution, this General Synod will also be automatically dissolved on that date.

Holy Communion

The Archbishop of Canterbury presided at a celebration of the Holy Communion and dismissed the Synod with the blessing at 12.46 p.m.