

General Synod Report Wednesday at Church House, Westminster

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The third day of these group of sessions was always going to be dominated by the proposals to introduce Women Bishops in the Church of England. The report of the working party was an honest attempt to represent the different views that exist within the Church of England and it was the report itself that was the focus of the morning discussions. The debate was reasonably well handled with equal contributions early on (when there was a longer speech limit) from those for and against. However, there was no contribution called for at this early stage from any evangelicals opposed. Later in the debate there were more contributions from those in favour but this merely reflects the composition of the Synod.

After lunch the synod considered a motion to move the proposals forward. This did still not amount to an endorsement of the principle but rather to allow a debate in July as to how things might proceed. Therefore, whilst it seems likely that the Synod will eventually vote for this innovation the procedure is being carefully handled. After the debate in July the possible scenario would be a debate in February 2006 to consider which of the various options should then be pursued particularly in terms of provision for opponents.

In mid afternoon the Synod moved to consideration of the new ordination services. There was first a debate on the general provision and the revision committee's report. At this stage the services can only be revised further by the Synod voting to recommit a particular part of the services to the Committee. In order for this to happen a motion for recommittal had to be put, endorsed by 40 members of Synod asking for debate to take place and then, after debate, a vote. There were fourteen motions for recommittal and five were passed:

- a) To include a prayer of confession in each service (this was omitted in the ASB 1980).
- b) To ask candidates to declare their commitment to 'collaborative ministry'.
- c) To ensure that the giving of the Bible is a key part of the ordination and cannot be moved instead to the close of the service.
- d) To insert the word 'uniquely' before 'revealed' in relation to a statement made by the declaration candidates have made regarding Scripture.
- e) To retain the BCP/ASB title of 'The Ordination or Consecration of a Bishop' where the Revision Committee had proposed changing to 'The Ordination and Consecration of a Bishop.'

Final business was consideration of a report on the funding of the Hind proposals in relation to ordination training. An amendment was defeated by 102 votes to 98 which appeared to reflect deep dissatisfaction with the way in which the proposals are being implemented by the Church. Indeed, there is considerable dissatisfaction with ordination training and the likelihood that with reduced numbers of ordinands some colleges and courses will soon close. The debate on this item was adjourned in order to allow a fuller consideration tomorrow.

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