

Lay and Diaconal Presidency 2009.

During the Synod of 2008 a motion was carried which purported to be a statement of policy concerning Lay and Diaconal Presidency at the Eucharist. The motion was presented on the basis that it was not meant to permit any particular activity, but rather simply stated that which Sydney Diocese believed. The Motion says:

“Synod_

- (a) Accepts the report concerning legal barriers to lay and diaconal administration of the Lord’s Supper which was submitted to the 3rd session of the 47th Synod; and
- (b) Affirms again its conviction that lay and diaconal administration of the Lord’s Supper is consistent with the teaching of scripture; and
- (c) Affirms that the Lord’s Supper in this diocese may be administered by persons other than presbyters.

Bishop Glenn Davies/Archdeacon Narelle Jarrett”

Following minimal debate the motion was passed.

The real difficulty is not that the motion passed. After all Sydney have been stating this position for many years, one would expect the motion to pass. However in passing the motion at Synod several significant things were verbally authorised, and were not submitted to due process.

Therefore it is important to identify a couple of prime difficulties to begin with. The main one is that when I speak of the church of God I mean the church that has grown and developed in understanding and expression over the past 2000 years. Conversely the supporters of Lay and Diaconal Administration of the Lord’s Supper reject this view as innovation and claim that the only credible tradition of the church is found in the Bible and that the past 2000 years are for the most part ignored, or criticised, and is not in any way to be described or accepted as being Christian tradition.

This means that when one stands in Synod and presents a debate based on a church 2000 years of age and growing the information is rejected as meaningless by those who do not accept this view of church anyway. This means that discovering a mutually appropriate level of debate is virtually

impossible. It is separated by 2000 years of evolving revelation of God. This means that this particular issue is not only a matter of law, but is an attempt to re-discover the church within the Apostolic period and then to begin a new tradition or model of what it is to be church.

Subsequently legal opinion is spurned as unfounded and biblical scholarship rejected as being innovative and misleading. Responses to challenges presented in terms of law and process are largely ignored and only given cursory comment. Generally this is to imply that such criticism is unfounded because it does not fit with the theological/historical position held by those who promote Lay and Diaconal celebration of the Eucharist.

There has been evidence of this in the Southern Cross over the past couple of months. To begin with, an Informal consultation with a leading Barrister in Sydney realised this result. "The leaders of the Diocese of Sydney have violated the Trust under which they function". The Barrister then proceeded to point out that there was little point in taking the issue to secular law because the judge or magistrate would simply refer it back to the church for processing.

The barrister whom I informally consulted is not alone in this opinion. Dr John Bishop, also a Barrister in the Supreme Court and a Lay Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral submitted an article to the Southern Cross which identified legal and procedural difficulties with this matter. His conclusion is this:

"It is my melancholy conclusion that any person other than a Priest who celebrates the Holy Communion does so illegally, and if this is done pursuant to permission or a request, whoever gives permission or makes the request, is complicit in the illegality."

The article which followed that of Dr John Bishop in the Southern Cross was given the promising heading:

"Answers from Philip Jensen on next page."

Sadly Philip Jensen completely ignored the legal and procedural difficulties which had been raised by Dr John Bishop and stated that the desired outcome would be pursued. There was no effort made to engage in debate concerning authority, Church Order or legality. Rather he appeared to maintain a moral

high ground which he seems to believe to be above reproach, and therefore any contrary view is deemed unworthy of debate.

An excellent opportunity to publicly respond to the concerns raised by Dr John Bishop was lost in an answer which failed to address that which many recognise as the real issue. That being unity, Order, and authority in the Anglican Communion.

The following month both Bishop Davies and John Woodhouse noted the concerns raised by Dr John Bishop. Bishop Davies remained consistent in his claim that no laws were changed therefore any observation from law is meaningless, and John Woodhouse suggested that those who disagreed with the new innovation were theologically in error, and therefore an appeal to law was irrelevant.

So this sets the scene for what will be a very difficult phase in the Anglican Church in Australia. The fundamental problem is that there is no agreed platform for debate. During debate at Synod, which at that point was focussed on Unity, Authority and Church Order, Mr Newman stood and stated bluntly and without explanation that the Eucharist of the Church Fathers was not the Lord's Supper of the New Testament, and immediately sat down again. In that one statement the platform of debate was violently rearranged. Most Lay people and many clergy would have floundered at that point as we struggled to comprehend that which had been said and where it might fit in the debate. It is unfortunate that in the final outcome many people voted as they were instructed rather than as a result of informed debate.

Throughout the history of the Anglican church change has come from the people. It is of major concern that the impetus for the promotion of Lay and Diaconal Administration of the Lord's Supper has not risen from the pews, i.e. from the baptised majority, but is being forced down from above. That a motion of such dramatic import be proposed by a Bishop and seconded by an Archdeacon is particularly alarming. Centralised power like this I would expect from our Roman brethren, not from within the Anglican Church where authority is granted from below, not imposed from above. Indeed in our

tradition the Bishop is recognised as the sign of unity, not the instrument of division.

From the floor of Synod Bishop Davies gave all lay people and Deacons permission to celebrate the Lord's Supper in their own home, at Bible study meetings, beach missions, etc., but, in the case of Laity, not at public worship on Sunday morning. He then proceeded to expressly state that Deacons could celebrate the Lord's Supper, publicly, without any reference back to the Archbishop. This effectively grants an Episcopal role to the regional Bishops while attempting to render unnecessary the Archbishop's specific Licensing and Authority for Deacons to celebrate the Eucharist.

A subsequent development is that some of the regional bishops have given personal permission for Deacons in their region to publicly celebrate the Lord's Supper. In one case some criteria were to be met, in another there were no conditions at all. This effectively means that Laity, Deacons and Parish Priests in this diocese are determining a Diocesan policy which effectively rejects unity with the wider church.

Now because the Archbishop has not publicly opposed this move he can attribute the outcome to Synod and the Regional Bishops. The Archbishop's observation to me at Synod was this: "It is only a motion." For all intents and purposes he appears to believe that he has not broken the Law of the Church, and that by declining to license non priests to celebrate the Eucharist all will be well. However it is not so easy to sidestep that responsibility. It is a matter of established protocol that anyone leading people in Word and Sacrament will be appropriately trained and subsequently authorised by the Archbishop. In both cases, Word and Sacrament, this is done through the laying on of hands, with prayer, and command. "Take authority to etc." The church calls this Ordination.

While the more traditional brethren will look to the efficacy of the sacrament itself, and determine that the Deacon cannot celebrate the Eucharist with the same authority, and therefore with the same efficacy, as the Priest, the people

promoting this argument refuse to recognise the problem. For them it is simply a form of words that anyone can speak.

John Woodhouse in the book *the Lord's Supper in human hands, who should Administer*, identifies the major attributes of Priesthood and negates them without a thought. On Page 8 he raises issues that he suggests will mislead the Evangelical Christians and some people who are not Christian at all.

He notes in a derogatory manner that to stop lay people celebrating the Eucharist is to suggest that:

- a. There is something about an ordained priest that gives them power to pray the prayer of consecration.
- b. Higher qualifications are needed for the administration of the Lord's Supper than for preaching.
- c. The validity of the supper depends somehow on the person administering it.
- d. Ordination has more to do with the sacrament than with preaching.
- e. A priest is essential to the conduct of the Lord's Supper, though not essential for any other event in Church life.

For those of us called by God to the Ordained ministry in other parts of the Anglican Communion this appalling attack on Holy Orders is quite insulting. The majority of Anglican Priests in the Anglican Communion would teach without hesitation or fear of correction that all of those statements indicate a valid Priesthood.

In response to those particular points made by John Woodhouse the answer is this. Yes we are given special authority, by right of our Ordination, to pray the prayer of consecration. The qualification to celebrate the Eucharist is in fact Ordination, not an academic qualification. The validity of the sacrament does depend on who does it. To say that Ordination has more to do with sacrament than preaching is a misnomer for it presumes that any person who can preach can celebrate. This is not so. And we firmly believe that a Priest is required to celebrate the Eucharist, and listen to auricular confession; and bless, and grant absolution. To suggest that the Eucharist is the only role for the priest is ill informed. Outside of Sydney Diocese these factors are a given.

This is one reason for there being no consultation within the Anglican Communion in regard to this matter. This subject has been debated within Sydney for about 10 years and there has been no consultation outside of the Diocese of Sydney. The Standing Committee requested advice from a carefully selected sub-committee. Their brief is this. "What is the nature of any legal barrier(s) that would make unlawful the practice of a Lay person or Deacon administering the Lord's Supper in this Diocese?"

The language used is specific to legal barriers and does not consider the wider church, Anglican Order, Apostolic Succession, scriptural interpretation, church authority, or any other credible variable. The goal has always been to overcome any legal barrier, and this will determine the credibility of any contra argument. For example, if, as Dr John Bishop has argued, the Diocese has breached the law, then the answer is, "No law has been broken, or changed, therefore your argument is faulty."

If an argument is put forward stating that the Archbishop, and presumably the regional bishops, and perhaps even the leading Laity of the Diocese, publicly signed the GAFCON Declaration which states explicitly that the BCP Ordinal is the absolute standard of authority in this matter:

"We recognise that God has called and gifted bishops, priests and deacons in historic succession to equip all the people of God for their ministry in the world. We uphold the classic Anglican Ordinal as an authoritative standard of clerical orders".

(point 7 the GAFCON Declaration)

It is fair to presume that any deviation from this statement could legitimately be interpreted as inconsistent. However this observation is not accepted as a legitimate argument.

When it was repeatedly pointed out at Synod 2008 that the Archbishop would be publicly and internationally embarrassed if the motion relating to Lay and Diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper was passed, we were told that, "The Archbishop is a big boy, he will have to live with it." The power brokers at Sydney Synod showed in that one action that they have no understanding of

Authority in the church, and certainly no respect for the Episcopal Office currently held by Peter Jensen.

What they may not have realised is that their self interest has virtually destroyed any perception of credibility that GAFCON might have gained. Who will trust what the representatives of this diocese say or sign, if they cannot hold a very publicly declared position for a mere two months?

When the debate on this matter refers to the Doctrine Commission it does not refer to the Doctrine Commission of the Anglican Church, but only to the Doctrine Commission of this Diocese. This means in real terms that “we asked ourselves whether this was a good idea or not and we said yes.”

After the appeal by the synod of 2007 for people to identify legal barriers to Lay and Diaconal administration of the Lord’s Supper five responses were submitted to Synod 2008. Four were from lawyers who stated categorically that there was no way forward without a General Synod Canon, and one lay person, who suggested that all the old laws were like dead letters and should be ignored.

The lawyers were supported in their considered advice by The Appellate Tribunal which has stated as a result of a vote of 6 to 1 that for Deacons to preside at the Eucharist there must be a General Synod Canon to change the law.

This would mean that a request be put to General Synod to debate the change of law which would allow Deacons and perhaps lay people, to preside over the Eucharist. This subject was not debated at General Synod, and no General Synod decision has been made. Rather a search was implemented, under the direction of Standing Committee, to discover a loophole in the existing legislation. And those who searched believe that they have successfully found one.

Reliance on the interpretation of the single word “Administration” suggests a way through, or around, Church Law. The terms “Administration” or “administer” designates the role of the person who is granted authority to perform a specific act. That is, a Deacon to be a Deacon and a Priest to Priestly function. A distinction is now presented where the Deacon assists the Priest

by **administering** the sacrament, a Priestly function, rather than assisting **in** the Administration of the sacrament, a Diaconal function.

Sydney appears to have taught for some years now, either by intention or default, that Ordination has no spiritual benefit, but is rather a privilege for those who are paid a living to preach and teach. Lay people can preach and teach, therefore ordination does not grant the ordained an extra authority, only an income.

The Ordinal states very clearly that the Deacon is given authority in Word only. The Priest is given authority over both Word and Sacrament, and is granted extra Authority to forgive or retain sin. This is the authority of the Apostle, conferred on the Bishop and then onto the Priest.

In the BCP Collect for the Making of Deacons we read this:

“Mercifully behold these thy servants now called to the like office (Deacon)and administration;”

The word “Administration” is applied to the Deacon in the BCP. But we note that the Church has never interpreted this to mean that a Deacon can celebrate the Eucharist. Rather the Deacon is Authorised in the Administration of the Order of Deacon.

“Take thou authority to execute the Office of a Deacon in the Church of God committed unto thee;” And with the giving of the Bible: “Take thou Authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God, and to preach the same.”

And in a following intercession:

“may so well behave themselves in this **inferior Office**, that they may be found worthy to be called unto the **higher ministries** in thy Church.”

This is recognition of the Priest and Bishop as being higher orders of ministry: And in this recognition of Higher Order, an identification of specific role and conferring of specific authority.

The current prayer book specifically sets the person apart for the work of a Deacon, and is given authority for the Office of a Deacon.

The ordinal for the priest makes some very distinct and important statements. In the first instance it describes different forms of ministry within the church. Jesus is called an Apostle and High Priest. Then he calls:

“Some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers.”

It is not assumed that one ministry suits all, or that all perform the same ministry. This reference is from the letter to the Ephesians. It is not only a Prayer Book statement, it is a Biblical statement.

The Bishop lays hands on the Deacon and once again “sets him or her apart by the laying on of our hands, for the office and work of a Priest in your church.”

Not one Ordinal in use in the Anglican Church of Australia allows for a Deacon to perform the same role as the Priest. The Deacon has a distinctive role and a primary part of that role is pastoral and to assist the Priest in the administration of the sacrament.

Have we really taken 400 years to discover that Deacons have the same role as a Priest? I suggest that it is a long bow to pull. Particularly when the word “Administer” linked to Deacons defines them to be in an Inferior Order.

Part of the argument raised at Synod for Deacons to be permitted to celebrate the Eucharist is the acceptance for Deacons to baptise. This is true, for even lay people can baptise if death is perceived to be immanent. In the case of a Lay person baptising in this way it is understood that if the person survives they will be brought to the church for the Priest to conduct provisional baptism for them. “If you have not already been baptised I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

There is a very good reason to allow for baptism under such circumstances. From the medieval period it has been believed, rightly or wrongly, that a person unbaptised cannot enter heaven. Therefore the absence of a priest to baptise would effectively condemn people to eternal death. This is an old Roman Catholic teaching which, in the case of infants, even they have now rejected. St Paul makes reference to people being baptised on behalf of the dead so that through vicarious baptism loved ones might enter heaven.

It is serious when a self proclaimed Evangelical church calls upon an ancient and superseded Roman Catholic point of doctrine to support a move to reduce the efficacy of another sacrament of the church. The unbaptised shall burn in Hell, therefore deacons and lay people should be able to celebrate the Eucharist does not make a sound argument.

John Woodhouse relies heavily on the argument that scripture is silent concerning who may celebrate the Eucharist. The scripture is silent on many things; and many things upon which it is not silent we ignore. For example very few of us would stone our children if they disobeyed their parents, and yet this is clearly stated in scripture. To argue from perceived silence is not a credible way forward.

It is my understanding that scripture is in fact not silent in this area. In fact from the Apostles on there are numerous references to people having the hands of the Apostles laid on them and granted authority to lead congregations in word and in the Holy meal. St Paul is critical of those who come to the meal and eat and drink in a gluttonous manner. And he says to them, "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'this is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way he took the cup also, after supper saying, 'this cup is the New Covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body eats and drinks judgement upon himself.'"

In the New Testament there is a distinctive role for Priests, just as there is for Deacons and Bishops. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles the decision was made to select seven men to serve at table. They were given authority through prayer and the laying on of hands. The account of the stoning of Stephen, a Deacon of the church, follows straight on from the appointing of the seven. The Deacon's role is derived from this early election. They were chosen, prayed over with the laying on of hands, and authorised to serve at table.

Elders were appointed in the various churches and they too were given authority by the Apostles through prayer and the laying on of hands. Our Lord gave Authority to the Church through His Apostles. And so it has been for two

thousand years. The Apostle has become the Bishop. The Bishop gives Authority to the Priest. The Deacon is given Authority by the Bishop, but placed under license to the Priest. This Authority is from the Apostles, and therefore from God in Christ

The reality is that all Ordained people have been set apart by God, and have been given authority from God. If you cannot accept this truth, do not seek Ordination.

The Anglican Church has claimed Biblical authority for the three Orders of ministry. There are other denominations within the Christian church which have not followed this model of ministry, but the Anglican Church has. In keeping with Biblical teaching each has their own specific role, and the only Order which can perform the role of the other two, is that of the Bishop.

When we remove any distinction between Priest and people and suggest that both are of equal status we must fall back to an argument which supports the well publicised headship/equal but different argument.

Confrontation with those of us who believe firmly in spiritual call and efficacy of sacrament; those of us who maintain that there is no greater honour than to be tested in ministry and accept that God through His Church has granted Authority to perform His work in the world; find the diminishing of the priestly role to be a difficult pill to swallow.

A real point of conflict is that some will argue that preaching and teaching are of the same substance as celebrating the Eucharist. While others argue that preaching and teaching is granted as an academic qualification while celebrating the Eucharist is a Priestly function under God. One can preach if one has a degree in theology, but a degree in theology does not qualify one to celebrate the Holy Mysteries of the church.

There was in fact a time in the history of the Church when Priests celebrated the Eucharist, and Lecturers preached the word. Priests were in fact banned from preaching: Probably because so many of us are so bad at it.

Cranmer.

One has to be very careful when calling on support from the writings of Cranmer. He is not easily pinned down when one speaks of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Some claim that Lay and Diaconal Presidency at the Eucharist is supported by Cranmer. I personally am not convinced. Just because he did not actively condemn it we distort his teaching if we assume tacit approval or endorsement.

Cranmer held a very high view of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In his writing "In defence of the True Catholic Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ" he is very specific.

"And although our carnal generation and a carnal feeding nourishment be known by all men by daily experience and by common senses; yet this our spiritual generation and our spiritual nutrition be so obscure and hid unto us, that we cannot attain to the true and perfect knowledge and feeling of them but only by faith, which must be grounded upon God's most holy word and sacraments."

"As meat and drink do comfort the hungry body, so doth the death of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood comfort the soul, when she is after her sort hungry. There is no kind of meat that is comfortable to the soul, but only the death of Christ's blessed body; nor no kind of drink can quench her thirst, but only the blood-shedding of our saviour Christ, which was shed for her offences."

There is no presupposition in this writing that the Sacrament of Holy Communion is of such little importance that any less than a Priest might celebrate it. In fact Cranmer appears to hold a position consistent with the spiritual presence of the body and blood of Christ in that Sacrament, and that no one less than a priest can celebrate it.

One cannot help but speculate that the initiative for introducing laity and Deacons to a Priestly function is either an attempt to dismantle the Order and Authority of the church, or a throw back to Puritanism.

The fact that Puritanism and Presbyterianism in the Anglican Church was rejected under Elizabeth, and definitively defeated with Cromwell, should not elude us.

All of this opens the way for the active degradation of both the Sacrament and Holy orders. We are now facing a return to Puritanism and Presbyterianism. Not because the current system is broken and is in need of repair, but because there are those who wish to see the work of extreme reformers like Thomas Cartwright continued, and two thousand years of Biblical scholarship questioned.

Thomas Cartwright, nearly 500 years after his death, has become a leading light for Sydney. The interesting thing is that Cartwright fought primarily for the separation of church from state, not for church division. His desire appears to be for the institutional church to become deinstitutionalised while arguing in favour of the divine appointment of the king. He also demanded the removal of Bishops, and the introduction of Presbyter lead congregations, with no Episcopal oversight. The role of Bishop and Presbyter is considered to be of equal status and authority. Does this sound familiar? It should. As an aside Deacons are entirely ignored by Cartwright.

Let us now move on to the Lambeth Conference of 1920.

Arising from resolutions 70 71 and 72 of the 1908 Lambeth Conference, and concluding with resolution 29 of Lambeth 1920 is a very important judgement made by the Anglican Communion. It relates to the “Reunion of Christendom” and more specifically to the recognition of the Unitas Fratrum, or Moravians: Even more specifically, that their Bishops be recognised within the Anglican Church. “Resolution 29 of 1920”

“The Conference, while welcoming the Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference of 1908 on the Unitas Fratrum or Moravians, regrets that it is unable to recommend any such action being taken as is suggested by Resolutions 70 – 72 of that Conference so long as Unitas retains its practice of the administration of confirmation and the celebration of the Holy Communion by Deacons, but hopes that, in the event of the Unitas changing its rules in these matters, negotiations with individual provinces of the Unitas may be resumed, and believes that in this case there would be good prospect of such negotiations being brought to a satisfactory conclusion.”

We are no longer speaking of pre Reformation, but of 1920. This is less than 100 years ago. Consistency in this matter would demand that Sydney desist from this action, or be ejected from the Communion. Place this observation alongside of Peter Toon demanding that Sydney be ejected from GAFCON for betraying the GAFCON declaration, and we have an interesting study on consistency and integrity. We can not escape the fact that both Lambeth and GAFCON agree in relation to the three Orders of Ministry and the Book of Common Prayer Ordinal. Therefore Sydney is out of step with both organisations.

There are several specific matters which make us Anglican. The Creeds: Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian; the Bible; recognition by and of Canterbury; the Thirty Nine Articles; and the Prayer Book. There are probably others, but this is sufficient for the day.

Our bishops have all signed the GAFCON declaration which specifically cites the Creeds, the Thirty Nine Articles and the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer as being of primary and incontrovertible importance. GAFCON, is actively promoted as the legitimate alternative to Lambeth and therefore suggests to me that Sydney has intentionally rejected Lambeth; and in so doing have rejected Canterbury.

By aligning the Diocese with conservative Dioceses around the world, regardless of tradition, the Archbishop has made a very public and intentional statement. GAFCON members, the Southern Cone, and other ad-hoc associations have a right to believe that Sydney would promote their cause. Sydney Synod has generated confusion by appearing to contradict the foundational statements of GAFCON, corrupting the Ordinal, and abusing Lambeth. The question of the integrity of the diocese must come under scrutiny. Is this a rogue Diocese?

As far as I am aware there is no provision in the Communion for Diaconal, let alone lay presidency. In fact we note from Lambeth 1920, that it is definitively rejected.

Bishop Davies did suggest that there is a Diocese somewhere in Africa where Deacons are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist and therefore the precedent is already established in the Communion. Another Australian Bishop advised

me that for the sake of unity the activity had been discontinued. Even so a senior member of the Synod showed his wisdom by advising Synod that “the problem with the African Church is that they were taught the faith incorrectly in the first instance and need to be re-educated.” The same man also suggested that “the Eucharist that the church fathers write about is not the same as the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament. That was just one of many moments of confusion for me at Synod.

Synod approved the endorsement of the GAFCON declaration. Within that statement is definitive recognition of the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles.

The 34th Article.

“Whosoever through his private judgement, willingly and purposefully, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like) as he that hath offendeth against the Common Order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.”

The ceremonies of Ordination and the Eucharist are not repugnant to God. His Son did after all introduce both: The Eucharist very specifically and Ordination by example. Paul pursued this enthusiastically. As the Church grew, more people were authorised/ordained to lead it and in this way Paul brought consistency and Order to the developing church. Authority was given and received. The Church grew and good Order was maintained.

E J Bicknel whose commentary on the 39 articles is accepted as credible says this in relation to Authority in the Church:

“But as members of a society, in questions of public worship we are bound to yield obedience to the common rule. If we dislike a custom or a ceremony we may agitate in all lawful ways for its alteration, but till it is altered it is our duty to submit for the sake of unity..... The puritans demanded that the church should enforce no rite or ceremony, however harmless in itself, unless it received positive support from scripture.

They objected to e.g. God parents or the ring in marriage, as not being commanded in the Bible. The Article is aimed at them (20). Their objection rested on a misapprehension of the purpose of scripture, which was given not to be a handbook of ceremonial but an instructor in moral and spiritual truth. If the church is faithful to scripture, she may be trusted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to work out for herself in each age that system of common worship which is best able to express her devotion and her obedience, and she can claim from her members their loyal adherence to it.”

With Sydney proceeding down this novel path we need to look to consequences. After all there can be no mutually agreeable negotiated outcome to this communal problem, so consequences are inevitable. With Deacons and possibly Laity administering the Lord’s Supper Unity and Order within the communion will be severely jeopardised. Deacons moving from Diocese to Diocese will take their perceived permission with them. This will mean that dioceses throughout the communion would be right to seriously question applications from Sydney Made Deacons. This will effectively restrict the free movement of the Ordained between Dioceses of the Communion: For it would be just as credible under these circumstances to reject applications from Sydney Ordained Priests because they may well carry this irregular teaching with them. Not many bishops within Australia will happily embrace a Priest who does not respect the Holy Orders under which he is called to serve.

Many of us would believe quite rightly that with Diaconal and Lay Administration the sacrament has been compromised and that when celebrated by either the Eucharist would be meaningless at best; a cause for damnation at worst.

The Anglican Church states that neither Deacons nor Lay people have the authority to celebrate the Eucharist, for if they do the sacramental efficacy is lost.

Unity of the church and Authority within the church are inseparable. This move away from recognised church order violates both. There is insufficient reason to depart from that which is accepted by the worldwide Anglican Communion. In fact there are many reasons for endorsing the primary position of the

Anglican Communion: Priests celebrate the Eucharist, Deacons serve at table, all of us are fed on the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus.

Even though I am opposed to this innovation by Sydney I would agree that it be taken to General Synod so that legal criteria can be satisfied. If Sydney is not prepared to do this it simply indicates that they know that the answer will contradict their wishes. Perhaps the real goal is division rather than unity and anarchy as opposed to good order.