

THE PREVAILING DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY:

A Case Study In Spotlight Theology.

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Thank you for the invitation to come all the way from Adelaide to speak to you. I have read the objectives of Anglicans Together and thoroughly support your ideals. Be assured that I have not come to speak tonight against the diocese of Sydney, or to criticise the wonderful Gospel ministry evident in so many parishes in Sydney, or to attack Moore College, or say one disparaging word against any of the leaders in this diocese. I personally think Harry Goodhew is the best Archbishop you could have. I am proud to be a graduate of Moore College and thankful for the wonderful grounding I had there in biblical studies in particular and theology in general. I will be criticising the doctrine of the church developed by Dr Broughton Knox, whom I was very sad to see pass away recently, and Dr Robinson but I am not criticising them as people. It was their exciting and provocative teaching that led me to start thinking about the church and I am always grateful for this and for their many kindnesses to me over the years. Dr Robinson lent me his house in the Blue Mountains for my honeymoon when I was a poor, just graduated student. Lynley and I always remember those happy days we shared in that home. If I have debated with their ideas, mainly in print, over the years I have only been doing theology in the way they taught me, and contending for the truth as they encouraged me to do. I sincerely believe the goal of their work was to produce students who thought for themselves and constantly returned to Scripture to discover the mind of God.

But I am critical of many of their students who have made what are best understood as their explorations in theology into dogma. Good students do not simply echo what they are taught, they reflect on what they hear and make their own contribution. One of the things most missing in Sydney diocese is independent thinking. All the plaudits seem to go to those who most dogmatically and unreflectively reiterate what they were taught as students. In my writings and lectures when I question Sydney's distinctive dogmas I don't see myself as attacking Sydney diocese but calling on brothers and sisters in Christ who have good minds to think again. In this world only those who are your friends, who admire your virtues take the time and willingly bear the cost of warning you when you are in danger or error. It is always easier and much

safer to remain silent. A lot of good people do this in Sydney.

Tonight I plan to do two things: firstly, outline as accurately and fairly as possible the basics of the dominant understanding of the church as it is commonly expressed in the diocese of Sydney, and, secondly offer a critique of these ideas.

Historical origins.

The position I will outline and then criticise is not adopted by any other group of Anglican Evangelicals anywhere else in the world. It is rejected, as I will show, by the 39 articles, not accepted by any of the 16th century Reformers, or by any of the great evangelical worthies such as, Charles Simeon, Griffith Thomas, Leon Morris, John Stott, Michael Green, Dick Lucas or any others you would like to name who have not trained at Moore College in recent years. This doctrine of the church is well known amongst American independent Fundamentalists and commonly held in Brethren circles, but amongst Anglicans it is only found in the diocese of Sydney. It was introduced into Sydney through the work of Drs Robinson and Knox who for long years, as we all know, were respectively, the principal and vice-principal of Moore College. As Bill Lawton has pointed out in his important historical study of Sydney Diocese, A Better Time To Be, both these men grew up in homes where Brethren teaching was well known and endorsed. From their fathers they imbibed the essentials of the position they were later to develop in their own way and teach to a whole generation of Moore College students. Should you doubt what I am saying on this point I suggest you read, Roy Coad, A History of the Brethren Movement, where you will discover that J N Darby, one of the pioneering fathers of the Brethren movement first argued that all the so called universal uses of the word church referred solely to a heavenly assembly, or W E Vine's book, (another Brethren author) The Church and the Churches, written long before these ideas emerged at Moore College. But to point out that this doctrine of the church we are considering tonight is but restatement of a well known but minority opinion does not in any way invalidate it. Minority opinions are sometimes correct but in this case I doubt if this is the case.

Before I outline this doctrine of the church as it has developed from these roots let me make one other introductory point. I call this lecture, "The prevailing doctrine of the church in the diocese of Sydney". The Concise Oxford Dictionary, defines the word prevail as, "to gain mastery", "be the more usual", "predominate". I am not arguing that

every one in Sydney diocese holds these views, nor that all the proponents are always consistent in what they say, nor implying that there is no questioning of some of the details of this position from time to time in a reserved way. But I am claiming these views as I will outline them are basically held by most who have graduated from Moore College in the last thirty and that no one of any significance in the diocese ever says openly, "this or that suggestion about the doctrine of the church by Broughton or Don Robbie was interesting and provocative but it is wrong. Their teaching on these matters is a distortion of what the Bible actually teaches."

The Sydney doctrine of the church outlined.

The position is as follows:

1) To develop a truly biblical doctrine of the church the way to do so is to determine what the Greek word ekklesia, translated as "church", means and then note how it is used. On the first matter reference to a classical Greek lexicon, or to Acts 19:32,39 and 41, where it is used of a secular gathering, shows that it means "assembly, "or "gathering", nothing more and nothing less. It is used in the New Testament in a theological context in only two ways: of a group of Christians actually assembled in one location on earth, or, of all Christians, who, in a spiritual sense, are continuously in assembly in heaven in the presence of Christ.

2) This means that if we are to be faithful to biblical thinking the word "church" can only be used of one entity on earth, Christians actually assembled in a given location for fellowship and mutual edification, and possibly by extension, of those who, through regular assembling together, form a social entity. On this basis, this position is rightly described as a thorough going congregational view of the church. Dr Knox always gladly accepted this conclusion, arguing that this also was how the English Reformers defined the "visible church". He regularly appealed to article 19 where the church is defined as, "a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered".

3) Because the word ekklesia/church is only used in the Bible of Christians who assemble either on earth in local congregations, or in a spiritual sense in heaven, it follows that the so-called bodies we call the Anglican Church, or the Uniting Church, or the Roman Catholic Church are wrongly titled. They are not "church" at all: they are human structures, a federation of churches, and are best called "denominations". You and I do not belong to the Anglican Church, but to the Anglican denomination.

4) As the local congregation is in effect an aggregation of believers, the church as an entity does not have any ministry in the world. It should not be thought of as a corporate entity which does things such as evangelism, or working for justice, or the alleviating of poverty. These things are important, but they are done by Christians individually - possibly in association with other Christians. But even when such work is done by groups of Christians, this is not to be considered a "church" activity for the Bible never uses the word ekklesia/church as the subject of any action in this world. These assertions mean that not only is this ecclesiology congregational in nature, but also individualistic in conception.

5) As the church in heaven is already united around Christ and the only church on earth is the local church all discussion of church unity, other than congregational unity, is theologically mistaken and senseless. What is more it raises the issue of the truth of the Gospel. Convinced conservative, Reformed, Christians should not work with those who confuse the tenets of the Gospel, or deny them. The maintenance of the true Gospel is of highest importance. To claim that love is more important is wrong for love of God is shown by commitment to the truth of the Gospel. Denominational affiliation is of no great importance and so Christians who are willing to work with those who know the Gospel is always a possibility but they come in to join "with us" on our terms.

6) Nowhere in the Bible is the word "worship" used of what Christians do in church. "Worship" as far as the Bible is concerned, is the giving of God his worth in ever moment of every day. The 10a.m. or 7p.m. "gathering" (a distinctive Sydney way of speaking of church worship) is for fellowship, mutual edification and learning. Whereas most Christians believe what we do in church should equally emphasise the horizontal (fellowship, mutual edification and learning) and the vertical (prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God) this teaching emphasises very strongly the horizontal. For this reason distinctive dress by those leading the service is discouraged. It is a hindrance to fellowship. Furthermore, in this approach to church meetings there is a distinctive emphasises on the cerebral. It is suggested that growing in factual knowledge of the Bible is the most important thing in the Christian life. For this reason everything is subordinated to the sermon.

7) The ordained minister is pre-eminently a teaching-elder. His training and ordination bestow a God-given authority to

interpret and apply the Bible to the conscience of members of his congregation. If at any time he is uncertain as to what the Bible teaches on a complex contemporary issue such as the doctrine of the church, the remarriage of divorcees, the ministry of women, the exercise of charismatic gifts, or any thing else, then his revered teachers will provide the answer. The hermeneutical problems of moving from a biblical text written two thousand years ago or more, in a totally different culture, are solved in this ecclesiology by the provision of a select number of godly experts who authoritatively pronounce on such matters. The agreed premise is that there can only be one correct biblical answer to every question and basically this is known and taught by the leading Sydney theologians.

8) Because an elder is given authority in ordination over his congregation, women cannot hold this office. God has permanently set women under men and to allow women to assume authority in the church or the home, is to disobey the clear teaching of the Bible. Christian men are obeying the word of God and pleasing Christ when they insist on the subordination of women. A church faithful to the Bible is led by men and this cannot change because on this matter the Scriptures convey timeless truth.

These eight interrelated matters sum up the essentials of the prevailing Sydney doctrine of the church. I believe I have expressed them fairly but I will be interested to see if there is any significant dissent on what I have outlined. Let us now turn to evaluate these formulations but not strictly one by one, or with the same detail in each case.

The Sydney doctrine of the church evaluated.

a) The methodological approach.

The appeal to the basic meaning of the word ekklesia and the claim that a study of how this word is used in the Bible is the key to a truly biblical doctrine of the church attracts evangelicals. They want to be biblical in their thinking and the claim is that, this understanding of the church springs directly from the pages of holy writ. But the truth of the matter is far different. This approach to doctrine allows the clever exegete unwittingly to read into the text his own ideas. The problem is that those who take such an approach show no awareness of the basics of semantics - how words are used - nor display any evidence of a well thought out theological methodology. Two fundamental errors in semantics are present. Firstly, it is assumed that some or all words have one basic meaning but this is not the case in everyday

language, and the Bible uses such language. Most words have a range of meanings, as appeal to any dictionary will show immediately, and the Greek word ekklesia is no exception as we will see. Secondly, this approach fails to note that a distinction must be made between an idea or concept and the words used to denote this idea or concept. A concept such as love, or goodness, or a private dwelling can be denoted by a large number of words, or groups of words or metaphors. For example the concept, a private dwelling, can be denoted by such words as, a home, a house, a residence, a rectory, or expressions such as, a haven from the world, the ordinary man's castle, or something else. These words or phrases are not exact synonyms but in a given context they convey the same meaning. By arguing that you can only deduce a doctrine of the church by a study of the word ekklesia is an error in semantics and as Don Carson points out in his book, Exegetical Fallacies, such an approach is the origin of much doctrinal error. Let me now illustrate how mistaken it is to build a doctrine of the church by concentrating solely on the Greek word ekklesia by referring to the word salvation. If a theologian set about to build a doctrine of salvation drawing only on the Greek word form then he would conclude John was not unduly interested in salvation because he rarely uses the word, speaking rather of the gift of eternal life, and Paul in Romans and Galatians was not unduly interested in salvation because he usually speaks of justification by faith. Such reasoning is absurd. Theologians are agreed the actual use of the word salvation is not a key issue for theology: what is basic is the theological concept, "salvation" which takes up ideas designated by other expressions.

It is at this point the fundamental error in this ecclesiology is disclosed. What we have here could be called, "spotlight theology"- a theology which only illuminates what you want to see. By concentrating on one word only part of the evidence comes to light and error results. In the study of the Bible as a basis for theology what is needed is a "floodlight" approach which brings all the relevant data into sight.

With these broadly based comments on semantics and theological method in mind, and the contrast between reading the Bible with a spotlight rather than a floodlight as an illustration of the key problem we are positioned to consider the meaning and uses of the key word, ekklesia/church.

b) The meaning of the key word ekklesia.

Basic to the Sydney position is the premise that the word ekklesia in the Bible means, and always means, "assembly", or "gathering" and that it is used only, either of local gatherings/congregations on earth, or, the ongoing gathering or congregation in heaven. But this is simply not the case. It

is true that in classical Greek the word ekklesia is used of actual assemblies and this usage can be seen in the New Testament (Acts 19:32,39,41 - of non-Christians - 1 Cor.11:18,14:27,29,34 - of Christians) but this evidence does not lead to the conclusion that this is the only usage in the New Testament. To extrapolate a doctrine of the church on this evidence would be like building a doctrine of salvation on the observation that the word sodzo/save always means to rescue from physical danger because this is its basic meaning in classical Greek and how it is used in Acts 27:20,31 where it used of salvation/rescue from drowning after a ship wreck. The fact is that the word ekklesia came into Christian usage not via classical Greek literature but via the Greek Old Testament where the word was frequently used of religious gatherings of all Israel and was in the post exilic period a virtual synonym of the word sunagoge, the term used to designate Israel as God's covenant community. It is in this sense that ekklesia is used in the more theologically significant passages in the New Testament. Thus for example in Matt.16:18 when Jesus promises to build "my church" he is promising to build a community - a new people of God, or when Paul speaks of the church of the Lord which Christ obtained by his own blood (Acts 20:28) he is speaking of all those for whom Christ died, or when he speaks of "persecuting the church of God" (1 Cor.15:9, Gal.1:13, Phil.3:6) he is referring generally to Christians. In each of these cases and with all the references of the word ekklesia in the epistle to the Ephesians the word carries the meaning "the Christian community". This can be confirmed by the substitution test. If instead of the word church you substitute the word assembly/gathering/local congregation none of these texts mentioned make sense but if you substitute community, understood as the Christian community, then in each case good sense follows. Furthermore, in none of these instances can a heavenly dimension to the church be found. The church Christ builds will be protected from "the powers of death" - something not needed in a heavenly church, the church for whom Christ died is made up of believers in this world, and the church Paul persecuted was found by going house to house and dragging off men and women and putting them in prison (Acts 8:3).

It is of course helpful to think of a vast company of believers already in heaven (the church triumphant) and even of Christians in a spiritual sense as being members of the heavenly community but the argument that all the universal uses of the word ekklesia refer exclusively to believers in heaven, simply does not make sense of the text of Scripture.

Only one verse in all the Bible possibly associates the word ekklesia with a heavenly assembly, and that is found in Hebrews 12:23. But even here the force of the text is debated. "The first born" enrolled in heaven who are said to be an ekklesia are most likely Christians on earth. In Lk. 10:20, Jesus, speaking to the disciples standing before him, says, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven". What is more whatever this one verse means it cannot be taken to determine the meaning of every universal use of the word ekklesia in the Bible. The thought and language of Hebrews is distinctive and a-typical.

This means that the claim that in every instance in the Bible the word ekklesia means assembly, no more and no less is mistaken, and the claim that it is used only of local gatherings or the heavenly gathering in continuous session is also mistaken. (We have in fact four theologically significant uses of the word ekklesia in the New Testament.

1) Of Christians actually assembled (1 Cor. 11:18, 14:29, 28, 34).

2) Of Christians who meet in the home of a certain man or woman and can be designated the church who met in the home of.....(Rom. 16:5, Philm.2, Col.4:15). This is in fact the congregational or local use of the word ekklesia.

3) Of Christians who live in a particular city and in most cases meet in a number of house churches and are designated the church in Thessalonica, or Corinth, or Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1, 1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1). Here the word is used of Christians in a geographical region who don't necessarily assemble together. [Is this possibly a distant parallel to the use of the word church for what we call as Anglicans, a diocese?]

4) Of all Christians on earth - the so called universal use. (Matt.16:18, Acts 20:28, 1 Cor.15:9, Col.1:18 etc).

Note: All these examples are of Christians living in this world.

One English word covers these last three uses - "community". There is the Christian community which meets in the home of Nymphia, or someone else, there is then the Christian community of a given city or location such as Jerusalem which may never meet as one entity, and lastly, the worldwide Christian community- all believers on earth. An earthly and heavenly dimension to the church is not implied in any of

these uses and such an idea introduces a way of thinking alien to the Bible.

c) Spotlight reading and floodlight reading of the Bible.

Having made this point we now return to the claim that a detailed study of the one word ekklesia is the sole route to a truly biblical doctrine of the church. Our brief comments on semantics and theological methodology have already shown that this claim cannot bear scrutiny. (It is our case that the biblical word study methodology, as a basis for the formulation of theology/doctrine, is like using a spotlight. It leaves a lot in the dark. A more adequate methodological approach is demanded. We advocate a floodlight approach. Those who take this path are aware that no one word can ever convey a profound idea or concept. The more theologically developed uses of the word ekklesia carry the meaning, "the Christian community, and this is the concept with which the theologian is interested." Once this is recognised then the concern is not with one word but with all the references and allusions to the Christian community in the New Testament.) It is soon discovered, once this methodology is adopted, that the Bible is profoundly communal in its thinking. At this point the question becomes not, "how does the New Testament use the word ekklesia?" but, "what does it teach about our fundamental corporate entity as believers in Christ?" In answering this question the use and meaning of the one word ekklesia will be of interest but so too will every other communal idea and term in the New Testament. Of particular interest will be such collective designations as the saints, the elect, the disciples, the brethren, the believers etc; metaphors such as the new temple, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, and basic structures of thought such as, "in Christ" and "in the Spirit".

The conclusion that most theologians have reached by this holistic approach is that the New Testament does not allow for any separation between personal Christian faith and communal membership. We respond to the Gospel, it is true, as individuals but in doing so, the apostolic writers insist, we automatically become members of the Christian community, the church of Jesus Christ. Once this is realised then all the inadequacies and problems with the Sydney doctrine are overcome. It now becomes clear that:

-The church on earth is not simply a local assembly of believers but at one and the same time the Christian community in the world, a regional body of believers and an intentional fellowship of people in association with one another.

-The church, when thought of as a local community of Christians, is far more than an aggregation of believers who gather for edification and good teaching. It is a manifestation of the body of Christ, a living, integrated organism.

-If the church is by definition the Christian community, manifested in various ways, it is proper to speak of the Anglican Church, meaning the Christian community which is formed by allegiance to the historic Anglican church created by the 16th century Reformation. It is also proper on this basis to speak of the church doing certain things for we are speaking of the Christian community formed by a small number, or larger number of Christians working together.

-Every attempt should be made to work closely with other Christians in unity because, despite our human divisions, we are in God's sight one community.

I hope I have not confused or bored you too much with all this semantic and theological argumentation. One final matter before I move on to touch briefly on the other issues I raised. Dr Knox's frequent claim that the 39 articles actually teach a congregational view of the church must be challenged. None of the 16th century Reformers held what is today called, a congregational doctrine of the church. This understanding of the church has its origins in the Anabaptist movement, which was bitterly opposed by the Reformers, and only became an enunciated doctrine through the work of the separatist Puritans in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Their novel ecclesiology was called congregationalism, and from this time on the English word took on a narrower meaning. Before that the word "congregation" was an equivalent to the word "church" and could be used either a local community of Christians or of all Christians. Tyndale in his translation of the Greek Bible used the word congregation to translate all uses of the Greek word ekklesia. Read in its historical setting and in the light of the English Reformers theology "congregation" in the wider sense to refer to the worldwide Christian community as manifest in the nation of England. This is exactly how the word church is used in the second clause of article 19, which refers to the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch and Rome.

Other issues raised.

WORSHIP.

The denial that what we do in church should be called worship is flawed by exactly the same inadequate understanding of semantics and overstatement of the evidence. Here again we have "spotlight theology".

It is true that Paul never uses the words of the Greek translation of the Old Testament to designate temple worship of what Christians do when they assemble. This is not at all surprising for it is obvious there was a profound difference between Christian gatherings and the temple cult. But a study of particular words as we have shown only reveals so much. The English word worship - to offer someone their worth - is first of all a general concept. This English word is well established as a broad term to describe what Christians do when they gather together. Thus in speaking of Paul's understanding of Christian worship we can say that he does not use the Greek words commonly associated with the Old Testament sacrificial cult to designate what goes on in gatherings of Christians, but of the whole of life (eg. Rom. 12:1-2), but then note what he does say about the corporate life of the churches he founded. The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence in Paul's writings is not that the English word "worship" should not be used of Christian gatherings, but that following the apostle we should understand that Christians assemble for very different reasons than Jews did under the old covenant.

But again the claim is not only flawed semantically, but also factually. A cultic word (leitourgeo) taken from the Old Testament is explicitly used of what is taking place in a Christian gathering in Acts 13:1-3 and in John 4:21 and 23. Jesus contrasts Jewish "worship" (proskuneo) and Christian worship assuming one concept but insisting that he has inaugurated a change in manner and content. The book of Hebrews also presupposes that Jews and Christians will corporately "worship" God but insist that under the new covenant worship will not consist of the offering of the blood of bulls and goats. The author in fact encourages his readers "to offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe" (12:28). What Christians do when they gather is also called worship in the Book of Revelation (14:6-7, 19:10, 22:8-9) and here the vertical dimension of Christian worship is very much to the fore. Christians offer their praise, adoration and songs to God on high. Any so called biblical doctrine of worship which does not accurately take up the teaching on this subject in Hebrews and Revelation is sadly wanting. The truth of the matter is that the Sydney doctrine of worship, while a corrective to some forms of Anglican worship, is a distortion itself. It so concentrates on the horizontal dimension - our

fellowship together - that the vertical is eclipsed. It is not a full orb'd biblical understanding of congregational worship.

The emphasis on the cerebral is also very one sided. The Bible suggests that our whole personality is a gift of God and in response we give of our whole selves. What is more when the Bible speaks of knowledge, or of knowing God, it is referring primarily to personal knowledge, what we might call the experiential, not factual knowledge. Knowledge understood as "knowing about", that is the mastery of facts, was a concern of the pagan Greeks but not of the biblical writers.

LEADERSHIP.

In regard to leadership in the church the central issue I believe is the nature of the authority given to those set apart as leaders of God's people. It seems to be that the Sydney position implies this authority is coercive authority. People are to obey what the ordained clergy declare to be biblical teaching. To disagree with what they pronounce on is taken to be not a disagreement with man's interpretation but with the word of God itself.

I find this understanding of the authority of the so called teaching-elder based on one difficult text, 2 Tim. 2:11-12, quite repugnant. I personally believe our Lord's five times repeated injunction that those who would lead should be servants (Matt. 20:26-28, 23:11, Mk. 9:35, 10:43-45, Lk. 9:48, 22:27), and his own example in the footwashing (John 13:1f), to say nothing of his sacrifice on the cross, is the key to understanding the authority of Christian leadership. It is an authority which is earned as leaders give themselves in humble service for Christ. It is not coercive authority but charismatic authority recognised and gladly accepted because it manifests the character of Christ. What is more this conception of the ordained ministry disempowers laypeople. In the life of the church they become second rate citizens as the clergy have all the answers and hold all spiritual authority. The term priest is hated but the result the division of the one body of Christ by this high doctrine of the teaching office creates in effect two classes of Christians, and a higher and lower calling, equal to anything attacked by the reformers.

The definition of the parish minister/priest as a teaching elder is also something which cannot be supported by a holistic reading of the New Testament. In Ephesians local leaders - in the plural - seem to be called "teaching-pastors", and in the Pastorals, "bishops". The

elders were older men who formed something like a pastoral council and from their number a few took charge of house churches being called bishops. Not until the 6th century were sole elders placed in charge of parishes. Up to this time those taking this role were called bishops.

The basing of the teaching authority of the parish minister on a teaching magisterium provided by a select number of approved theologians is, however, the worst error of all. This is a denial of our Reformation heritage. It is a return to what the Protestant objects to most in traditional Roman Catholicism. Big brother will tell you what to believe and if you don't, you are disobeying God. This is denied of course by leading Sydney theologians who insist that it is the Bible alone which is the basis of their teaching but a little reflection soon shows that it is not the Bible itself but the select number of interpreters who are the final authority. Outside of Sydney, evangelicals have been struggling with what has become a matter of academic study in its own right, hermeneutics: how to understand and apply biblical teaching given in one culture, two or more thousand years ago, to our very different, modern western culture but in this diocese the debate has hardly begun. In fact those who have wanted to bring it to the fore have been censured. While this issue fails to get the hearing it deserves dogmatism and intolerance will prevail.

Church unity.

This absolutist understanding of truth, we have just discussed, also bears on the Sydney rejection of working towards closer ties, and possibly some form of union with other Christians. Most Christians believe that their understanding of revealed truth is partial and that sitting down with other Christians with whom they differ is an obligation for they may show us some imperfection in our position. In Sydney, however, the opinion seems almost to be that we have nothing to learn, except strategies for church growth, from any other parts of the church. We have the Truth. Here both Christian humility and love seem to be eclipsed.

The ministry of women.

When ministerial leadership is understood primarily as a charismatic gift, authenticated by the Spirit, and exercised in humble service then women's ministry can be embraced without reserve or restrictions. It is the mistaken Sydney view of the authority of the parish minister which determines the answer arrived at in regard to the ordination of women. Furthermore, Sydney's deliberate isolationist stance has got

the diocese in the illogical and confused situation in which it now finds itself. We are told women must not hold authority in the church but then they are allowed to be wardens, parish councillors, synod members and archdeacons: we are told women must not teach men but then women are sent out as missionaries to teach pastors and lead churches where they preach regularly, and women are licensed in the diocese as lay preachers: we are told the subordination of women is timeless truth because it is grounded on the order of creation but then the claim is made that this order does not apply in the secular world where women can be leaders despite the fact that every theologian agrees the orders of creation are structures bearing on the whole of life not just the church and the home: and finally we are told that women cannot be ordained as presbyters for they cannot be the senior minister in a parish but as we all know such ordination does not automatically place anyone in charge of a parish - the incumbency of a parish is a completely separate issue to ordination. If the Sydney theologians had only sat down with Christians with whom they disagreed on the question of the ordination of women and listened, instead of stonewalling, or personally attacking them, they would not now find themselves looking so silly to outward observers.

Conclusion.

I am sure my time is up. I hope all this was worth an airfare from Adelaide. It has been a long lecture but it would have needed a book if you had asked me to speak on the strengths of the diocese of Sydney - there are just so many ways the Gospel is being preached effectively in this great city, and so much spiritual life in so many churches. I am very aware of this and I hope you are too. In answer to your request I have done my best to outline what I believe is the prevailing Sydney doctrine of the church and to offer my critique. I now look forward the response to what I have said by those asked to reply. Where I am wrong or have been unfair I will gladly take back anything said, or modify it.

Kevin Giles
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