AN OUTSIDER’S RESPONSE TO AN INSIDER’S DEFENCE OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF SYDNEY GIVEN BY MICHAEL P. JENSEN IN His BOOK, SYDNEY ANGLICANISM: AN APOLOGY, (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2012)

BY DR KEVIN GILES

(I encourage those who get this paper to buy Michaels’ book and read it carefully before reading my response and when they read my work that they check carefully my quotes of what Michael says.)

A book defending the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, written by a true blue Sydney evangelical Anglican, is well overdue after a number of books written by critics who have majored on what they think are the more negative aspects of the diocese.1 Few could be better placed to do this than Michael Jensen. He has lived most of his life in the diocese; he is the son of the Archbishop of Sydney, and therefore free to say things no one else could say without crippling censure or marginalisation; he is a lecturer at Moore Theological College, the flag ship of the diocese; he is a scholar, holding a doctorate from Oxford University, and he is a gracious and thoughtful man.

I believe I am qualified to critically interact with Michael’s interesting book. I trained at Moore College where I had four very happy and informative years, and I served in two large Sydney parishes before going overseas for post graduate studies on a scholarship that was awarded to me personally by my friend and most influential teacher, Dr Broughton Knox. On my return, Dr. Knox wanted me to lecture at Moore College, but my interests were primarily in parish ministry and evangelism. Over the years in several books I have questioned his distinctive teaching on several matters that are now characteristic of Moore College theology: the permanent subordination of women, the pastor as primarily a teacher, the church on earth as solely a gathering or assembly of Christians, and the eternal subordination of the Son - all matters that Dr Knox put forward regularly to stimulate discussion. I remained on good terms with Dr Knox and Dr Robinson, never breaking with them or they with me. In writing on the matters I mention above, I have always thought I was doing what Drs Knox and Robinson taught me to do: evaluate by appeal to the Bible what others are teaching and doing. The church cannot be healthy unless internal debate and discussion is encouraged. Because I am positive about so many aspects of the Diocese of Sydney, I have always wanted to see open and honest debate on the idiosyncratic ideas that Dr Knox introduced into the diocese for the purpose of discussion, and which have now become distinctive Sydney doctrines.

Before turning to what Michael says, I need to make one thing clear. Like him, when I speak of “Sydney Anglicans”, I am speaking collectively of those who hold power in the diocese. I am of course well aware that there are many dissenting voices, and on some matters that are very important for Sydney Anglicans, Michael Jensen is one of these.

My aim in this essay is to accurately reflect what Michael says and comment on it; not distort what he says. Before making this essay public I sent it to Michael to read, asking him to let me know if at any point I had misrepresented his views or misquoted him. After reading my work he wrote back very graciously saying he disagreed with much of what I said, but declined to offer a critique in any detail. On one issue on which he thought I was inaccurate I changed my wording to meet his criticism.

In his book Michael attempts three things.

First, he seeks to defend Sydney Anglicans on a number of matters without any reservations. We are not fundamentalists; we are ordinary garden-variety Anglican evangelicals; our distinctive form of Biblical theology gives “theological coherence” to the whole Bible,2 and our expository sermons convey acutely the mind of God.

Second, he defends Sydney Anglicans but with some reservations. Dr Knox was right to speak of the Bible as “propositional revelation only” but he “overstated his case”.3 The Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church is to be...

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2 Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology (Eugene, Or., Wipf and Stock, 2102), 41
commended but it needs some adjustment. Sydney has been right in insisting on the priority of preaching the Gospel and leaving to one side social concern, but some balancing is now needed. The distinctive Sydney doctrine of the Trinity is basically correct but it was a “bad tactical mistake” to speak of the eternal subordination of the Son.\textsuperscript{5} The winner-take-all approach to church politics in Sydney, is “remarkably good” at achieving what those who hold the power want, but some courteousness and charity is desirable.\textsuperscript{6}

Third, he calls for change. He is critical of the Sydney’s minimising of the Anglican identity of the diocese and he argues that the push for lay presidency (“administration”) must be abandoned “as a matter of tactics”\textsuperscript{7} if it does not want to lose the opportunity it now has “for leadership within national and global Anglicanism”.\textsuperscript{8}

When it comes to the matter of the male-female relationship, which he calls the “line in the sand” over which Sydney cannot pass, it is impossible to know what he is trying to say. He is like the politician who was asked on what side he stood on an important question. He replied, “I am on the side of my friends; some are for and some are against.”

Are Sydney evangelicals simply evangelicals?

The many contemporary books on evangelicalism are agreed that contemporary evangelicalism is a very diverse phenomenon and that there are many different kinds of evangelicals: Reformed evangelicals of several varieties, charismatic evangelicals, social-activist evangelicals, Arminian evangelicals and even “post-evangelicals”.\textsuperscript{9} At an even deeper level, some argue evangelicalism is divided between those who have sharp and well defined boundaries as to who is “in” and who is “out” of the evangelical fold, and those who have fuzzy and open boundaries.\textsuperscript{10} Throughout his book Michael Jensen argues or implies that Sydney Anglicans are just evangelicals.\textsuperscript{11} He claims that much of the criticism they get is simply because they are evangelicals. However virtually everyone outside of Sydney, including other evangelicals, are convinced that there is something quite distinctive about Sydney evangelicals. I have travelled widely and wherever I go people indicate this belief the minute I say I trained at Moore Theological College Sydney. Michael acknowledges that the Sydney kind of evangelicalism is distinctively “Calvinist” or “Reformed”.\textsuperscript{12} I would add that it is also distinguished and characterised by its congregational ecclesiology; its view that church on Sunday is a “gathering” rather than a time for worship; its insistence that the preaching of the Gospel has precedence over both social concern/action and the sacraments; its opposition to the manifestation of spiritual gifts, especially the healing ministry; its synod-endorsed doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son, and by its principled opposition to the leadership of women in the church and the home.

When we come to the closed and open boundaries division, there can be no debating that Sydney theologians tend to have very sharply defined boundaries. Not only are liberals and catholic Christians regarded as not among “the chosen ones”, the true evangelicals, but neither are evangelicals of other persuasion such as myself. Indeed, many Sydney leaders seem to be most hostile to their fellow evangelicals who differ with them on women, the Trinity, charismatic gifts and social involvement in the world than to non-evangelicals.

The distinctiveness of Sydney evangelicalism is illustrated in its uneasy relations with John Stott and Tom Wright. In the second half of the twentieth century, John Stott exemplified contemporary evangelicalism and he was a unifying force amid the differing parties. However, for the last thirty years of his life John Stott was \textit{persona non grata} in Sydney. In the teaching of this gifted expositor of scripture there were things that were anathema to Sydney evangelicals. He opposed their congregational ecclesiology, the idea that church on Sunday was only a gathering of

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 85.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 123
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{9} As Michael concedes in passing, ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Sydney Anglicanism}, 5, 7, 15-18, 22-25, 31-33 etc., and particularly, 99-103.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 93-94.
Christians not worship, their insistence that women could not preach in church or be ordained, and their belief that “mission” is exclusively about evangelism; social concern is not a Gospel issue. Similarly, with possibly the foremost evangelical Anglican theologian today, the New Testament scholar, Tom Wright. He too is persona non grata in Sydney for other reasons. To be called a disciple of Tom Wright in Sydney suggests that your theology is sadly mistaken.

Sydney Anglican evangelicalism has some distinctive doctrines hardly known among other evangelicals. Where affinity is found they stand closest to Reformed Southern Baptists. Sydney evangelicals may call themselves “Reformed”, but this term also requires definition because there are many divisions among the Reformed. Their nearest affinity is with the nineteenth century American Reformed faith of Princeton seminary, epitomised in the work of Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield.

I reiterate my conviction, held by many who look from the outside at Sydney: there is something very distinctive about Sydney Anglican evangelicals. Michael implicitly recognises this in that he chooses to write a defence not of evangelicals in general or even of Australian evangelicals, but of Sydney Anglican evangelicals. And he explicitly acknowledges this distinctiveness when he quotes Archbishop Robinson as speaking of Sydney’s “brand of conservative evangelicalism.”

Are Sydney evangelicals fundamentalists?

This is a hugely important question for Sydney Anglicans. Michael’s father, Peter Jensen, in his first major address after his election as archbishop in 2001, insisted that he and his diocese were evangelicals and not fundamentalists. Michael is of the same opinion. Both argue that Sydney theology does not reflect the ideas of the original American fundamentalists who were world denying, biblical literalists and often poorly educated. The problem is that the word “fundamentalism” in the post 1970’s era no longer carries this meaning. How could it, if it can be used not only of conservative Protestants but also of some Roman Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus?

Today, the cognate words “fundamentalist” and “fundamentalism” have two meanings. In the old sense, they refer to conservative Protestants in America or elsewhere whose beliefs can be enumerated and their fear of change almost felt. Sydney evangelicals are by and large not fundamentalists in this sense. However, in the post 1970’s period, the words “fundamentalist” and “fundamentalism” came to refer to any ideology which has an absolutist hermeneutic: what I/we say/teach is “the truth”, or any religious person or movement that asserts, “what I/we say is what God says”. Religious fundamentalists in this contemporary sense believe that what they teach reflects exactly the mind of God. There is no gap between the holy text and what “I” say the text says. This kind of fundamentalism reigns in Sydney, albeit in softer and harder forms, even if it is masked by subtle turns of phrase.

This mindset, I have found, makes it virtually impossible for Sydney theologians to enter into the debate on what the Bible teaches on the status and ministry of women. For them, this debate is not over the interpretation of what the Bible read holistically says on women, but about the authority of scripture. It is between those who accept what they tell us God says in their proof text, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and those who reject what God says in this one text. To even enter into debate as to whether or not the competing egalitarian reading of scripture offers a more coherent and compelling understanding of the relationship of the sexes and a far better alternative interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, would be, for them, to abandon their belief that what they say is what the texts says and therefore what God says. Interestingly, all religious fundamentalists (in the second sense) insist on the subordination of woman. This is where their hermeneutic hits the road. All their holy texts teach, allow, or reflect a world where patriarchy reigned and so they can be selectively quoted in support. To concede that women are substantially equal would be to allow that there are alternative perspectives within these texts questioning patriarchy, indicate a capitulation to modern culture on this issue, and worst of all, undermine their case for preserving male power and privilege.

Closely allied with what has just been discussed is the question of whether or not Sydney evangelicals have a distinctive and untenable doctrine of scripture. Michael gives a whole chapter to discussing Broughton Knox’s assertion that all biblical revelation is propositional revelation and “only” this. This, he tells us, is the prevailing

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13 Ibid., 33.
14 Porter, The New Puritans, 23ff, tells this story
understanding of scripture in Sydney. He claims that Knox is simply arguing that divine special revelation is given in words, not in events or acts. I am of another opinion. I sat at the feet of Dr Knox who taught in a Socratic style for four years. He would make assertions and then encourage questions. In my time at Moore I always sat at the front and debated with him, more than any other student in my year. Because I was a respectful and a good debater he loved this. There is absolutely no question for me that for Dr Knox propositional revelation meant that the words of scripture could be identified one for one with the words of God. In support of my view I note that Knox’ article, to which Michael refers, concludes by arguing that his understanding of propositional revelation is demanded because only this can safeguard scriptural “inerrancy”. This term for Knox indicates his belief that the words of scripture are completely without error. They are entirely God’s words and as such cannot be less than perfect in every way.

Because Dr Knox had tremendous confidence that the Reformed teacher can accurately say what is in the text, he believed that the preacher in expounding the Bible spoke for God. His words in preaching and teaching were the very words of God. So in Sydney we sometimes hear preachers say at the end of a sermon, “What I have said to you today faithfully reflects what scripture says; if you disobey or ignore what I have said to you, you are not disobeying or ignoring me, but God himself.” This lofty doctrine of scripture and hermeneutical optimism is, as noted above, the root of fundamentalism in the modern sense of the term.

Michael says openly that Knox was “ill-advised” in his use of the term “propositional”, that he “overstated his case” and that his father, Peter Jensen, worded the case for propositional revelation more carefully. However, he does not say openly that Dr Knox was wrong to equate one for one the words of scripture with the words of God himself. Evangelicals who reject Knox’s claim that all saving revelation is propositional do not deny that revelation can come to us in words. Rather they deny that the words of scripture are literally one for one the very words of God. For them, in biblical revelation God the creator condescends to speak to human beings in their own creaturely language with all its limitations. Yet in doing so God faithfully reveals himself and the way of salvation. To conclude this chapter Michael claims that what Dr Knox and Sydney evangelicals believe on propositional revelation is much the same as what the Oxford philosopher J. L. Houghton, the Yale philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and the erudite evangelical theologian, Kevin Vanhooser teach. This is highly contentious. I very much doubt if any of them would agree that all divine revelation is propositional, conveying literally the words of God himself.

To be careful not to misrepresent Michael’s views, I need to add that in chapter 5, when he comes to discuss what he calls “the Sydney Sermon”, he quotes with approval the Melbourne theologian, Peter Adam, who argues that the preached word based on scripture is not “in itself the Word of God.” Peter Adam is of course right and at this point Michael recognises it.

Are Sydney evangelicals the best of biblical theologians?

Because the Bible is so central to Sydney evangelicalism, much of Michael’s book is on the Bible. In chapter 3 he argues that in Sydney a distinct form of Biblical Theology has emerged that is the envy of the world. It was pioneered by Donald Robinson and perfected by Graeme Goldsworthy, a graduate and one time lecturer at Moore College. I was taught by both men for four years. Dr Robinson was an innovative thinker and always stimulating, but his publications are very limited. He never developed any of his novel ideas in a substantial book, and some of the things Michael says in praise of Robinson are pure hagiography. For example, he describes Robinson as “an expert linguist,” yet as far as I know he was only fluent in one language, New Testament Greek, besides his native English. He even suggests that Robinson “pioneered” the evangelical turn to Biblical Theology, a claim that can bear no scrutiny. To be quite honest, I did not leave Moore College with some grand biblical theology, learnt from Donald Robinson that integrated all of scripture. Often I was not quite sure what he was on about. Rather, I left Moore

15 Sydney Anglicans., 44.
16 Ibid., 52.
17 Ibid., 53.
18 For Michael to bring in what Archbishop Peter Carnley says (Ibid., 51), in answer to Dr Knox’ doctrine of scripture, someone totally hostile to all forms of evangelical and charismatic Christianity, only muddies the water. It implies that the alternatives are a hidden God who is largely unknowable, or a God who reveals himself in inspired utterances that are literally his own words.
19 Ibid., 66.
20 Ibid., 32, 78.
21 Ibid., 34, 36.39.
College with a comprehensive theological system that I learnt from Dr Knox, and I would think this is true of most of those with whom I trained in the 1960’s.

Dr Goldsworthy, on the other hand, was the most pedestrian teacher I had. True, in a number of books he developed a distinctively conservative kind of biblical theology, where every part of scripture is somehow related to some great theme. I have read most of what he has written and come to the conclusion that he gets more out of the text than is in the text. What is more he constantly denigrates other biblical scholars who differ with him on something, calling them liberals, and he discounts evangelical brothers who read scripture critically and historically, something he definitely does not do.22

Here we need to note that the “Biblical Theology” of Robinson and Goldsworthy that Michael eulogises has little to do with what mainline contemporary scholarly evangelicals consider to be Biblical Theology. We see evangelical critical and historical Biblical Theology at its best in the three volume Intervarsity Dictionaries, Jesus and the Gospels, Paul and his Letters and the Later Writings of the New Testament and their Development. The depth and scholarship of these volumes, written by evangelical scholars who read scripture historically and critically, is of another standard altogether than the so-called “Biblical Theology of Sydney” that Michael Jensen praises. In the Biblical Theology seen in these volumes the distinctive contribution of each biblical author is given voice. The diversity in scripture is acknowledged and noted.

Michael says that it is untrue to say that this distinctive “type of Biblical Theology”, developed by Robinson and Goldsworthy, “is an “Australian quirk borne of isolation from the rest of the world”.23 He claims it has been “vindicated” by scholars like N. T. Wright, Kevin Vanhoozer, Daniel Trier, Francis Watson and Gregory Jones.24 Again we have the audacious claim that internationally known theologians endorse what former Moore College lectures developed and is now promulgated in Moore College. I very much doubt if any of these men would endorse Goldsworthy’s work, and Michael himself concludes Robinson basically got it wrong on his biblical theology of the Church.25 I simply cannot see any parallel between the kind of “Biblical Theology” Robinson and Goldsworthy produced and that of other mainline evangelical scholars, in particular N. T. Wright, who, I remind readers, is thought of as dangerous by Moore College theologians – an opponent of their views.

Are Sydney sermons the best in the world?

In chapter 5 Michael enthusiastically praises the quality and nature of Sydney sermons. He says they are of a “distinctive kind”, expository sermons.26 This kind of sermon means that the preacher has “the heroic task of mediating the divine voice to the present day hearer.”27 To this he adds, “the quality of preaching in ordinary Sydney pulpits is very high.” 28 With this chapter my response to Michael is quite brief. I agree with him on much. Good sermons that are biblically based, interesting, relevant, delivered with warmth and a bit of humour are the life blood of the local church. I am also in agreement that John Stott exemplified expository preaching at its best.

It is true that there is much good preaching in Sydney, but good preaching is not limited to Sydney Anglican churches. I have heard wonderful expository sermons in America, England and in dioceses other than Sydney in Australia. Furthermore, we should not think that expository sermons as such are always good or interesting and accurately reflect what scripture is actually saying. If all expository preachers could expound the Bible like John Stott their sermons would be riveting, but they cannot. The expository sermon in the hands of lesser preachers all too often becomes a verse by verse Bible study unrelated to life, and boring.

Michael acknowledges both that the Bible itself does not prescribe expository preaching as the only form of sermon pleasing to God and man, and that the sermon as we know it today has no firm roots in scripture itself, something I

22 Ibid., 65.
23 Ibid., 39
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 84-88.
26 Ibid., 57.
27 Ibid., 59.
28 Ibid., 65.
have not heard a Sydney man say before. He admits that preaching in Sydney churches and elsewhere may be “an authentic development from New Testament experience, but it is hard to see how it directly compares to what happened in the early church.”

Is Sydney’s doctrine of the church defensible?

Michael begins chapter 6 on ecclesiology by extolling what he calls the Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church. This is the view that the Greek word ecclesia means “assembly” or “gathering” and nothing more. It can only be applied to two realities, a local church on earth that actually gathers and the ongoing assembly in heaven of all believers. A denomination is not “church”, there is no such thing as “the Anglican Church”, and there is no universal church on earth but only individual believers. In my book, What on Earth is the Church? I argue that at every point this reasoning is mistaken. Without referring to my work Michael builds on my critique. He argues first that the Greek word ecclesia can be used of Christians who are not gathered (1 Cor. 15:9, Gal. 1:13, Acts 3:8 and almost certainly Acts 9:31). He does not mention Matthew 16:18. Second, that a study of any one word cannot produce doctrine. We need to accept that the church idea or concept may be present when the word is not. Thus the many collective titles for Christians in Acts, the ecclesia, the disciples, the brethren, the saints etc. are virtual synonyms, and Paul can speak of the church by using other terms or expressions such as “the body” or “the temple”. Third, he argues that the apostolic comments about Christians gathered in heaven refer not to a Platonic-like assembly paralleling what is on earth but are rather eschatological. Fourth, that the Knox–Robinson doctrine of the church virtually eclipses the Holy Spirit. There is no recognition that for Paul it is the Spirit who makes Christians one community in Christ. Michael’s critique of the Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church is devastating and irrefutable. The problem is that my case and Michaels against the Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church does not seem to have been accepted by the diocese. I still hear Sydney theologians saying that the Greek word ekklesia exclusively means assembly/gathering and the only church on earth is the local congregation.

At this point, we clearly see a profound tension between Michael Jensen the enthusiastic apologist for the Sydney Diocese, and Michael Jensen the critically minded scholar, who can distinguish between good and bad theology. He begins this chapter by praising the Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church as if it were something of huge significance, but goes on to point out that it is contrary to the teaching of scripture, and finally admits that if it is accepted it completely eliminates any sense of Anglican identity, which he believes is a dangerous and unhelpful in today’s world. He develops this last point in the next chapter to which we now turn.

“Are Sydney Anglicans actually Anglicans?”

In chapter 7 Michael addresses the commonly voiced critique that Sydney Anglicans are not true Anglicans in any meaningful sense. The charges we often hear made are: Sydney Anglicans have virtually abandoned the use of the Prayer Book; their clergy do not wear robes; lay presidency is advocated and practised; the sermon is so emphasised that the sacraments and social concern are marginalised; they teach that, “all we believe comes directly from the Bible”, implying the Anglican creeds and confessions do not contribute to theology; key doctrines defined in the creeds and confessions are questioned (i.e. Trinity and church), and to cap everything, they often claim “there is no such thing as the Anglican Church.”

To his credit, Michael is totally opposed to any breach with historic, world-wide Anglicanism. He argues that the Anglican Church in Sydney should recognise and affirm its membership of the Anglican Communion and its allegiance to the creeds and 39 Articles. Sydney Anglicans, he says, “should remain committed to the Anglican Church”. They ought to be Anglicans, as evangelical Anglicans have traditionally been, not only of convenience but of conviction. Very significantly he adds that they “cannot point the finger at those who transgress in areas of faith and conduct if they themselves are eroding the Anglican edifice.” He specifically says, “It is not possible to remain an Anglican and

29 Ibid., 68.
30 Ibid., 75-76.
31 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995).
32 Sydney Anglicans, 84-89.
33 Ibid., 105.
34 Ibid., 106.
35 Ibid.
to deny the resurrection or the Trinity with any integrity." 36 Prior to this, he says the scriptures cannot be set in opposition to the Articles. The “reconfiguration of orthodoxy” as defined by the creeds and articles, is simply not possible for an Anglican. 37 He also says it is “not possible to remain an Anglican with authenticity and honesty and have a greatly reduced role for the Lord’s Supper and baptism”, 38 as is often the case in Sydney.

In this chapter Michael declares himself unambiguously as someone who can see major weaknesses and problems with the prevailing Sydney theology and rhetoric. He argues that Sydney Anglicans cannot claim to be Anglicans and aspire to lead evangelical Anglicans world-wide, and at the same time deny or undermine essential elements of the Anglican faith. He writes asking his Sydney colleagues to affirm without qualification Sydney’s roots in historic evangelical Anglicanism, and to value their membership of the Anglican Church in Australia and the world-wide Anglican Communion. We have not heard such an affirmation of Anglican evangelical churchmanship from Sydney for many years.

Does the Gospel involve both word and deed?

In chapter 8 Michael discusses Sydney’s characteristic disconnect from the world of everyday life. He begins by outlining the disastrous response by Sydney diocesan leaders to the NSW Labour government’s decision to introduce ethics classes in state schools as an alternative to scripture classes. He says the Anglican Church leaders simply opposed the idea, giving the impression that “the [Sydney] Anglican Church was more interested in protecting its own privileged patch than it was in promoting the welfare of the community.” 39

He sees this story as illustrative of the divide between the church and the world which the theology of Sydney has encouraged. This divide is encouraged first of all by the Sydney doctrine that “mission” is about preaching the Gospel and nothing else. Evangelism is of utmost importance and it eclipses everything else. This explains for Michael why his father decided to begin his archiepiscopate with a decade long, word-only evangelistic programme that would make primary “the proclamation of the Gospel” to Sydneysiders. 40 Michael does not give any figures but he openly admits that this decade of evangelism was disappointing. In the secular Sydney context of the first years of the second millennium, and in the manner in which it was attempted, it was very ineffective.

Another Sydney strategy expressing this “Word only” theology, Michael points out, is to have more and more well-trained clergy who give expository sermons within the walls of the church. What has been discovered, Michael says, is that this does not grow the church in numbers, and it is not an effective means of evangelism. What is needed to bring the Gospel effectively to Sydneysiders is not more clergy but an awakening and mobilising of the laity who are deeply involved in the world and can live and speak the Gospel in that context. 41 He argues for a shift from a clergy dominated church to one in which all God’s people are equipped and sent on mission into the world, the place where they live and work. Again Michael Jensen makes a clarion call to the diocese of Sydney to change its ways that is brave and insightful.

The entrenched Sydney belief that the Christian mission is almost exclusively concerned with preaching the word and evangelism, has its roots in the in the teaching of Broughton Knox who argued that “the teaching and actions of Jesus nowhere show a concern for social justice”. 42 Michael tells us Knox’s rejection of the social dimension of the Gospel is well illustrated in his stance on apartheid. He believed that nothing in the Bible questioned apartheid. 43 I vividly remember him saying often in classes that he could see no problem with white people ruling over coloured people, as long as they were not cruel or harsh. Michael says what this illustrates is the terrible consequences of having a theology “unable to say anything about the presence of evil” in society. 44

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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 97.
38 Ibid. 106
39 Ibid., 111.
40 Ibid., 122.
41 Ibid., 123.
42 Ibid., 119.
43 Ibid., 120.
44 Ibid., 121.
The prioritising of preaching and evangelism over everything else is also seen in the teaching of Michael’s uncle, Philip Jensen. He promulgated the idea for years that word ministry, which involves study at Moore College, is infinitely more important than any other kind of work. According to him, we do not need more Christian doctors, nurses, teachers, shop assistants and plumbers, but more trained teachers of the word of God. Such a view discounts the value of everyday life and work. It echoes the old Roman Catholic idea that there are two classes of Christians: those who work for the church who are pre-eminent in God’ sight and those who work as business people, farmers, doctors and housewives. Evangelism is of huge importance, especially in our age, but it must not eclipse a holistic view of life, predicated on the doctrine of creation, that makes all of life of value, or Jesus’ teaching that we are to love our neighbours as ourselves by serving them.

Michael exhibits considerable unease with this disconnect between the Gospel and the life and needs of the world, seeing that a change in theology in Sydney is needed, but he shows no evidence of embracing John Stott’s conclusion, now held by most evangelicals, that Christ’s sending of his disciples into the world, his “mission”, always and by necessity involves both word and deed. One without the other is not authentic Christianity.

Are women permanently subordinated to men?

In chapter 9 Michael come to the matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the distinctive Sydney teaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, with which the women question is inexorably connected in Sydney theology. He says that “If there is any single issue with which Sydney Anglicans have found themselves identified, it is surely the matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood.”45 And he says, this is the “line in the sand” over which Sydney will never cross.46 It cannot be crossed because he believes this issue distinguishes Christians who stand under the authority of scripture from those who do not.47 Because Michael ascribes such importance to Sydney’s distinctive view of women, and because he thinks more than anything else this characterises the Sydney brand of evangelical Anglicanism, I give more space to his discussion on this topic than to others.

In what he says on women Michael lands himself in very muddy water and seems to flounder around. Most of what he says in this chapter is an attempt to obfuscate what Sydney theologians have in fact been teaching from the 1970’s, namely that in creation, before the Fall, God set woman under man and that this hierarchical social ordering prescribes God’s unchanging ideal for the man-woman relationship. This teaching is claimed to be firmly grounded and unambiguously prescribed in what he calls, the “decisive” text, 1 Timothy 2:11-15,48 where according to the Sydney and more general “complementarian” 49 interpretation of this text, Paul forbids women to teach/preach or exercise authority in church on the timeless and transcultural theological principle indicated by Pauls’ appeal to Genesis. Women are not to speak or lead in church because Adam was created first and is thus first in precedence, and because it was the woman who was deceived not the man. For those who embrace this interpretation, what this means is that women cannot be ordained is solely because they are the subordinate sex. The ordination of women is forbidden because it would allow women to assume leadership in the church where men are present.50

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45 Ibid., 126.
46 Ibid., 126.
47 Ibid., 127
48 Ibid., 128.
49 This is the self-chosen title of evangelicals who believe that the Bible permanently subordinates women to men. This self-designation was first adopted in the early 1990’s. Of course all Christians who believe God made us men and women are “complementarians”. I have been using this term to speak of what the Bible teaches on the sexes since 1977. Now I have to say, I am an “egalitarian-complementarian”!
This is the position first enunciated in Sydney by Broughton Knox and then endorsed in print by Peter Jensen, Philip Jensen, Paul Barnett, John Woodhouse, Robert Forsyth, Peter Bolt, Mark Thompson, and many other Moore trained Sydney leaders. Broughton Knox put the case in plain English with no attempt to hide what he was arguing: God in creation before the Fall made men “superior”, and women “inferior” in a “hierarchical order”. And because men are head over women in the home, men and men only should be head over/lead the church.

When we turn to Michael Jensen’s lengthy discussion on Sydney Anglicans and women we move into what I have already called very muddy water. What he says Sydney believes about women is not what Dr Knox taught and not what Sydney theologians generally teach in their publications. So we note that he denies explicitly that Sydney evangelicals hold to a “hierarchical view of humanity” and that male “headship” in the home can be “transposed into the church”. He boldly affirms that “Paul did expect women to speak in the church gathering in some capacity” and then he mentions women prophesying, the gift Paul sets above teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:28. Furthermore, he says that Sydney theologians insist on “the profound equality of all human beings in God’s eyes”. They believe that Scripture speaks “of the profound and ineradicable sameness and mutuality of the human male and female.” They do not endorse an “essentialist” view of the sexes. They believe that, “Like political order, gender is a very human, culturally interpreted, and negotiated realization of the created nature of our sexed bodies.” And to add to this, Michael gives three pages to criticising American “complementarian” evangelicals such as Grudem, Ware, Kostenberger and Carson, who, he says, endorse “a full blown theory of gender roles” in “essentialist” terms. To crown it all, he says that among the many Sydney evangelical marriages, “I know [their] marriages are remarkably egalitarian.” This he implies is highly commendable. If only all this were true; that this was what Dr Knox taught and Michael’s father, Peter Jensen, and Uncle Philip Jensen, and other leading Sydney theologians taught.

Then Michael takes a contradictory tack and attempts to justify the Sydney “biblical” case for what is best called, the permanent subordination of women. He praises Sydney Synod for fifteen times resisting the call to ordain women and for standing in opposition to “complete gender equality in ministry”. This he argues was done on the basis of biblical teaching which cannot be questioned, because for Sydney “the primary issue is the authority of scripture.” It is not for him a debate over the interpretation of scripture, which to outsiders seems obvious and undeniable, but between those who stand under Scripture and those who do not. On this basis, he says, he endorses “the principles of headship [for men] and submission [of women] in church order.” Like other Sydney theologians, Michael tells us that the “decisive” text, 1 Timothy 2:11-15, clearly reveals the mind of God. This text settles everything. It teaches that God has permanently excluded women from teaching/preaching in the church, putting man in authority over the woman because of what Genesis 1 to 3 teaches. He does not say what this is, but every Sydney reader knows what he has in mind: that in creation God set the man over the woman before the Fall. That virtually no scholarly contemporary commentator on Genesis can find any hint of a pre-Fall subordination of woman is not of concern to Michael or other Sydney theologians. He then refers to Dr Knox’s teaching on the sexes which speaks of their

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51 “An Addendum.”
52 See note 37 above for documentation
53 Sydney Anglicans, 127.
54 Ibid., 129.
55 Ibid., 143
56 Ibid., 127, 138. I put “in God’s eyes” in italics, because both sides can say this. The issue is always what takes place on earth.
57 Ibid., 137. I am not too keen on the word “sameness” because I believe God made us men and women but I can gladly accept the point I think Michael is making. We are the one species made in the image and likeness of God.
58 Ibid., 138.
59 Ibid., 139.
60 Ibid., 136-141.
61 Ibid., 137.
62 Ibid., 140.
63 Ibid., 126.
64 Ibid., 127.
65 Ibid., 130.
66 Ibid., 128.
67 In opposition to this view in post 1980 commentaries see, W. Brueggemann, Genesis (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982); J. J. Scullion, Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers and Preachers (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982); J. P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis
“hierarchical” ordering, arguing that if in the home the man is set over the women this pattern should be reflected in the church, the Christian communal family. He warmly commends Knox’s reasoning only to confuse his readers by putting in the midst of this section the contradictory sentence quoted above, “male headship is not simply transposed into the church.” Further evidence that Michael is not, in fact, an egalitarian is seen in his attack on modern culture that he claims raises acute “anxiety” by allowing people to work out their own relationships in “freedom”, rejecting any bibliically prescribed “notions of roles” or male “headship”, or acceptance of a “social order” “dictated to me” in scripture.

Michael obfuscates matters profoundly by consistently claiming that the great issues at stake are male/female “roles”, sexual differentiation and the ordination of women. They are not, and Michael should know this because I have been saying this to my Sydney friends for thirty years. First of all, the word “role”. In a dictionary or in sociological texts a role speaks of characteristic behaviour that can change and is not person-defining. So social scientists tell us the roles of men and women have changed in the last forty years. Most women now are part of the workforce and some men do their share of house work and child nurturing. For Michael, and all so-called complementarians, male and female “roles” are all about power relations, who rules and who obeys, that are ascribed by God and can never change. Men have the “role” of headship; women the “role” of subordination. This doctrinaire use of the word “role” cannot be justified. Admittedly, Michael tells us he does not like the more extreme ideas on sex-prescribed roles promulgated by some American “complementarians”. I am glad to hear that!

Second, male-female differentiation is not the central issue, and to suggest it is misleading. Do these men think that only they have seen their wife in the shower and noticed a few differences? And do they really think that evangelical egalitarians reject Genesis 1:27-28 where God explicitly says he made us male and female? No one in this debate denies male-female differentiation. What the Christians who are not “complementarians” deny is that God permanently subordinated women to men in the created order before the Fall. It is not male-female differentiation that sharply and painfully divides evangelicals today; it is the claim that women are subordinated to men in the created order and that this can never change. To claim that the central issue is “difference” is simply untrue. Why then do Sydney theologians claim this incessantly? They themselves give the answer. Michael tells us that if “difference” is not stressed the God-given “roles” of men and women will be undermined. The constant attempt to make the “differences” of the sexes the key issue is a deliberate attempt to obfuscate what is in fact being taught. In this argument for women’s permanent subordination the word “difference” is a code word telling insiders that we believe God has appointed men to rule, women to obey, without telling outsiders this is what we believe. I say again, for Sydney always the key issue is the subordination of women. I apologise for being so sharp in my wording but to go on making “difference” the key issue is inexcusable.

Third, when it comes to ordination, this too is not in fact a primary issue for Sydney theologians, contra Michael’s claims. In Sydney women are excluded from ordination solely because women are the subordinate sex and so must not be in leadership when men are present. They can be “ordained” as deacons because this does not allow them to be in charge of a parish in Sydney. I personally do not crusade to see women ordained into a ministerial role.


68 Ibid., 129.
69 Ibid., 136.
70 Ibid., 136-137. On the ABC program, Q&A (Series 5, episode 22, Set 2012) his father, Peter, Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney, sought to put the “difference” argument as the summation of the Sydney doctrine of women, never once mentioning the real issue, woman’s permanent subordination, and was savagely mauled by Catherine Deveney who took his reply as cant.
71 Ibid., 126.
office invented by men for men in the middle ages, without biblical warrant, that does not work well today for many men and is even more difficult for women, especially women with children. My great crusade is against appealing to scripture to justify the subordination of women as if it is the God-given ideal, when scripture makes the rule of the man over the woman an expression of sin. In Genesis chapters 1 to 3, before the Fall, man and woman stand side by side in substantial equality. Genesis makes it plain that it is as a consequence of the Fall that the man comes to rule over the woman (Gen 3:16). Virtually all contemporary scholarly commentators on Genesis reject the traditional idea, held by Sydney theologians, that before the Fall woman was subordinated to man.  

This debate on the status and leadership of women is not going to go away. Michael may be encouraged that most of Sydney Synod opposes the ordination of women, as we would expect that they would. What surprises me is that 30% of lay people and 15% of clergy in the Sydney Synod are of another opinion as to what the Bible teaches. The huge problem is that today most scholarly evangelicals reject the interpretation of 1 Timothy chapter 2 and Genesis 2 given by so called “complementarians”, and they follow the (egalitarian) Michael Jensen in arguing that the “headship” of the husband is all about serving one’s wife, and that marriage is a “partnership” of “equals”. What is more, arguing that women are a subordinate class in today’s world is patently nonsense and must eventually become untenable. It will be seen in the diocese of Sydney, as it has been elsewhere, that this is a self-serving theology developed to preserve male privilege and power. In the 1860’s very similar appeals to the Bible to support slavery were made by leading evangelical theologians of Reformed persuasion in the United States, and in the 1960’s by evangelical theologians of Reformed persuasion in South Africa in support of Apartheid.

I conclude this section by putting a question to Michael that greatly perplexes me. If he believes like me that men and women have a “profound equality”, in many ways sharing an “inerradical sameness and mutuality”, that the two sexes are not “hierarchically ordered”, that God has not ascribed fixed and immutable “roles” on an “essentialist” basis to the sexes, that Paul expects “women to speak in church gatherings”, that the best of marriages in Sydney are to be commended for being “remarkably egalitarian”, and we are 101% in agreement that in creation God made humankind male and female, indelibly differentiated, what then is this debate about? We definitely do not disagree on the authority of scripture. I think scripture read holistically as biblical theology prescribes must be the final arbiter in this intramural debate among evangelicals.

At this point it important that I spell out the conservative evangelical egalitarian reading of the Bible. Egalitarian evangelicals refuse to begin the discussion with what Michael calls the “decisive” text, 1 Timothy 2:11-14, which says things with no parallel to anything else in scripture. To begin with this text would be like beginning with James 2:14-26 in seeking to establish a doctrine of salvation. James says, “a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”, and he quotes “scripture”, the verse about Abraham’s faith, in support. Evangelical egalitarians also refuse to import into the discussion on the man-woman relationship the unbiblical term “role” that only obfuscates what is being said. In the cause of truth this word should be left out of the debate. The Bible does not differentiate men and women by what they do (“roles”), but on their God-given sexual identity. It is also to be emphasised that all egalitarian evangelicals affirm sexual differentiation unequivocally. The sharp division between evangelicals is not about sexual differentiation but whether or not the Bible permanently subordinates women to men. The claim that the dividing issue is “differentiation” is an assertion that cannot be substantiated. It is wrong.

Egalitarian evangelicals follow the method of Biblical Theology that Michael tells us is taught at Moore College and which is honoured there on all other matters. The big picture is to be established first and the parts understood in this light. The goal is “theological coherence”. No one text is “decisive” on any matter of importance. Proof

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72 See note 54 above.
73 Ibid., 126-127.
74 These percentages are based on Michael’s figures.
75 Ibid., 138. 140. For a biblically consistent, exegetical reply to the hierarchical view of the man-woman relationship, see in popular form, Kevin Giles, Better Together: Equality in Christ (Melbourne: Acorn, 2010). And for a more scholarly reply see, Giles, The Trinity and Subordinationism, 141-268. The definitive egalitarian exegetical study is, P. B. Payne, Man and Woman in Christ, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).
76 77 Ibid., 128.
78 Ibid.” 30-42.
79 Ibid., 41
texting” is rejected because all too often theologians can select texts that seem to endorse their views, missing completely what scripture as a whole teaches. The appeal to scripture by evangelicals to support slavery and apartheid are examples of this.

For evangelical egalitarians with their high view of scripture, the right place to begin on the man-woman relationship is where the Bible begins, Genesis chapter 1, a text that sets the parameters for all that follows. This chapter undeniably speaks of the substantial equality of the sexes, their joint rule over all of creation and joint responsibility in the family mandate. Genesis chapter 2 does not contradict Genesis 1 by subordinating the woman to the man. Rather it teaches that man alone is “helpless”, incomplete, until his counterpart woman stands by his side. Genesis makes the rule of the man over the woman a direct consequence of the Fall. In subsequent history woman’s subordination reflects life marked by sin. The place to begin in the New Testament must be the Gospels. Jesus says not one word on male “headship” and much to the contrary. In his sight man and woman stand side by side. Appeal to the fact the twelve apostles were men is irrelevant as has often been pointed out. This is what we would expect in a patriarchal context. When we turn to Paul we should begin with his charismatic theology of ministry that holds that the Spirit gives gifts of ministry/leadership to every believer irrespective of their sex (1 Cor. 12:7-28, Rom. 12:3-7, Eph. 4:11-12). So we are not surprised to find among the larger number of apostles, the ministry Paul says is “first in the church” and of whom Paul is one, a woman apostle (Rom 12:7) . There are also women prophets (1 Cor. 11:5 etc.), “second in the church,” and women house church leaders (Col. 4:15 etc.). These church leaders certainly taught in church gatherings. In this reading of scripture in canonical order we come last of all to 1 Timothy chapter 2 which, on the Sydney interpretation, stands in direct contradiction to what has just been noted. On biblical theology principles this text, like the James passage mentioned above, has to be taken as an exceptional comment in response to an exceptional situation. Everything said in this passage is dissonant. It is not ordinary teaching that Paul forbids to women; it is teaching given in an authentein way. This Greek word found only this once in the Bible defines the kind of teaching forbidden to women in Ephesus. It speaks of authority to teach wrongly assumed; of usurping authority. Paul tells these women in that church at that time to stop teaching and to desist from putting yourself “first”, because you should remember it was Eve who was “deceived” – like you have been Until very recently virtually all theologians interpreted this appeal to the Genesis creation story to be saying women must not teach or lead because woman was created second and thus is second in rank and she sinned first and is thus more prone to sin and error. There is no support in the text of Genesis 2 for this interpretation and it has been abandoned by most contemporary scholarly commentators.

One final and critical point: if egalitarian evangelicals of which there are thousands including many of the best evangelical scholars, in no way question or undermine the authority of scripture, and they do not, then to claim that what divides Sydney evangelicals and other “complementarians” from egalitarian evangelicals is acceptance or not of biblical authority is untrue and deeply offensive. On the doctrine of scripture we stand on the same side of what Michael calls “a line in the sand.” We are on opposing sides on the interpretation of scripture, one side believing the scriptures make the God-given ideal the subordination of women; the other that the scriptures makes the substantial equality of the differentiated sexes the God-given ideal.

The Trinity

In the midst of his parallel defence and rejection of the distinctive Sydney doctrine of women, Michael digresses to make a parallel defence and rejection of the distinctive Sydney doctrine of the Trinity. Again we have a matter that demands an extended discussion. The doctrine of the Trinity is the primary doctrine of the faith. It is “our” Christian doctrine of God. The 39 Articles begin with a definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Michael recognises the huge importance of this debate over the doctrine of the Trinity. He sees clearly that, if Sydney theologians have got this

80 Apostles are uniformly depicted a teachers of the church Revelation2:20 Jezebel the prophetess is condemned not for teaching but for giving false teaching.
81 See Payne, Man and Woman, 291-444.
82 See note 54 above.
wrong they have put themselves out of the Anglican family. He says, “a reconfiguration of orthodoxy” is simply not possible for an Anglican.  

Michael tells us the debate about how the doctrine of the Trinity might inform the man-woman relationship began when a Sydney egalitarian evangelical, Dr Stuart Pigg, argued the Trinity could not be appealed to in support of the permanent subordination of women because the Athanasian Creed spoke of the three divine persons as “co-equal”. Pigg was actually countering Dr Broughton Knox who in fact introduced into Sydney the appeal to a hierarchically construed Trinity as the ground for the permanent subordination of women. Here it should be carefully noted that it is the evangelicals who argue for the permanent subordination of women who, first in Australia and in America, appealed to a hierarchically construed doctrine of the Trinity as the ultimate ground for the permanent subordination of women, and who pursue this argument today. Appeal to the orthodox “co-equal” doctrine of The Trinity has virtually played no part in the evangelical egalitarian case. I have never developed it. Egalitarian arguments for the substantial equality of the sexes are primarily biblical. In any case, I personally cannot see how the relations between three divine persons in heaven who are all confessed as “Lord” can be prescriptive for human relationships on earth, let alone the twofold, male-female relationship. The triune God is the creator; we are all fallen creatures. I reject completely any attempt by egalitarians or by self-designated “complementarians” to ground the man-woman relationship in the life of God in eternity.

Michael’s discussion of the 1999 Sydney Doctrine Commission Report, “The Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Bearing on the Relationship of Men and Women”, later ratified in Sydney Synod as the agreed statement of faith on the Trinity for the diocese, is convoluted. He wants to affirm what is said but he accepts that it deeply flawed. In this document drawn up by the senior staff at Moore College including Peter Jensen, the then principal, and Archbishop Robinson, the authors openly say they are “subordinationists”, adding that they put the term in inverted commas to distinguish their position from heretical subordinationism. This is a strange admission because this term is a technical one for a heresy. In my nearest theological library I found fifteen definitions of this word in theological dictionaries and theological text books and they all defined it in slightly different wording as the error of ranking of the three divine persons or their hierarchical ordering in the eternal life of God, exactly what the Sydney statement of faith teaches! Michael in defence says this statement of faith only seeks to affirm the “functional” or “role” subordination of the Son. If this functional or role subordination alluded specifically to Jesus’ earthly ministry in “the form of a servant”, and as such is temporal, there would be no debate. But as Michael concedes, the statement repeatedly says this functional subordination of the Son in authority is “eternal”. This means the Trinity in eternity is “hierarchically” ordered - as the Arians argued.

It cannot be contested that the authors speak of this “functional” subordination in ontological terms. They tell us that speaking of “role” or “functional” subordination is “only true as far as it goes”. What needs to be added, they say, is that “the subordination which ‘subordinationists’ [the authors] see in the Trinity belongs to the very Persons themselves in their eternal nature.” Similarly, they say, “the Son’s [functional] obedience arises from the very nature of his being as Son” and most egregiously, the Athanasian Creed “makes these differences in being most clear.” In saying this Sydney theologians actually directly contradict what the Athanasian Creed teaches (and the Nicene Creed), namely the “oneness of being” (Gk. homousias) of the Father and the Son. Time and time again, in the midst of affirmations of orthodoxy this convoluted document explicitly and unambiguously denies and contradicts what the Creeds and the 39 Articles state is what the Bible teaches. For these Sydney theologians, the difference between the Father and the Son is explicitly described in ontological terms (“being”, “nature”, “very person”), as in Arianism. They tell us that, “subordination in the Godhead is part of orthodox Christian teaching and

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84 Sydney Anglicans., 97.
85 Ibid., 131-132.
86 This document is quoted in full in Giles, The Trinity and Subordinationism. It is divided into numerical paragraphs. Para 14, 17, 18. Particularly note the wording of para 33.
87 Para 23 actually commends the Greek tradition for ensuring “a hierarchical mode of conceiving God.” In para 9 egalitarians get criticised for reject reading “hierarchy and subordination” into the eternal life of God.
88 Para 13. There can be no question this is what is meant if one reads all of para 32 and 33.
89 Para 33.
90 Para 18, italics added
91 Paragraph 25, italics added
it expresses the truth of scripture”. 92 Michael says, “Giles completely overstates what his opponents are claiming for their description of Trinitarian relations,” and that my criticisms are “extreme.” 93 Are they? Can he offer one example where I misquote what the Sydney theologians put in print and ratified in Synod, and is it “extreme” to criticise brothers who teach “the eternal subordination of the Son”, a “difference in being” between the Father and the Son and eternal “hierarchal” ordering in divine life, claiming this to be orthodoxy? I suspect Michael too readily shoots the messenger rather than listens attentively to what he says. He accuses me of hurting the diocese of Sydney on the international scene but the truth is, Sydney dealt itself a huge blow when it decided to subvert the creedal and confessional doctrine of the Trinity in its quest to uphold the subordination of women.

Michael tells his readers that the Doctrine Commission did not prepare this document with the purpose of grounding the subordination of women on the most profound basis possible, the life of God in eternity. He says, the “Sydney Doctrine Commission report explicitly denies this move”, 94 He accuses me of reading this motive into their noble deliberations. He claims rather that I argue for the co-equality of the divine persons to further my own dangerous views on male-female equality. 95 As I have already pointed out this is untrue. I do not believe the life of God in eternity, however understood, prescribes the man – woman relationship on earth. Michael fails to note that orthodoxy, not just Kevin Giles, speaks of the “co-equality” of the divine persons (see the Athanasian Creed). Note the title of the document, “The Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Bearing on the Relationship of Men and Women.” What could more plainly attest the intention of those who developed this distinctive doctrinal statement on the Trinity? Furthermore, at least 14 paragraphs in this document explore how eternal hierarchical relations in divine life prescribe hierarchical male-female relations on earth. 96 I do not resile; this document was prepared with the sole purpose of grounding the subordination of women in the life of God in eternity.

After I published, The Trinity and Subordinationism, where I gave the text of the Doctrine Commission’s report with the permission of its chairman, Bishop Paul Barnett, the Sydney Doctrine Commission reconvened and met for some months to consider my critique of their work. Fifteen of the members had doctorates and three bishops were present, but no reply was forthcoming. I have since published two more books on the Trinity 97 and about a dozen scholarly articles arguing that the “co-equality” of the divine three in being and authority is orthodoxy and the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son in authority is a key element in Arianism and no one has written anything that would convince me I am wrong.

Michael says that some have (mistakenly) taken my accusation of “trinitarian revisionism” by Sydney theologians as factual, and cites the English evangelical academic, Elaine Storkey, as an example. 98 To suggest that a scholar of her calibre did not read for herself “The Doctrine of the Trinity and Its Bearing on the Relationship of Men and Women”, which she had before her in my book, The Trinity and Subordinationism, before writing on the Trinity for The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology, I find impossible to believe. I published the text in full so that scholars and others could check for themselves the accuracy of my quotes and come to their own mind on this document. I am sure Elaine Storkey and others have done this.

Michael confesses that this debate on the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity has made it hard for him to “think straight.” 99 On one side is his father, who was involved in formulating the Sydney statement of faith on the Trinity and has strongly defended it for ten years, as well as most of his esteemed teachers at Moore College, some of whom are now his colleagues, and his uncle Philip who dogmatically supports the statement. On the other side stands Kevin Giles who continues to appeal to the Bible, the creeds and confessions in support of his case and is supported, as Michael admits, by numerous “evangelical luminaries”. 100 And, I would add, by numerous mainline
Protestant and Catholic luminary Trinitarian scholars. I can make this claim because nine of the most informed published Trinitarian scholars in the world, Catholic, Protestant and evangelical, have endorsed my account of historic orthodoxy.  

This is a huge problem for Sydney diocese, one that their next Archbishop will certainly need to “revisit”, as Michael acknowledges. It was indeed a bad “a tactical mistake” to make the eternal subordination of the Son what differentiates him from the Father. It is untenable to have a synod endorsed statement of faith on the Trinity prepared by the diocesan Doctrine Commission, which stands in contradiction to the teaching on the Trinity given in the creeds and in Article 1 of the Anglican 39 Articles. I completely agree with Michael when he says, “Anglicanism is a Trinitarian form of Christianity. Positing the authority of Scripture does not allow for revision of that article of faith”, and that the “reconfiguration of orthodoxy” is simply not possible for an Anglican.

Is lay administration (presidency) at the Lord’s Supper Anglican?

I must admit it came as quite a surprise when friends we were staying with in Sydney took us to their large Anglican Church morning service and, when it came to communion, one of the laymen came forward to lead the service. When I asked our friends about this they said, “Oh, that often happens. Our Rector encourages lay people to administer communion.” For the last twenty years many leading theologians in Sydney have been advocating lay presidency, or as Sydney folk call it, “lay administration” of Holy Communion. When Peter Jensen was appointed the Archbishop of Sydney in 2001, many anticipated he would authorise this practice because he was a strong advocate of lay presidency. This is not something that offends evangelicals as evangelicals, because the Bible does not prescribe who should lead Holy Communion and we do not believe only an episcopally ordained minister, defined as a priest, is needed to lead communion. However, it is something that evangelical Anglicans have not generally advocated, because the sixteenth century Anglican Reformers ruled that as a matter of good order only an ordained minister should lead communion, and they know it would deeply offend catholic Anglicans. It would be an uncharitable thing to do.

Michael defends his friends in Sydney for pushing hard to get lay presidency accepted, which he thinks may have become for them their “great cause”. We can be thankful that in the end he comes down on the side of traditional Anglican theology and practice as prescribed by the Prayer Book in the cause of unity and church order. His assertion that this radical move was in no way related to the debate about the ordination of women is not convincing. I do not know how many times I have heard Sydney evangelicals say, “Those liberals forced through the ordination of women against our wishes; we are now going to force through lay presidency, what they abhor most.” What is more, Sydney leaders more than once told me that this was a “strategic move” on their part. If lay men and women could preside at communion, why was the ordination of women necessary?

At the end of this chapter, we get the impression that Michael wants to put a stop to this development primarily because it is a barrier to Sydney diocese assuming the leadership of Anglican evangelicals on the world scene at this time of Anglican fragmentation. He says, “There is far more for Sydney to lose in opportunities for leadership within national and global Anglicanism than there is to be gained by pressing ahead” with lay presidency. He says to desist from advocating this “is simply a matter of tactics”.

Is the Anglican Church League a very ethically ambiguous lobby group?

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101 My endorsed summary and commentary on the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was published in Priscilla Papers, 26-3, (2012), 12-23. Christians for Biblical Equality International sent a copy to the more than 3000 evangelical scholars who belong to the Evangelical Theological Society and a Sydney lay man sent an electronic copy to every ordained minister in the Anglican diocese of Sydney. I invite critical response to this work but so far none have been forthcoming, only affirmations.

102 Sydney Anglicans, 133.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid., 97.

105 We are now discussing Sydney Anglicans, chapter 10.

106 Ibid., 154.

107 Ibid., 145 and pages 156-158.

108 Ibid., 158.
In the last chapter before his brief conclusion, Michael discusses the notorious politics of Sydney, which rivals anything in the Labour party. This, Michael tells us, has been fully documented in the 2005 book by Chris McGillion, *The Chosen Ones; The Politics of Salvation in the [Sydney] Anglican Church*. He does not dissent from what McGillion says. The lobby group that “dominates Sydney Anglican politics”, Michael tells us, is the *Anglican Church League* (ACL). 109 This body selects approved candidates for every diocesan position and puts out a ‘how to vote’ ticket. Today its power is in the ascendency and unassailable. It is even able to determine who will be the Archbishop, as it did in the case of Peter Jensen. No opinion or position contrary to the wishes of the ACL can now get a hearing in Sydney. What did Lord Acton say about power?

Michael seems awed by the success of the ACL and praises its achievements profusely. Its great virtue, he says, is that it is “remarkably good” at getting what it wants. 110 However, he does question whether church power politics can “be playedchristianly”? 111 In reply to his own question he outlines six principles which do not question the “winner takes all” approach to church politics in Sydney, but ask for more civility and grace to be shown. One of his suggestions for improvement is that women be encouraged to take part in Sydney church politics – something I am sure most of them do not seek! 112 Among these principles we find no mention whatsoever that democracy demands open debate which is facilitated by publications that give opposing opinions, and by respecting those who dissent. The great tragedy for Sydney is that they have deliberately and successfully closed off all significant debate. No counter opinion on anything of importance is allowed. In publications controlled by them, views contrary to those who hold all the power are excluded. The disastrous consequences of this policy are illustrated by their teaching on the Trinity. Sixteen Sydney theologians of one mind in opposition to the leadership of women drew up their doctrine of the Trinity in consultation with no one outside of their closed and united circle. Not surprisingly they got it wrong. The insular nature of Sydney with its closed-in mentality, I think is its Achilles heel. It would seem to me that it is in great danger of becoming a breakaway group, with its own distinctive doctrines, believing that it alone possess the fullness of truth, and it alone interprets the Bible correctly. In other words, it is in danger of becoming a sect.

**Conclusion.**

Michael Jensen has done the Australian Anglican Church, and indeed the world-wide Anglican Communion, a great service by outlining as an insider what is distinctive about the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. In the past we have had critical accounts of the diocese, which Michael thinks have been unfair and inaccurate. Now we have a sympathetic but not uncritical perspective from a genuine insider.

As I end this essay I must admit I feel Michael has said far too little of the many positives in the Diocese of Sydney; its superb theological training, its many large and growing churches, its evangelistic outreach, its commitment to worldwide mission, its ministry to young people, especially university students and its total rejection of clergy abuse in any form, just to mention a few matters. Michael instead spends most of the book trying to defend what outside critics of Sydney see as negative, and more than once he concedes their criticisms have validity.

109 Ibid., 168.
110 Ibid., 160.
111 Ibid., 169.
112 Ibid., 170.