

**Is Lay Administration of the Lord's Supper
Consistent with an Anglican Identity?**

An Occasional Paper
for
St. John the Evangelist Church
Gordon

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ABSTRACT

The Issue of Lay Presidency in the Anglican Communion and in the Diocese of Sydney is a hotly debated issue. The question we seek to answer from this paper is simple. Is Lay Presidency of the Lord's Supper consistent with an Anglican Identity? The question is simple enough, but I suspect it would surprise no one to discover that the road to an answer for such a question is complicated. In this paper we will look at the Reformation foundations of the Anglican Church, we will look at the hermeneutical question, that is, what is a suitable hermeneutic for the Lord's Supper? Then we will look at two Modern Theologians from here in Australia who are clear advocates for Lay Presidency. During our discussion we will touch on the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal as required. While we are certain this is not the last word on this debate, we are prayerful that it will be a helpful contribution.

In recent years there has been a lively debate about various issues in the Anglican Communion. One important question is, “Who is able to preside at the Lord’s Supper?” We note that other terms such as Holy Communion and Eucharist are also terms in widespread use in the Communion. This is an important question, for both sides of the debate claim that the other’s opposition or acceptance is either not consistent with the bible, Anglican Tradition, or both. So the question is simple, “Is the Lay Administration of the Lord’s Supper consistent with an Anglican Identity?” We will not apply ourselves here to the issue of Diaconal Administration of the Lord’s Supper. There are subtle and important differences in the debate. We do note that since the 2010 Sydney Synod a motion affirming the belief of Synod that Diaconal Administration was consistent with the Bible was upheld, and Diaconal Administration is effectively being sanctioned within the diocese. This paper is, it should also be noted, written from the perspective of one who ministers in the Diocese of Sydney.

A major question arises that is critical to resolving our investigation and coming to some conclusion. It is this, “is there a change in the nature of things that occur in the Lord’s Supper?” We are referring specifically to the words of institution, and thereby asking if something happens to the bread and the wine, or at the very least, in the person receiving the bread and wine? A subsidiary question also arises: Is ordination ontological? If so how?¹ We will first explore the various traditions behind the understanding of what happens at the words of institution and the distribution. We will do so from the sixteenth century perspective and then we will look at later developments and fit that within the broader understanding of the Anglican tradition.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century rent the fabric of Christendom. However, it was not born out of a vacuum, but what commentators such as Paul Avis describes as an “explosion of pent up conciliar reforming energy.”² All of the various reformers from Luther to Calvin, and everyone in between believed that they were reforming the church, not starting new ones. However, the ecclesiastical polemic and power politics of the day that arose out of the debate proved otherwise. It became abundantly clear rather quickly

¹ Newbigin, L., ‘Lay Presidency at the Eucharist’ *Theology* September / October 1996 Vol XCIX No. 791 Loades, A., ed. [SPCK London 1996] pp 366-370 provides a very good overview of these issues.

² Avis, P., *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition*, [T&T Clark: London: 2008], p xix. Here Avis provides an excellent overview of the conciliar movement for the novice, prior to the Reformation and traces the Anglican adoption and implementation of it through his study.

that on the Catholic and Reformed sides neither was going to give an inch. Here Avis is especially helpful. He seems to infer that if the Conciliar movement which gathered steam in the first half of the fifteenth century, when the issue of the three popes was trying to be resolved had in fact been successful, the Reformation while still inevitable may not have had the devastating effect on the Western Church, in that it effectively broke up. Avis sees that the Council of Trent was too little, too late, to prevent this inevitability.³ Unsurprisingly the Reformers had a number of agendas. Perhaps the most significant was the desire to return to the pre-medieval church teaching; the teaching of the Middle Ages being seen as a corruption of the early church and the Patristic period, usually encompassing the first 400 years of the church.⁴ At the heart of this debate on the corruption of the church was what occurred in the Lord's Supper, and specifically, what happened to the bread and the wine?⁵ Their response was to set themselves apart from the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation.

The doctrine of Transubstantiation found its full flowering in Thomas Aquinas' (1225-1274) work. He was attempting to apply Aristotelian philosophical categories to explain what happened to the bread and the wine and the moment of consecration. Aquinas utilised Aristotle's distinction between *substance* and *accidents* of an object.⁶ There is a varied and fierce debate as to how accurately Aquinas' work was understood and used in the Middle Ages.⁷ What is often forgotten in the debate is that the term "Transubstantiation" is not strictly Aristotelian, but rather, "is working in consequence of an understanding of the world subordinated to an already Christian conception of God."⁸ Commentators such as Kilmartin and Hemming appear to suggest that Aquinas' explanation of what happens to the bread and the wine at the consecration has been distorted due to a Christian matrix being applied to Greek secular philosophy. This

³ Avis, *Beyond the Reformation?*, See esp. pp xii-xix, also p 24

⁴ Osterhaven, M.E., 'Eating and Drinking Christ: The Lord's Supper as an Act of Worship in the Theology and Practice of Calvin,' *Reformed View*, Winter 1984, Vol 37 No2, p 83 is but one example of this assertion.

⁵ Foley, E., *From Age to Age: How Christians have celebrated the Eucharist*, [Liturgical Press: Minnesota: 2008] pp227-236 gives a good overview of Eucharistic Theology in particular the issue of the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist at that time.

⁶ For a short overview, see Thistleton, A.C., *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids Michigan: 2007], pp 530-1

⁷ Kilmartin, E.J., 'The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium' *Theological Studies* 55 [1994] pp 405-413 demonstrates how even Catholic theologians are challenging the integrity of the development from Aquinas to Trent. Kilmartin is but one, e.g. Hemming whom we quote below.

⁸ Hemming, L.P., 'After Heidegger: Transubstantiation', *Heythrop Journal* XLI [200], p 172

distortion came about due to the zeal of the church trying to impress upon the faithful the importance of the sacrament. The unfortunate outcome was that the bread and the wine became the object reality and not Jesus.⁹ In other words, instead of the bread and the wine becoming the manifestation of the presence of Jesus, the bread and the wine became Jesus. The proverbial theological hair may indeed have been split for we would concede that the intent of such an emphasis is to emphasise the objective reality of Jesus in the sacrament, and therefore emphasise and not lose sight of Jesus. However, the way it was done and its theological matrix and practical outcome means that we suspect that Hemming and Kilmartin are right in their assertions. This skewing of the object reality is not consistent with the biblical witness where it is recognised that God cannot be confined to manmade elements. In addressing this problem the reformers found themselves forced to speak in apophatic terms about the sacrament rather than cataphatic, in an effort to ensure that they are not associated in any way with the Roman position.¹⁰

There are three major reformers who are important for our discussion, as they have had influence on Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) and therefore the English Reformation and our Anglican liturgy. Martin Luther (1483-1546), Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) and the second wave reformer John Calvin (1509-1564). All of the reformers as noted above talk about the sacrament in apophatic terms, i.e. describing what is happening by saying what is not happening. As transubstantiation is the main issue, all the reformers are fixated on reminding us that Jesus is corporeally in heaven at the right hand of God, and therefore unable to be corporeally present in the bread and the wine. This fixation on negative theological description in a very real sense hampers the reformers in giving a clear and consistent *positive* message about what is happening in the sacrament, as they are tied to goal of defeating the doctrine of transubstantiation. They appear to be constrained by a time / space view of the world that reflects their own mortal human experience of time and space. While this is natural, it omits the reality that *Jesus while being fully human is no*

⁹ Some Catholic Theologians such as Hemming have done some interesting analysis of Transubstantiation in the light of other Theologians such as John Macquarrie and others interaction with Heidegger, along with the gender theorist Judith Butler who have been using the term within secular circles. Butlers' use of transubstantiation for Hemming means that we become the proper locus of transubstantiation not the bread and the wine. Hemming, 'After Heidegger', p 182. While we are not able to reflect at length on these issues as they are outside our discussion it is interesting to note the similarities with our observation with the closing comments of Hemming in his discussion about Butler.

¹⁰ Thus we get this constant rebuffing of the "Papist teaching" or "understanding" of transubstantiation which is "repugnant to the word of God" by all the reformers.

longer a mortal human as we are, but His humanity is the humanity we hope for at the general resurrection. *Jesus is truly human, but he takes resurrected, transformed humanity into heaven, not our mortal humanity which is confined to this time and space continuum where we are certainly not able to be in two places at once. What they, the Reformers, have done is make God in their own image, and limited God to their own imagination.* However, all that aside, for the moment, a significant benefit arises out of their critique in that Jesus becomes again the focus of consideration for what is happening at the Lord's Supper, not what is happening to the bread and the wine.

Luther represents the objective end of spectrum of reformed Eucharistic understanding. That is, while he rejects Transubstantiation as expressed by Rome, he nevertheless expresses that Christ is really present in the bread and the wine.¹¹ The objective view holds that it is not dependant on the faith of the recipient for Christ to be present. On the other end of the spectrum is the subjective and is best represented by Zwingli. He opined that it was unnecessary for Christ to be present in the sacrament and the meal is a memorial where nothing of great significance occurs in the elements of bread and wine, and even in the eating and drinking. It is in fact not an ontological, but intellectual event.¹² For Zwingli the emphasis is not on God's action, but on our faith and belief. Calvin as a second wave reformer seems to have attempted a path between the two.¹³ Calvin disagrees with Zwingli and his followers because he claims they fail to show how Jesus is believed to be in the Supper,¹⁴ and moreover, he is confident in asserting that Jesus is the substance of the sacrament and the source of efficacy.¹⁵ He goes further, and states that if Christ is not

¹¹ Stephenson, J.R., 'The Lutheran View' in Smith, G.T., ed., *The Lord's Supper: Five Views*, [IVP Academic: Downers Grove Illinois: 2008], pp 41-58 but especially pp 44ff. Cf. Cross, R., 'Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran Doctrines of Eucharistic Presence: A Brief note towards a Rapprochement', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* V4, No 3, see also Thistleton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, pp 531-2, also Moore – Keish, M.L., *Do this in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology*, [Eerdmans: Michigan: 2008] pp 16-18, and Osterhaven commenting on the conflict between Luther and Zwingli, 'Eating and Drinking Christ,' pp 84f

¹² Richardson, C.C., *Zwingli and Cranmer on the Eucharist [Cranmer Dixit et Contradixit]*, Seabury – Western Theological Seminary: Evanston: Illinois: 1949], pp10-15 and pp 29ff, cf Thistleton pp 533-4. Luther especially rejected Zwingli's assertion that Jn 15 "this is my body" means "this represents my body" as a distortion of the text, see Thistleton p531.

¹³ Moore – Keish, p 116

¹⁴ Osterhaven, p 84

¹⁵ Calvin, J., 'Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ', in *Treatises on the Sacraments: Catechism of the Church of Geneva, forms of prayer and Confession of Faith – Tracts by John Calvin*, [Tr. Henry Beveridge, Christian Focus Publications Ltd: Geanies House Fearn: Ross-shire: Great Britain: 2002], p 169

present in His substance, then “all benefits which we would seek in his supper is annihilated.”¹⁶ This, while moving towards Luther, is certainly not going as far.

So the reformers are not united on their opinions of what happens at the Lord’s Supper, except one, no transubstantiation.¹⁷ The consequence of this diversity of opinion is, the church splinters rather than being reformed, they in effect become schismatic. The reformers are united against Rome but they are not united with one another. For example, in the Swiss church the followers of Zwingli are at odds with the followers of Calvin. This is not the case in England.

The situation in England is very different.¹⁸ First, the country is physically cut off from the continent, and there is a strong head of government who also exercises theological control as well as secular. The reality is, that if Henry had not been so determined to marry Ann Boleyn it is doubtful that a reformation, such as took place in England would have occurred, at least in Henry’s time or if it did, it would have been later, and possibly would not have been so intrusive. It is clear that once Henry succeeds in separating the Church in England from the power of the Pope, he is to be the new power of the church, and while there may be theological changes there will not be in effect any structural changes.¹⁹ The English church retains its threefold orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon, unlike much of the reformed continental church. At the same time many of the Bishops and clergy remain faithful to the Catholic faith, and because they remain in the Church in England their voice is not silenced, and so they continue to exert influence. Finally, as the Archbishop of Canterbury remains the supreme prelate in the country Thomas Cranmer holding that position becomes enormously important in our ongoing study.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p 170, cf also Vander Zee, L.J., *Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper*, [IVP: Downers Grove Ill: 2004], pp45-51, esp. p 49 where there is a very good discussion on the reality that God “does not bargain with us, or give us treasures of salvation for us to distribute” this highlights one of the main opposing points with respect to transubstantiation.

¹⁷ Otten, W., ‘Between Augustinian Sign and Carolingian Reality: The Presence of Ambrose and Augustine in the Eucharistic Debate between Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus of Corbie’ *Dutch Review of Church History*, 2000, Vol 80 Issue 2 pp 137-157.

¹⁸ Neill, S., *Anglicanism* [Mowbray: Exeter: 1977 Reprinted 1989] pp32-41 provides a good overview as to why it is different in England. It is a bit dated, but still helpful.

¹⁹ Avis, *Beyond the Reformation?*, p 134. Here Avis notes that Henry, mainly due to his trying to manipulate the situation ends up with both the power and the problem of the Papacy while invoking conciliar authority which was opposed to the Monarchical Papacy Henry was opposed to. However, it would seem that because the Papacy was modelled on a monarchical style he was comfortable with a power structure he identified with and ended up with a system he was ultimately opposed to in theory, except as it applied to him.

When Cranmer became a Protestant is largely unproven to this day, although a process of development of thought can be discerned.²⁰ Because of this lack of clarity in the conversion process there have been some really fanciful conjecturing about his true motives. C.C. Richardson believed Cranmer was a Zwinglian, however this does not coalesce with Cranmer's own defence before Gardiner.²¹ Indeed Cranmer is able to affirm that Christ is corporeally in heaven at the right hand of God, and the faithful truly feed on Christ Spiritually.²² What is important is that Cranmer's Eucharistic Theology came out of his understanding of Justification by Faith. We see this specifically in the Prayer of Humble Access, "We do not presume to come to this thy table, trusting in our own righteousness...." While it would be terrific to pursue this further it is beyond our scope.²³ Of course, whatever else might be said of him for our purposes in our study, Cranmer's enduring legacy to the Church in England is the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. Both seem to indicate the thought process of Cranmer and where he was taking the nation theologically and liturgically. Cranmer seems to have sought to correct two errors. First, Christ is corporeally in the bread and the wine, which we have noted above was the concern of the reformers, especially Calvin and Zwingli, but is consistent with the Western Church thought and the notion of Eucharist as sacrifice offered by the priest. Second, he also noted that in the New Testament consecration is followed immediately by communion. It is however, uncertain that this practice was continued, even in the early church, and is accordingly unfair to blame the Medieval Church alone for what Cranmer saw as a distortion.²⁴ This New Testament view is not necessarily what happens in the early church. The Sahidic version of the Egyptian Anaphora of St. Basil is written in about the 660's, but is seen as a text written some 300 years prior. Here in this version at least communion does not immediately follow consecration, but is separated by other prayers

²⁰ Brooks, P.N., *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist*, [London: McMillan & Co Ltd: 1965] pp 3-37 is a good overview of the process of conversion, cf with Null, J.A., *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love*, [OUP: New York: 2001], pp1-27, with special reference to pp 7 and 10.

²¹ Richardson, *Zwingli and Cranmer*, also Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine*, p 48 and then cf Cranmer's own words in respect of the Sacrament as "not a bare sign" Cranmer, T., *Writings and Disputations Relative to the Lord's Supper*, The Works of Thomas Cranmer VI, Cox, J.E., ed. [The Parker Society: Regent College Publishing: Vancouver 2001, reprinted from the 1844 edition], p 16 and 15 where he expressly confesses that Christ is verily consumed. This is at odds with Zwingli. In an additional note, this author had occasion to discuss with Ashley Null in person this very issue that Richardson raises, and he commented that he believes that Richardson has over extended himself. We agree.

²² Cranmer, 'Of the Presence of Christ' in *Writings and Disputations*, p 79, cf also Brooks, *Cranmer's Doctrine*, p 100

²³ See Null, *Doctrine of Repentance*, p 26

²⁴ Neill, *Anglicanism*, gives a good overview of this issue esp. pp64-74.

common in today's modern rites.²⁵ What this demonstrates is that academic research is getting better in the area of liturgy than what was probably going on at the time of Cranmer. Again, whatever else might be said, Cranmer was ultimately successful in addressing these two issues, while at the same time continuing to reinforce the point that something really does happen in the Holy Communion, albeit only between the recipient and God.²⁶

What in effect happened in England is both simple and complicated. The church, unlike the continental church remained intact, albeit separated from Rome. That is not to say that there were not opponents to either edition of the Prayer Book. What the church did have was a Prayer Book in English that retained much of the ancient traditions of the Augustine and Patristic period,²⁷ and had a large infusion of Scripture. Indeed, the whole of the Communion Service was infused with Scripture.²⁸ The church retains its threefold clerical structure, and one could genuinely say that the church in England in Henry's time was actually catholic and reformed, and at the same time truly returned to a position where the church was more conciliar, which was also catholic.²⁹ Unfortunately the power politics that accompanied the succession of Mary after Edward, and then Elizabeth ensured that Cranmer's own personal theology would not be able to force its way fully into the English Church.

Whatever our romantic, even idealised belief about the Reformation's influence on the Church in England, for Anglicans today the theological formulation of the Eucharist finds its final form in the Elizabethan Settlement and the Restoration Prayer Book which came into effect on St. Bartholomew's Day 1662. Here in this book is a compromise, and thus the full flowering of the Reformation did not see itself applied to the Church in England as both the Reformed and Catholic view persevered through all the turmoil that ensued

²⁵ Jasper, R.C.D., and Cumming, G.J., *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, 3rd Edition Revised and Enlarged, [Liturgical Press: Minnesota: 1987], pp67-73.

²⁶ We should note here that Cranmer argues for the change of the accidents, not of the substance. See 'Against Transubstantiation' in *Writings and Disputations*, p 327. When one reads through his treatises on Transubstantiation and Real Presence one gets a very real clue that Cranmer believes in Transubstantiation but within the person. I.e. the receiving by faith of the sacrament brings about conversion or change of and in the person.

²⁷ Avid, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology*, [T&T Clark: London: 2007], p 88

²⁸ Packer, J.I., 'The Centrality of Holy Scripture in Anglicanism' in Lewis, D.M., ed., *The Future Shape of Anglican Ministry*, [Regent College Publishing: Vancouver: 2004] pp30-2. Packer's assessment of the Scriptural foundation of the Prayer Book reflects closely that of Stephen Neill.

²⁹ Avis, *Beyond the Reformation?* See esp. p 23

after Elizabeth. This is seen most eloquently in the words spoken at the distribution. Anglicans who are in the Reformed Tradition take a subjective faith view of what happens at Communion and can be content with the words, “*Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.*” The Anglican who has a more objective view can accept and be content with the words, “*The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.*”³⁰ Thus, while there were struggles, especially from the more high churchmen such as William Laud (1537-1645) the prayer book of the Restoration, with Cranmer’s considerable hand, albeit with other subtle influences, was able to serve for some 400 years.

As to the Lord’s Supper, however, it was maintained by people such as Hooker,³¹ and much later Fredrick Meyrick, that “spiritual” did not exclude “real.”³² In this context we turn to the thirty-nine articles of Religion. Article XXVII reinforces that the body and blood of our Lord are truly consumed, but by faith.

So in the Anglican tradition it is true to say that in our understanding of Holy Communion something truly happens, and that understanding can be held from a more objective view point through to the subjective, as long as there is no affirmation of carnal presence for the objective, and an affirmation that spiritual is real for the subjective. That is, no Transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and no Zwinglian position. What we must also say is that for an Anglican the historic threefold orders of ministry, Bishop, Priest and Deacon as set out in the Ordinal is normative. Article XXIII directs that only those “lawfully called and sent” be allowed to minister in the congregation. It would seem that the Ordinal is the only lawful means of sending. The terms of the Ordinal and the words of the Service of Holy Communion in the Book of Common Prayer establish beyond dispute that Anglican Authenticity requires a priest to preside at the Lord’s Supper.

³⁰ Book of Common Prayer Service of Holy Communion.

³¹ Hooker, R., *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity Book 5*, n 67, Electronic Resource <http://solomon.tcpt.alexanderstreet.com.eaccess.library.moore.edu.au/cgi-bin/asp/phil/cpt/getobject.pl?c.597:1.cpt> p365. This is a forceful reaffirmation of the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

³² Meyrick, F., *The Doctrine of the Church of England and the Holy Communion*, [OUP: Oxford: 1885 Reprinted by Bibliobazaar LLC: Charleston: SC] pp 118-123 documents a litany of people explaining Holy Communion in the Anglican understanding from Wycliffe in 1324, through Tyndall 1477, to Usher in 1580 all the way to Golburn in 1885. While they talk about real presence they deny carnal presence and the ability for Christ to be in two places at once.

When we turn to modern times we seem to have a new debate going on. Who can preside at the Lord's Supper? One of the main lines of argument in this debate is to turn to the New Testament and claim that there is no scriptural warrant for an ordained person alone to be eligible to preside.³³ This line of thought has not occurred in a vacuum, but is a line of thought whose trajectory can be traced back to the Continental Reformers, who were not Anglican. It is true that Continental influences came to the English Church, but as we noted above the English Church developed its liturgy in its own way. We should also note that in the English Church this question was never seriously discussed and certainly not from a New Testament perspective. What we are saying, is, this is really not a new question, rather a new milieu and perspective from which to ask. So this gives rise to the question that needs to be addressed: What was the Lord's Supper in the New Testament, and especially in reference to the last meal Jesus had with His disciples?³⁴

Surprisingly hermeneutics do not seem to be applied to this question. It's not surprising for the sixteenth century, but it is surprising for the latter half of last and this century. A rare contribution comes from Anthony Thistleton. He adopts J. Jeremias' view that the most fruitful starting point for understanding the Lord's Supper is the Jewish Passover. In this he notes that the narrative provides a dramatic action by which all the participants in the meal participate in the dramatic action. He completes his review by noting that the Mishna requires all such participants to regard themselves as if they came forth from Egypt that very night.³⁵ If Thistleton is right, and we think he is, the Passover meal is not celebrated as a memorial, but as a participation in that which is to occur, and anticipating God's action, despite not knowing what will necessarily take place.³⁶ When we apply this principle back to the Supper, it effectively eliminates the Zwinglian position. The Passover was to be eaten before the angel of the Lord passed over the nation of Egypt, so they didn't do anything, except eat the meal, but their participation in the meal meant they reaped the benefits, freedom.

³³ Bolt, P.G., Thompson, M., Tong, R., eds. *The Lords Supper in Human Hands: Who Should Administer?*, [ACR/ACL Camperdown NSW 2008] is a collection of papers canvassing this very issue in the Diocese of Sydney. It was sent to every Bishop in Australia and apparently has been sent to certain overseas Bishops as well, but to who is hard to verify.

³⁴ Dunn, J.D.G., *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making VI*, [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids Michigan: 2003] has a good discussion on this issue especially pp 230ff and pp 771ff.

³⁵ Thistleton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, pp 526-7

³⁶ *Ibid*, p528

When we turn to the Lord's Supper, the most appropriate matrix within which to understand what is happening is the Jewish Passover. Jesus and His disciples eat a Passover meal, albeit with new meaning given to it. The bread which is blessed is the body of Jesus, the cup of blessing is the blood of Jesus, both of which will be given up the next day on the cross, and will result in a New Covenant being forged between God and his people. The Passover was a covenant sealed in the bodily sacrifice of a lamb and its blood painted on the doorposts in Egypt. So the New Covenant will be sealed by bodily sacrifice and the shedding of blood, but this time, no lamb, but Jesus. By eating and drinking the disciples participate in anticipation of what will occur on the cross, just as the nation of Israel participated in anticipation of what will occur when the angel of death passes over. In both cases it is able to be argued that neither sets of participants had any idea of what was to come when they were involved in the meal, they just did it. Both events will result in liberation: first time a nation, the second, the whole of humanity who put their faith and trust in this crucified Jesus. Both events take place under the covering of a body, and shedding of blood. Understood in this context it can be seen that in the Lord's Supper something does indeed happen.

With this in mind we return to the modern debate here in Australia. One of the contributors to the Sydney Diocese booklet is Dr. John Woodhouse. He is a former Principal of Moore Theological College (2002-2013) here in Sydney, which is the training college for Anglican Clergy in Sydney.³⁷ Dr. Woodhouse notes many Evangelical concerns about the issue. He objects to the beliefs that there is a difference between a layperson and an ordained person, the validity of the Lord's Supper depending on who administers it, and seemingly higher qualifications needed for administering the Lord's Supper and not for preaching the word of God.³⁸ He also draws our attention to what he asserts is Cranmer's desire to play down the role of the Priest at the Lord's Supper.³⁹ On this last point we would contend that his position is too simplistic a representation of Cranmer's position and of the effect of the Prayer Book. It is true that Cranmer desired to play down the role of the Priest in the Supper, but only as it pertains to the issue of Transubstantiation, in which the priest has the role of "making Jesus on the altar."

³⁷ We are concentrating on the Woodhouse article here. It is the clearest and others in the book pertinent to our discussion follow the same general line as he.

³⁸ Woodhouse, J., 'Lay Administration of the Lord's Supper: A Change to stay the same?' in Bolt, P.G., et al. *The Lord's Supper in Human Hands*, p 8

³⁹ P 12

However it is not true to then say as Woodhouse appears to be inferring that the priest is no longer necessary to the Supper, or that the Prayer Book infers such a belief. Cranmer actually required, and it is there clearly in the Prayer Book, for the priest to preside and consecrate. Another proponent of the Lay Presidency debate makes an interesting note about this issue. Dr. Kevin Giles, a Sydney trained and ordained priest now living in Melbourne notes, “To the reformers, both lay presidency and lay preaching were dangerous and revolutionary ideas.”⁴⁰ We believe that Woodhouse is drawing a very long bow here.

When one reads through the Woodhouse article one is struck by the very Zwinglian nature of the theology expressed. This is highlighted by his Fiction 2 where the matter addressed is the belief that the Lord’s Supper is the essential expression of the whole community life.⁴¹ Commentators such as M.J. Townsend argues that the Agape meal and the Eucharist were significant expression of the community identity especially when they met. Townsend further notes that the Agape meal and the Eucharist were initially held together, and when the separation occurred is uncertain.⁴² What Townsend shows is that it is not true to say that the Lord’s Supper is not essential to community life, especially within the witness of the New Testament. When we return to Cranmer while a Protestant as we noted above he was not trying to reinvent the church, but reform it. If he was trying to reinvent it he would have, for example done away with ordination and the threefold order as happened on the Continent. He did not do so. Therefore we may be more comfortable in surmising they were important and significant in his theology. We suspect that Woodhouse is posing questions Cranmer would never have asked.

We might also suppose that Woodhouse is somewhat inconsistent when he states “While oversight of the congregation is still rightly entrusted to fully trained and recognised ordained persons, competent lay persons now share in the public ministry of the word.”⁴³ He further opines that the priest is not essential for any other part of the community life and that nothing happens at ordination.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Giles, K.N., *Is a Priest Needed? The Debate about Lay Presidency of the Eucharist*. Unpublished, undated paper. 17 pages including Bibliography. p 9

⁴¹ Op.cit. p17

⁴² Townsend, M.J., ‘Exit the Agape?’ *Expository Times*, Vol 39 Oct 1978-Sept 1979 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark: 1979] pp 356-361

⁴³ Op. cit., pp 12-13

⁴⁴ Op. cit., p 12

Maintaining that oversight of a congregation is only reserved for ordained persons seems to be contradictory to his stated positions above. It would be more natural to assume that because something does happen at ordination that is the basis on which an ordained person, not a layperson is required for congregational oversight. Taking the matter further, it might be argued that a person who denies any sacerdotalism in ordination is, if they also seek to make a fundamental dichotomy between lay and ordained persons, implicitly advocating it. Moreover, for Woodhouse to maintain any degree of consistency with his argument would need to allow that a fully and properly qualified lay person could have oversight of a parish, because on the Woodhouse view there is no valid distinction between the ordained and the unordained as nothing happens in ordination. It is simply an issue of licensing.

Another view taken on Lay Presidency is as we have already noted above, Dr. Giles. His reflection on the wider debate in Anglican and Roman Catholic theological context takes a broader view.⁴⁵ Perhaps his most helpful insight is in relation to the Roman Catholic work on reshaping of the ministry model we currently have to reflect the position which sometimes applied in the very early church whereby local leaders had hands laid on them by the Bishop so as to become a local Eucharistic minister, which ceased to be effective when the person moved on.⁴⁶ This is helpful in our discussion because, as Giles notes, it does and did matter who presides at the Lord's Supper. This is not something we note in the Woodhouse argument. As convincing as Giles' arguments are, his approach would still require the reshaping of ministry as Anglican have it now. On the other hand a Woodhousean approach would seem to be just get on with it without regard to the Anglican Ordinal "as an authoritative standard of clerical orders,"⁴⁷ or the Book of Common Prayer "as a true and authoritative standard of worship and prayers."⁴⁸

The modern debate on Lay Administration of the Lord's Supper as exemplified by the members of the Sydney Diocese and others like Kevin Giles throws down a real challenge to the Anglican Church, not just in Australia but throughout the Communion. Whatever the validity of their arguments we would make a few comments. As noted above Anglican

⁴⁵ Op. cit., pp 8-15

⁴⁶ Op. cit., 12-15

⁴⁷ The Jerusalem Declaration paragraph 7. <http://fca.net/dec.html>

⁴⁸ The Jerusalem Declaration paragraph 6. <http://fca.net/dec.html>

Theology of the Lord's Supper holds that we truly eat and drink of Christ. If we apply Thistleton's hermeneutic then we can also say that we participate as if on that night with our Lord and the Disciples. The disciples participated in the cross, in anticipation. Jesus goes to the cross alone, but our participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus is through the meal and so we are participants in the means of forgiveness of sin, and we become the forgiveness of sins people through our participation in the Supper. What this means is we are doing something highly significant, and in the need to preserve its significance we need to regulate it. While it may not be perfect the current threefold ministry as expressed in the ordinal is authentically Anglican, reformed and catholic. There is no other organisational structure for ministry that can make a similar claim.

In the Lay Presidency debate as exemplified by Woodhouse and Giles, three important mistakes are made. They associate the words of institution as the only priestly part of the communion service. They mistakenly believe that new biblical and historical insights to the early church practice of presidency of the Lord's Supper invalidate current Anglican practice. They seem to think that a return to early church Eucharistic practice will be the pure form.

First, it has never been the catholic practice to see the Priest as only required for the words of institution, absolution and blessing. Properly understood, catholic Eucharistic theology has always seen a priest as essential to the presidency of the Communion Service in its entirety. The priest never operates as the focal point in that he is the object of the service. Rather, he leads the worshipping congregation. His ability to delegate parts of the service to lay people does not limit or abrogate his authority or role as president in the service. The priest leads the people in worshipping God and his words in addressing God, especially in the words of Institution are always in the third person plural. Thus to denigrate the role of visiting clergy as if coming to the service in the absence of the regular priest as if to say some "magic word" is a gross misrepresentation of catholic Eucharistic theology. I would personally never accept an invitation to lead a service under such circumstances.

Second, it is also naïve to think that going back to early church practice, whatever that might be, is returning to so called true Eucharistic practice. Catholic Eucharistic theology

which the Anglican Church professes, grew and developed over time. To return to “early church” practice does not guarantee such development will not occur again. We can’t reset this.

Third, to assume new and biblical historical insights invalidates current Anglican practice with respect to the Eucharist is fallacious. To say that these new insights invalidate current practice would be like a group of Baptists coming to the conclusion that infant baptism is lawful and sanctioned by the New Testament. If they then wanted to impose this new found theological insight they would find resistance, because the Baptist Church practice is to baptise adults. It is what gives the Baptist Church part of its identity. It may not be perfect, but it has been the position of the Baptist Church for a long time. A small group of people cannot make such an important directional change decision for the wider group. It is the same problem that the reformers had. Individuals having their own ideas about things, fracturing the church. The church catholic has always made its mind up as a collective, not by one small group, even as large as the Sydney Diocese is, it is still one small part of the Anglican Communion and it cannot make a decision for the rest of the Communion unilaterally. The English Reformation gave us a unique opportunity to rectify defects in its Eucharistic Theology. The reformers, and Cranmer specifically for Anglicans did see much at fault and rectified it. A Priest presiding at the Eucharist was not one of those defects.

With this in mind, we feel compelled to say that Lay Administration of the Lord’s Supper is not consistent with an Anglican Identity at this time. This is because, at the moment the Anglican Church affirms that something does happen at the Lord’s Supper and that which happens is holy and a mystery. Therefore it does matter who officiates, a position that is reflected both in the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal, which for an Anglican at this time is foundational with respect to the Anglican Identity.