

ACR sells out immediately

Last October's Synod has generated a number of important issues for discussion throughout our diocese from the grass-roots up, which dominate this issue of ACR. The important role of the laity in the proceedings was very interesting.

The October issue of ACR was so well-received that we had orders far in excess of the number of copies we had printed. More copies of this issue have been printed but the trade-off is that we've had to lose four pages. We are grateful to those friends who have made donations to allow another

Record to appear—enough for *half* of this issue. But we will need further donations if future issues are to be made possible (as a rough guide, to get one paper to each reader costs us one dollar, plus postage when needed).

Synod distances itself from Primate's remarks

After a vigorous debate, Synod voted to rebuke the Primate of Australia and Archbishop of Melbourne, Keith Rayner, for remarks concerning homosexuality made during his sermon to the Melbourne synod. The final motion stated that the Sydney Synod "expresses its concern about, and distances itself from, public statements by the Primate in his Synod sermon 1998 and his press release of October 8, 1998 to the effect that Anglicans should reconsider the received tradition of the church teaching on homosexuality and his seemingly giving to so-called 'tradition' a level of authority alongside that of the scriptures".

Few speakers disagreed with the motion. Amendments attempting to allow the 'concern' to be expressed by our Archbishop privately, or suggesting the Synod make no comment at all were resoundingly defeated. Speakers drew attention to the Primate's method as an issue of particular concern. His sermon displayed a shift away from the primacy of the Scriptures and an interpretive method which gave far too much weight to human experience and too little to God's revelation. Archbishop Rayner's sermon had argued that just as the church has already followed society when it changed its perspective on

remarriage after divorce and women's ordination, so too the church should rethink its position in view of society's changed attitudes to homosexuality. An amendment seeking Synod's repudiation of any suggestion that the endorsement of women's ordination and the endorsement of homosexuality relied on a common hermeneutic was resoundingly defeated. The Synod asked Archbishop Goodhew to call on the Primate and all Australian bishops "for a renewed submission to the sovereign authority of scripture and for a reaffirmation of our historic teaching and discipline in relation to marriage and celibacy".

Synod profits from lay persistence

During the question times in the first three days of Synod, the dogged persistence of one layman in particular became obvious to members of the house. Motivated by a desire to see the continuance of effective ministry in his community, this man had questions for which he wanted answers. The 1998 Synod was the first occasion when the lay representative of St Andrew's, Bondi Beach was present. This provisional parish came into existence on December 31, 1996. An article in *Southern Cross Newspaper* (March 1997) announced the commencement of the Rev Stephen Bligh as the curate-in-charge, with the accolade that "it would be harder to find someone more perfect for this new ministry". But the article also revealed that all was not well in the parish. The creation of the provisional parish involved the loss of territory from St Matthew's, Bondi. Many parishioners were 'deeply hurt' by the procedures. Bishop Peter Watson was quoted as saying "I took the decision not to bring them into discussions". The Bishop also alluded to a family welfare group attached to the parish who were about to leave the church, but whom the Diocese wished to remain because they had invaluable contact with the community. By the time of his first appearance as Lay Representative for this new parish, Mr Brian Gaetjens had no curate-in-charge to sit next to during Synod. Exactly one year after the announcement of the new venture, *Southern Cross Newspaper* (March 1998) reported that the Bondi Beach experiment was at an end and Stephen Bligh's licence had not been renewed.

The reasons for the non-renewal of Mr Bligh's licence were not reported and there appears to have been nothing about his ministry to account for it. In fact, a majority of the parishioners of St Andrew's had petitioned for him to remain, saying that his ministry had been well received and citing as evidence, in part, that church attendances and offertories had more than doubled in 1997 over those of 1996. In its 1998 report, *Southern Cross Newspaper* noted that Bishop Watson had no comment, and "no one was speaking publicly about the causes of the rift", before suggesting that the welfare group was apparently the focus of the difficulties. The to-and-froing between the lay questioner and the President across several days left the Synod aware that problems of some complexity had existed down by the seaside for some time. Some aspects of Mr Gaetjens's earlier questions were not fully answered, due to the fact that they did not meet the criteria that govern the asking of questions in Synod. When another lengthy question seemed to be heading in the same direction, Paul Cohen, the Rector of Malabar, to the surprise of the Synod, moved and gained a suspension of Standing Orders so that the question could be fully answered. Mr Cohen himself had been impressed by Mr Gaetjens's persistence and had realised that the questions being raised were important enough to be of some interest to the Synod. On the first day Mr Gaetjens had placed a four-part motion on the Synod agenda. He says that his aim in doing so was to inform the Synod members, to encourage prayer, to assist

accountability in a genuine attempt to sensibly resolve the Bondi Beach issue, and to promote the evangelical ministry of his church. The motion asked the Synod to note the difficulties of the newly formed parish—that it has "limited income, effectively has no use of its rectory building, has no current minister, and Vision 2001 funding has been withdrawn" and to pray for the congregation. The final part asked the Archbishop "to appoint a [permanent] sound evangelical minister as soon as possible", which was no slight upon either the former curate-in-charge or upon the three subsequent part-time ministers. It reflected the frustration of the congregation that nearly 12 months after the advice that Stephen Bligh was leaving, there was still no clear word as to the future supply of long-term ministry. The third part revealed the difficulties relating to the welfare group, who are occupying the rectory without any written agreement. It asked the Synod to direct "the Property Trust to accede to the Churchwardens' unanimous request for a licence agreement for the use of the rectory by the non-parochial organisation being allowed rent-free for the period to December 31, 1999". This compromise was proposed to allow a cooling off period during which a more permanent solution could be negotiated. Realising that the motion would be so far down the agenda that it would never be put (correctly, as it turned out), Mr Gaetjens decided to use the opportunity afforded by the question time in an endeavour to ensure that the Synod was alerted to the long-standing problems of the congregation at Bondi Beach. Knowing

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The Australian CHURCH RECORD

February 1, 1999 Issue 1878

"As a supporter of the *Record* since the 1930s I was absolutely thunderstruck when it ceased publication. In 1995 Broughton Knox suggested that I try to revive it, but I was 79 at that stage! When I heard that it had been re-launched I was delighted. There is no doubt about it, we need an independent evangelical newspaper." Rex Meyer, Editor 1966-74.

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Challenging relationships

Alison Blake

A close friend who worked at the bank told me, “I could enjoy working if it wasn’t for the customers!” And she’s not the only one. I had similar thoughts about my patients when I was nursing and whenever I’ve shared this comment with others—teachers, hairdressers or sales people—everyone agrees.

Local churches aren’t immune either. Often it’s the people and relationships that make it hard work to be a Christian. Of course there are many occasions when fellow Christians are a great encouragement, but I also know that we disappoint, frustrate and hurt each other.

Dealing with a Christian brother or sister whom we feel particularly hurt or distressed by is not easy. So how should we? What is a Christ-honouring way of responding to the disappointments and frustrations of everyday life amongst the people of God? We should strive as far as possible to speak with the person with whom we struggle. Perhaps we may need to get help from another godly Christian to deal with the problem. If hurt is commonplace in our local fellowship, then certainly we need to speak, with truthfulness and gentleness, to those in leadership about the situation.

Rather than being disappointed with the Christians he wrote to, the

apostle Peter, with infectious enthusiasm, described them as a people, a priesthood, a nation which, because of God’s mercy in Christ, now belonged to God (1 Pet 2:9-11). He argued that each of them was a chosen and precious “living stone”, which God was building into a spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5). Paul, too spoke about God building his people into a household (Eph 2:19), and ultimately into a purified people, fully like Christ (Eph 4:11-13, Tit 2:14).

Notice that it’s not our job to find ways of making ourselves into a people. We are a people because Jesus Christ himself made us his people when he redeemed us and bought our forgiveness (Tit 2:13-14). It is like a Christian friend of mine who is the adopted daughter in her earthly family. She didn’t choose her adopted family, her parents chose her, and she inherited her brother and sister. Despite the inevitable family fireworks, she is very grateful to them. As Christians, she and I have been adopted into a family with Christ as our head and our fellow believers as our brothers and sisters. Our heavenly ID card says that we belong to him and to his people.

So why the disappointment with each other? In Ephesians Paul describes us as infants, struggling to grow up and take off the filthy clothes of our old self (Eph 4:22). At times we’d rather pursue our old sinful desires,

thoughts and behaviours (Eph 2:3). It’s not surprising that we find it hard work to get on with each other.

However, God is at work in us, individually and as a household, creating a building in which his own Spirit lives (Eph 2:21-22). He is now working in our lives, re-creating and re-shaping his adopted children to be like him (Eph 1:5), holy and righteous.

And God’s workshop for building Christ-likeness is the body of believers. Paul and Peter consistently challenge and encourage us to grow our godliness, not so much by the tasks we do but by the way we treat each other. When I face disagreeable Christians, I have an opportunity to put on Christ-like compassion and kindness; to speak wholesome, truthful words that benefit people in their walk with Christ (Eph 4:20-32). Disputes, disagreements and misunderstandings are an opportunity to maintain and live gospel truth without ongoing anger, bitterness, rage and malice (Eph 4:15). Now there’s a challenge! The household of God is to be the place where God’s family learns how to conduct itself and gospel truth is preserved (1 Tim 3:14-15).

Have you noticed how the fruits of God’s Spirit are all to do with how we treat others? Or that the long list of qualities that I am to add to my faith are only really grown when I get involved in ‘challenging’ relationships



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(2 Pet 1:5-8)? So I need to get in step with what God is doing in my life, seeking and taking opportunities to relate to my Christian family and live with them in a way that pleases my Lord (Col 1:10).

This is exactly what our world needs to see: different and difficult people united by Christ (Jn 17:20-23). Yes, it’ll be hard work, but I’ll hang in there with my church family—not just tolerating them, or avoiding them, but serving them for their good. After all, won’t this point people to the Lord Jesus? ●

Synod profits from lay persistence

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that there is no procedure for clarifying, or disagreeing with, the answers given to questions, and that he couldn’t ask the same question twice, the Bondi Beach Lay Representative came to Synod armed with a list of questions, and with the resolve to ask them progressively over the three days. And ask he did, aided by the Rector of Malabar’s suspension of Standing Orders on the third day.

Mr Gaetjens feels that it is important not to abuse the privilege of question time. Some laity would feel that there is a great deal of difficulty getting heard in Synod, and question time is “a useful procedure if you want an issue raised, especially since motions never seem to get up”. Since Bondi Beach had no minister, and because his questions were by no means frivolous, Brian Gaetjens felt compelled to speak on behalf of the parish so that Synod might be aware of their difficulties.

He describes the situation over the welfare group as being at an impasse. During 1997, the welfare group completed its incorporation as a non-parochial organisation. As a result, there

needs to be a lease or licence agreement to regularise its use of the Bondi Beach rectory. The Property Trust cannot sign an agreement without the church’s consent. The welfare group want a long-term licence and the Standing Committee has requested the parish to accede. The parish council

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has rejected this, especially while the long-term future of the parish is uncertain. But, as a compromise, it has suggested a rent-free licence until the end of 1999 while the long-term situation is negotiated. The Standing Committee has apparently directed the Property Trust not to do what the parish council wishes them to do. The end result is the welfare group is still in the rectory with no signed agreement and the church has no usable rectory in which to house a minister, no stable ministry, an income well below normal requirements, and limited funding for any ministry (Vision 2001 money ceased with Stephen Bligh, although application has been made to Regional Council for some funding for the

recently appointed temporary minister). What began as a church plant with great promise, appears to have rapidly stalled. Having the stand-off broken would be one step in getting the ministry back on track.

Brian Gaetjens received no adverse response to his persistent questioning;

no-one expressed to him that he had wasted the Synod’s time; any comments he received were in order to find out more information about the situation in Bondi or to assure him of prayer. This same Synod debated for a long time before eventually overturning a motion seeking to remove questions from the floor. If it had succeeded, future Synods would have been denied such fine examples of lay persistence. The persistence of the Lay Representative of Bondi Beach ensured that Synod has now become aware of the difficulties of that newly formed congregation. No doubt this will not be the last we hear of this matter. ●

Standing Order 27(1), (2) and (4) requires that a question should:

- relate to any motion or matter connected with the business of Synod or any committee, board or commission of the Synod itself, or established by the Synod
- contain no statement of fact (without leave of Synod)
- offer no argument or opinion
- make no inference or imputation
- use no disrespectful or offensive language (in the opinion of the President)

Robert Tong, in *The Synod Survival Manual*, also suggests that a question should not seek a legal opinion.

THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH RECORD

The Australian Church Record is an evangelical newspaper in the Reformed Anglican tradition of the historic creeds and the 39 Articles of Faith, and the standard of teaching and practice in the Book of Common Prayer. We accept the Scriptures as God’s word written, and as containing all things necessary for salvation and the final authority in all matters of faith and behaviour.

Publisher:

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Australian Church Record
(ACN 000 071 438)

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Editorial

Bible in the background, Spirit in the foreground

Sydney Synod’s ongoing concern

Despite the clear affirmation by its Synod of the sovereignty of the Bible in thinking through the issue of active homosexuality, the choice to stand on ‘Bible alone’ is now beginning to be challenged by ‘Bible plus experience’ in Sydney. The members of Synod—lay as well as clergy—need to maintain and strengthen their resolve to champion the Bible alone as authoritative.

Two statements by Archbishop Harry Goodhew show that the matter of Scriptural authority is now in the balance—the advice of the Australian Bishops given to the Appellate Tribunal on the matter of lay administration of the Lord’s Supper, and the Archbishop’s Presidential address.

Experience as revelation

As reported in the last edition of *ACR*, the Australian House of Bishops’ submission to the Appellate Tribunal on lay and diaconal presidency acknowledged that the threefold order of Bishops, Priests and Deacons as a *normative* order was not revealed to the Church in Holy Scripture. According to the submission it had been revealed through the theological writings and synods in the centuries following the writing of the New Testament. The report also asserts that in the same time, after the writings of the New Testament, it was also revealed to the Church that “only a bishop or priest could celebrate the Holy Communion”.

This is an appeal not to ‘Bible alone’, but to ‘Bible plus experience’, in this case, the historical experience of the church. It was also the unanimous submission of the diocesan bishops of Australia, including Archbishop Goodhew. Only Tony Nichols of North West Australia, who dissented from the reasoning of the report, and Ian George, Bruce Wilson and Peter Chiswell—the three bishops on the Appellate Tribunal to whom the submission was addressed—didn’t approve the report. Until Archbishop Goodhew also dissents from this agreed statement, he has accepted a method of doing theology contrary to the evangelical faith.

Bible clear, but open to another approach

In his synod address the Archbishop again addressed the question of the ordination of women to the presbyterate. In outlining the options he affirmed that “remaining as we are satisfies the plain reading of 1 Timothy 2 and accords with the long tradition of our Church”. However, in seeking to make his own position clear, Archbishop Goodhew invoked two distinctive ideas long associated with the belief that as an interpreter of Scripture, the church is a source of revelation. He said:

“In our communion we are in a process of ‘reception’.” (p.12)

“While I appreciate the clarity which allows others to speak for one position or the other with unqualified conviction I cannot. I have prayed for a growing consensus that might indicate the mind of God.” (p.13)

And:

“I find myself challenged to be open to consider a different approach. The God-blessed ministries of women who, in the absence of men, have founded and sustained churches cannot be ignored.” (p.12)

“Reception” is a technical term taken from Roman Catholicism and now quite common in Anglican circles. It is the belief that when a particular interpretation of Holy Scripture, or even

a tradition outside of Scripture, has been well received in the wider church then it is a sign that God himself has revealed it. (This is, for example, according to Keith Rayner’s Synod address, the way the ordination of women emerged, as well as being the basis for his appeal for the church to rethink the issue of homosexuality).

It is not, of course, consensus in the church which reveals the mind of God, but the Bible; as Articles 6, 20 and 21 of the Thirty-Nine Articles make clear. It is the Apostles who reveal the mind of Christ, not the church (1 Cor 1 and 2). In a similar way, “openness” is the language of the appeal to experience which has been characteristic of theological liberalism.

It needs to be pointed out that the Archbishop has also consistently stated that he wants to affirm women’s ministry in biblical terms. ‘Bible alone’ and ‘Bible plus experience’ are thus competing with each other.

So what has happened, and, is in fact ‘Bible alone’ true, or ought it now be seen as outmoded?

Bible in background, Spirit in foreground?

British scholar Tom Wright speaks of God’s revelation, his self-disclosure, as a five act play. Within the pages of Scripture we have the first four acts, while the church over the last 2000 years has been writing the last, the fifth act (with the writing of the New Testament as Scene 1). In effect, this influential view places the Bible in the background, back 2000 years, with the Spirit in the foreground. The spirit is now at work in the church’s interpretation and teaching about the first four acts, in order to write the last act.

But this is the error of Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism—it splits the Word of God from the Spirit of God. Roman Catholicism locates the Spirit in the church, Pentecostalism focuses almost entirely upon the Spirit in the individual believer. By contrast, the New Testament emphasizes the conjunction of the Spirit and the Word, although endorsing the presence of the Spirit in the believer. Jesus promised that the coming Spirit would not speak on his own authority, but would take what belonged to Christ and declare it to the disciples. “He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn 16:13-15). (Note that this is regularly and mistakenly interpreted as being a promise to all Christians, or the whole church, rather than the apostles). The characteristic work of the Spirit is speaking, speaking the gospel to and through the apostles, and thus, through the New Testament, to us. Indeed, when we preach the gospel, the Spirit preaches it (1 Pet 1:12). Further, the church and the individual believer only have the Spirit as they have Christ, Christ clothed with his gospel, by faith (Rom 8:1-17; Jn 14-17).

For this reason, the Bible is not just an historic book, but also the contemporary speech of the Spirit, the speaking of God directly to us in the here and now. So, the writer to the Hebrews, in quoting centuries old texts from Psalms and Jeremiah states: “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says...” (Heb 3:7-11, citing Ps 95:7-11). Because the Spirit speaks the written words of God to us, when we read or hear that written word we have God talking to us in person.

This fundamental insight helped our sixteenth-century Reformers frame the doctrine of ‘Bible alone’. By ‘Bible alone’ they meant that when read through the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ the Bible was sufficient, clear and unified for authoritatively revealing God’s mind to us regarding living a life pleasing to God. That is, in comparison to what Archbishop Cranmer called “the stinking puddles of the traditions of men”, the Scriptures are fully and solely trustworthy.

The Spirit illuminates our minds

The Spirit’s role in the giving and hearing of Holy Scripture ensures that, first, the apostolic word *is* trustworthy, it really does reveal to us the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:1-16; Jn 14-16), and secondly that God’s word actively illuminates our minds (Isa 11:2, Eph 1:18), drives out the darkness as it does its job of recreating us in the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:17).

God does not promise that the Spirit will teach us grammar and syntax, but he does promise that as we apply our hearts and minds to understanding and appropriating Scripture we really are dealing with his own living word and in it he is dealing directly with us.

‘Bible plus experience’ inevitably means that experience is viewed as the latest word of God, and the biblical word of God as but the earlier, background word. Experience will thus always triumph over Bible.

What then is the role of our experience as we bring it to the Bible? It is the same with any object we are seeking to understand. We start with our own assumptions and questions, but as we “listen” to the object of our inquiry, we have to learn to change our questions and assumptions so as they fit the object under investigation. That is, if we wish to know it on its terms, not ours. In the realm of reading and interpreting Scripture, the Bible calls this “repentance”, which embraces not just our minds but also our hearts. That is, God—through his active and enscriptured word—changes us.

Laity judge doctrine

One of the foundational insights of the Reformation was that lay people could, and should, judge doctrine. It is imperative that those who elect our lay representatives ask themselves the same question they ask about ordained ministers: is this person of uncompromising evangelical integrity? Because evangelicalism is a matter of personal trust in the enscripturated promises of God, the ‘half-life’ of its strength is only one generation. Deficient decisions now mean our sons and daughters will only inherit fragility. ●

Donations needed and welcome!


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This edition cost around \$5000, and except for layout, printing and postal distribution, was produced by voluntary labour.

Sydney needs

The remarkable unity of Sydney Synod

he fairly minor coverage received by the Sydney Synod in the Sydney press was predictable enough. The world seems to love to speak of the church divided.

Before Synod began, we were told that “Historic settlements are expected on some major outstanding issues but new divisions threaten to open in the Sydney diocese when the Anglican Synod opens next week”; and we were reminded that “Historically, Sydney Anglicanism has been faction-ridden”.

As Synod got under way, there was mention of “the divisive issue of the ordination of women” and the suggestion that Archbishop Goodhew

being open to a different approach “may put talk of a split back on the agenda”.

By the end of the first week, the division over women had become a division between clergy and laity. Although Archbishop Goodhew said he would not oppose ordination of women if the synod so requested, it had not asked him to consent and, according to the *Herald*, “the clergy can be expected to try to keep this situation intact. But will this now strain their relations with the laity?”. This was backed up by the assertion that “in the pews, support for women priests is growing” whereas, “the clergy remain adamantly opposed”.

But the facts are that both clergy and laity have consistently voted against the ordination of women. This was acknowledged in the same article, whose figures reveal that the laity who voted against the ordination of women in 1996 represent 32.8% of the house, and the clergy who voted with them represent only 23.6% of the house. The article also acknowledged that “many of the clergy most strongly opposed to women’s ordination head parishes bursting with people attending their services”. Presumably this means there must be a lot of laity happy with clergymen holding such views.


Despite the media’s persistent

efforts to create the impression of division, the Synod was, in fact, remarkably unified. Of course, there was plenty of opportunity for vigorous discussion between those of different points of view. Of course, some lost debates and others won. But, at the same time, this Synod stood firmly by its previous decisions, and in the traditional Sydney stand for the Bible—even when such a stand was under challenge from strong and powerful people. Several members of the proceedings of this Synod expressed to the *Record* that this Synod showed itself to be “strongly evangelical”. This could not have been achieved by the clergy alone. ●

Sydney needs its lay people

Philip Gerber

*It has been said that in most Anglican Dioceses the Bishop’s pronouncements are authoritative, but in the Diocese of Sydney the Archbishop’s declarations the basis for the start of a discussion. One reason for such a comment is the strong role which the laity have played in the Diocese of Sydney down through the years. Early in the fledgling colony of New South Wales, provision was made for the election of three churchwardens in each parish, one by the pewholders, one by the parochial property trustees and one by the minister. They had wide temporal powers and were invariably men of importance in the district and colony. Land holders, merchants, civil servants, lawyers (even judges)—the roll of churchwardens read like an Anglican Who’s Who, even though most of them, in the early days, would not have qualified for such an office back in England. (Judd and Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, 1987, p. 37)*

ne of the first things the first Anglican Bishop of Sydney, Bishop William Broughton, did was to set up a lay Diocesan Committee to raise funds for church extension. This effectively started the development of a form of synodical government which ensured that the voice and power of the laity remains significant in the Diocese of Sydney.

The recent increase in lay involvement in Church decision making has been attributed to three factors. The first is theological: there is a belief that lay people are not the passive observers in a church which is clergy led and

clergy run. Instead they’re seen as the life-spring of every Christian community, with great gifts and responsibility in every area.

Second, nominal Christianity is becoming rarer in a secularised society. Remaining church members have a renewed, vigorous and perhaps defensive commitment. They want involvement and take a greater interest in decisions which affect their church life than perhaps was the case in the past.

Third, the increased sophistication in church administration and management often requires technical skills in law, accounting, computer sciences, so that professional lay people with these skills are much sought after for decision-making responsibilities on committees, boards and councils. (Judd and Cable, p. 277)

The dilemma for many is whether the time spent on Synod, committees, boards and councils is worth the effort in spiritual terms when one considers the unlimited needs in Sunday Schools, youth leadership, small groups, personal evangelism and innumerable other gospel activities. I want to propose three reasons why lay men and women should seriously consider committing themselves to contributing to the Synod and other denominational governmental processes.

Representation

When judges sum up to a jury, they often refer to the fact that the 12 jurors, as non-lawyers, bring into the court room their 12 sets of life experiences, a combined knowledge

and wisdom that no single judge could ever hope to have. The jury has a unique multi-faceted perspective on the case being decided. In the same way the lay members of Synod and other boards and committees bring to the government of the church perspectives which clergy alone could not hope to have. The common sense, continuing contact with the world and daily experience of the laity as a group is extremely important. For this reason, the Synod needs to draw broadly from as many walks of life, classes and races as possible. The fact that our churches already represent a good cross-section of our communities makes this easy—if only all kinds of people are encouraged to consider standing come Synod Rep election time. The collective experience of our laity should be significant in ensuring that the outlook and methods of the church remain always focused outwards, towards the world which so desperately needs the saving message of Jesus which the church preaches.

Skills

With the increasing complication of the context in which ministry is conducted as we approach the twenty-first century, the benefits brought to the government of the denomination by the many gifts and the training which the laity have are essential. Few people would have the skills to overhaul a car, balance a budget, write a press release, design a building and cater for a 100-person dinner on their own. The body of Christ needs the gifts of all its members and so does the

Synod. Often the world of Synod is so foreign to the world lay people normally inhabit, that they can ask questions which wouldn’t occur to those who have become familiar with its machinations. They broaden the debate during Synod and help to provide a grounding for synod decisions in a part of the real world about which others may have only the slightest clue. Each calling has something to contribute towards leading the denomination through the mine-field of the modern world.

Support

What has been said so far may give the impression that a low view is held of the importance of the ordained Ministry of the word and sacrament. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is trite to say that sound, well trained Bible preaching, teaching and pastoring is at the absolute core of what we evangelical Christians are about. However, without the support of a theologically literate and committed laity the strength of evangelicalism would soon be lost to liberalism or sentimentalism. It has been said that the four hallmark pillars of evangelicalism are the Word, the Cross, conversion and a role in the world. A well informed laity is essential in ensuring that the clergy are held to their duty to persevere with the first three. The same laity must themselves give the impetus for the fourth.

In recent times it has been said, particularly in the context of the Lay Presidency at Communion debate, that there is a tendency

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godly laity

Keeping your focus in Synod

Joanna Warren

Joanna Warren
teaches at Sutherland
Christian School

Entering the Wesley Theatre seems like entering any large cinema or modern auditorium. Long curved rows of comfortable seats face a stage and lots of people are moving and talking. Perhaps it's interval, or maybe the show's already over? On the stage, facing the amphitheatre of seats is a long table with people sitting behind it. To one side, others sit at smaller tables, sorting, reading, typing, consulting—an office that keeps working obviously under the gaze of the auditorium.

This is Synod—an odd contrasting mixture of formality and friendliness, performance and passivity, practised speeches and personal stories that cut to the heart of a debate and stick in your mind.

The Archbishop (in a brilliant red academic gown against the blue of the theatre) is directing proceedings. People in the amphitheatre get to their feet and move to speak at one of the microphones placed in each of the aisles, or, if sure of their words, go to one of the lecterns on the stage. And all the time the murmuring and the movement in the 'audience' continues as people react, discuss and plan responses.

There are passionate speeches, loud cries of 'Aye' and 'No', hard-to-follow legal arguments and opinions as well as the sudden relaxing warmth of laughter as someone makes a joke or the Archbishop admits that he too is lost in the legal technicalities.

I do enjoy Synod. If I'm elected for another three years I'll certainly be back. It creates a camaraderie and gives opportunities for catching up with friends and more distant acquaintances whom I may only see once or twice a year. There is the joy of fellowship and exchanging news and opinions over dinner. Will we go to the cheap (and rather good) noodle shop just around the corner, Pizza Hut, the restaurant upstairs or just Maccas tonight?

But there are also more important issues debated that go to the heart of what we believe. Decisions that we make will affect many, both here in the diocese and elsewhere in the world as evangelical Anglicans in other coun-

tries are heartened, or otherwise by the stand that we take. It's at these times that I most feel the seriousness of the responsibility I have been given by the congregation to which I belong.

This year, among many other matters, we 'distanced' ourselves from comments the Primate, Archbishop Rayner of Melbourne, had made. In the course of debating this motion we re-affirmed our acceptance of God's attitude to homosexuality as revealed in the Bible. We also re-stated the reformed, biblical view of the Scriptures that we see and understand the world around us in the light of the Bible, instead of understanding and interpreting the Bible in the light of the world.

Being part of such a debate as a listener is exciting. I know I am one of those who are contending "for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3)—discussing, debating and explaining the truths that are at the centre of the universe. Taking part in a process that has been going on for nearly 2000 years.

Such debate made me grateful for the quality of the Bible scholars and teachers we have here in Sydney, both the well-known and the not so well-known. Their clarity of thought, depth of Bible knowledge and their sympathy and wisdom in applying it was humbling. My little opinions seemed very little indeed.

At last, after three years I think I've almost become used to the complex parliamentary rules that govern the way Synod is run. At least, I found myself listening to a broadcast of a Senate debate in Canberra and I actually understood what was going on! Synod procedures are complex and strange at first, but provide a clear and fair set of rules for everyone to play by. Advice is always gladly given and as in past years, I was constantly impressed by the patient graciousness displayed towards just about everyone who spoke. People who weren't quite sure what was happening, or how their contribution should fit into the proceedings, were able to ask for help which was then graciously given. Feelings ran high at times during debates but there was none of the

abuse and heckling which I've seen at other meetings. I hope that the lone ABC cameraman there briefly one evening went away realising that Christians are different.

But it is a pity that the proceedings of Synod are often so legal. A lot of what goes on is framed in legal language, and judges and lawyers often seem to dominate. I fear the result is that ordinary members of Synod are left feeling out of their depth and tend to take sit back and watch instead of actively participate. I suspect that women feel this pressure even more than men. I think it's a great loss for us all and an erosion of what Synod really is—an opportunity for everyone to speak and be a part of decision making. I value the contributions of non-legal, non-clergy representatives, both men and women, who have taken the floor without any great expertise in public speaking. Time and time again what they have said has been full of down-to-earth, godly commonsense. Stories and statements about life as it is in parishes throughout Sydney, that have helped to re-focus and clarify debate.

I would dearly love to see a greater variety of people speaking. As I watched it seemed to me that amongst those who spoke there were a few who spoke many times. I wouldn't want to limit them, their contributions were often valuable to our debate, but it would be good to have greater numbers of both men and women speaking overall.

So what do you need to be a Synod rep? There are a lot of qualities that will help. Being prepared to sit down and do the hard work of reading and thinking through the proposed legislation and motions is vital. I'm not a wonderfully quick thinker on my feet, and debate often moves very fast. I've found that careful preparation beforehand helps me to assess arguments far quicker in the heat of debate. Being bold enough to speak in front of hundreds of people is also useful. But the most important qualification I think is godliness—convinced, mature, Christian character, combined with a clear grasp of what Scripture says.

There has been, regrettably, some

very woolly, very emotional arguing and thinking by Synod representatives. What is needed instead is the ability to think through issues biblically and clearly, not swayed by feelings, either your own or other's. Legal and complex arguments can be daunting but Synod needs people who can keep hold of the basic issues involved and see them through the filter of Scripture, evaluating them perhaps more as God does.

It is sad that we Christians, commanded by our Lord to love one another, should have to resort to legislation to regulate our relationships with each other. In this situation godly wisdom is needed even more to keep a check on things, ensuring that precious truths like repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are not somehow legislated out of existence.

The world around us has always exerted enormous pressure on Christians—pressures to fit in, to lower our standards, to accommodate ourselves to society around us and to be approved. But Jesus warned that the world would hate us. Only godly men and women, filled with the Holy Spirit, will have the courage, the grace and the God-given wisdom to hold the line, to swim against the stream and rightly reject any measures that in any way deny what we believe.

I have often been tempted to say that if you are not prepared to get up and speak at Synod, then you shouldn't be there. But I think that's wrong because the final vote is where the rubber hits the road. Decisions are finally left where they ought to be. Not in the hands of bishops, leaders or functionaries, but in the hands of ordinary Christians whose consciences are informed by God's word and guided by the Holy Spirit. This is Synod's strength, and this is the great opportunity it gives godly men and women to serve this diocese.

The speeches and debates are all over, the discussions behind the scenes, the phone calls and the deals are all finished. Suddenly it is finally up to you, to your understanding and conscience. Will you call out 'Aye' or 'No'? ●

Continuation of
'Sydney needs its lay people' page 4

or attempt to 'clericalize' the laity, whatever that means. If presiding at Holy Communion is the essence of the ordained minister's role then the


corollary must be that the laity's role is to passively take. Such an analysis, if it was ever true, is, in this day and age, completely irrelevant. We are in ministry together. The complex interplay of the respective and ever-changing roles of clergy and laity are

now meaning that more and more the two groups are essential to each other. Either we hang together or we'll hang separately!

I hope lay Synod representatives are challenged before God to persevere with their service in Synod, on

committees, on boards and on councils to the extension of God's Kingdom here on earth. ●

Presidential parallels

 In his Presidential Address on the opening day of Synod, Archbishop Goodhew drew the Synod's attention to "the arguments advanced by those who hold that in a significantly changed social environment, faithfulness to God might mean that the same revealed truth needs to be expressed in a different way".

In rebuking the Primate, Sydney Synod has publicly expressed its concern about the hermeneutic driving the pro-homosexual agenda.

The Archbishop was alluding to a hermeneutical procedure which is increasingly being invoked within English evangelical circles with respect to the ordination of women (e.g. R.T. France, *Women in the Church's*

Ministry; J.R. Middleton & B.J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*). Sometimes it is put quite starkly in a way that must make our forebears turn over in their graves:

"There is a sense, then, in which genuine faithfulness to the authority of Scripture means that we must go not only beyond the biblical text but sometimes even *against* the text" (Middleton & Walsh, p.184).

But, in other circles, exactly the same hermeneutical procedure is being used to advance the pro-homosexual cause. Take, for example, the bishop in Paul Barnett's study group at Lambeth who spoke of preaching *against* the Bible, especially those passages deemed 'heterosexist' (*Southern Cross Newspaper*, October 98). He reads what is there and then declares it outmoded, given the views on homosexuality he has adopted.

Closer to home, we have another

example of this procedure operating in the Primate's Sermon on the opening of the Melbourne Synod. Here Archbishop Rayner is very clear that the same procedure underlies both issues. A significantly changed social environment has already helped the church move on remarriage after divorce, and [in his context] on women's ordination. Now the time has come, given other kinds of changes in our social environment, for the church to rethink the 'received tradition' on homosexuality.


Recently reviewing Lambeth, in a speech that attracted the attention of the *English Church of England Newspaper*, Bishop Paul Barnett spoke of a 'new liberalism' which is pursuing its agenda with 'missionary zeal' and in which the Bible is a necessary casualty if it stands against the progress they are seeking.

One of the things that this new liberalism shares with the old liberal-

ism is the assumption that there is an 'essence' of Christianity (old: love; new: justice?) that, once discovered, will enable us to remove the culture-bound expressions of that essence. The way that 'essence' was expressed in the New Testament may have been good for the 'social environment' of the first-century, but when that social environment changes, then the actual teaching of the New Testament is outmoded, even if the 'essence' remains the same.

In rebuking the Primate, Sydney Synod has publicly expressed its concern about the hermeneutic driving the pro-homosexual agenda. It is equally important to reject the same hermeneutic as it drives the 'new look' at women's ministry in the New Testament. For the two Synodical Presidents have alerted us to two different forms of exactly the same hermeneutic. ●

What does science say about homosexuality?

 Archbishop Rayner urged the church to rethink 'the received tradition' in regard to homosexuality, partly because of advances in scientific knowledge. "We have a clearer understanding than the biblical writers of the nature and incidence of homosexuality". However, the facts known about this 'nature and incidence' have been clouded over by the gay lobby and its media friends.

One of the most famous cases of misinformation is the oft-quoted figure suggesting that 10% of the population is homosexual—a figure said to derive from the 1948 report into human sexuality in America by Alfred Kinsey. When this statistic was repeated as recently as October 3, this year in *The Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend* magazine, a reader complained (October 24) about this "misleading statistic [being] peddled yet again".

In the September issue of *Quadrant* ("Fifty Years After the Kinsey Report"), Australian sociologist Ronald Conway explained the error. Kinsey reported that 37% of *white men in his random sample* (not the general population) admitted at least one sexual experience with another man in their lifetime. Conway noted that sexual exploration in the post-pubescent period hardly makes this a momentous assertion. He pointed out that the 10% figure is 10% (not of the general population but) of *this sub-set of the sample* (ie. 10% of the 37% = 3.7% of the sample). Kinsey's own estimate of predominantly homosexual *men in his sample* (which was badly skewed, and biased towards college students, prison inmates and deviate groups) was only 4%.

Conway notes that subsequent studies "suggest an average figure of three to four per cent for males across most Western societies". The genuine cross-sectional study behind *Sex in America* (1994)—according to Conway "the best recent survey based on American data"—showed an even lower incidence of homosexuality (2.8% for males and 1.4% for females).

So much for our knowledge of its 'incidence', what do we know about its 'nature'? Once again, political agendas have clouded public perceptions of the 'scientific' evidence.

Once again, political agendas have clouded public perceptions of the 'scientific' evidence.

Psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, says he wrote *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Baker, 1996) to help "to guard against the grossly overblown claims of interest groups who misuse science for political ends". He shows how the homosexual lifestyle is socially damaging and risky for the health—even considering the effect of AIDS.

Archbishop Rayner's sermon rightly condemned promiscuity of all kinds. But evidence shows that homosexuality and promiscuity are virtually inseparable. Recent studies show that a typical male homosexual has had an average of eight sexual partners in the previous 12 months and will have an average of 50 partners in a lifetime.

Another showed that only seven of 156 homosexual couples surveyed had maintained sexual fidelity within their relationship. Not one of the 100 couples surveyed who had been together for five years or more had maintained sexual fidelity. A 1981 study showed that only 2% were monogamous or semi-monogamous (that is 10 or fewer lifetime partners). In 1978 a survey reported 43% of male homosexuals estimated having sex with 500 or more partners and 28% with a thousand or more who were mostly strangers. (Satinover, p.55).

Satinover compares the health risks involved in being a homosexual with being an alcoholic. However, Satinover notes that while alcoholism is recognised as a social evil, homosexuality is promoted, even though it has far more social and health risks, including:

- significantly decreased likelihood of preserving successful marriage
- a 25 to 30 year decrease in life expectancy, even before AIDS is factored in. (AIDS decreases the life expectancy by a further 7%)
- Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease
- Inevitably fatal immune disease
- frequent rectal cancer
- multiple bowel and other infectious diseases
- a much higher than average incidence of suicide
- a very low likelihood that adverse effects can be eliminated, unless the condition itself is

So, where are the 'scientific advances' that speak in favour of homosexuality? The sermon was not the place for

Rayner to elaborate. Satinover's book, however, deals with the (fairly successful, we must say) attempt to shift community perceptions away from viewing homosexuality as a chosen lifestyle, to seeing it as an innate, inherited condition—no more evil than, say, left-handedness. The most spectacular 'scientific discovery' used to support this strategy in recent days is the so-called 'gay gene'. Four months after the announcement of its discovery on July 15, 1993, *Science* magazine concluded that the data provided no consistent support for the 'gay gene'. Satinover knows of no well-founded scientific support for a biological theory. The drive to find one, in his opinion, comes from the desire to undercut the evidence that homosexuals can actually change their lifestyle.

What does science tell us about homosexuality? If the facts are allowed to speak for themselves, they would speak eloquently against it. If any rethink is needed, it is in regard to the homosexual choice, not the biblical prohibition. ●

What the plough-boy says to the Bishop

Peter Bolt

If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scripture than thou dost' (William Tyndale, 1522).

Although the media reports appeared to take the Archbishop's 1998 Presidential address as an encouragement for the Synod to ordain women, the address actually confessed to some confusion over the issue, the Archbishop revealing that he has "prayed for greater clarity in [his] own views".

The same episcopal confusion has been expressed elsewhere over the issue of homosexuality. Opening the 1997 Newcastle Synod, Bishop Roger Herft spoke of his own confusion over the topic, and then began the quest for the answer by launching 'a year of listening'. Last year at the Synod in Melbourne, the Primate's sermon also expressed mild confusion over the homosexual issue, hinting that the changed circumstances of today's world may show us that the traditional condemnation of homosexual behaviour was misguided.

Whatever else it shows, this episcopal confusion could be taken to illustrate the success of the feminist (and homosexualist) strategy.

In a recent *Quadrant* article—'Do Men and Women Live in the Same World?', (April, 1998): a summary of her book *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation* (London: Routledge, 1997)—Jean Curthoys, formerly a lecturer in philosophy at Sydney University, charged that much of the argumentation produced by feminist academics is 'pseudo-theory', in that it violates the norms of reason. According to Curthoys, one of the key strategies adopted to push the feminist political agenda is the generation of confusion. Two of the sub-strategies used to achieve this confusion are the

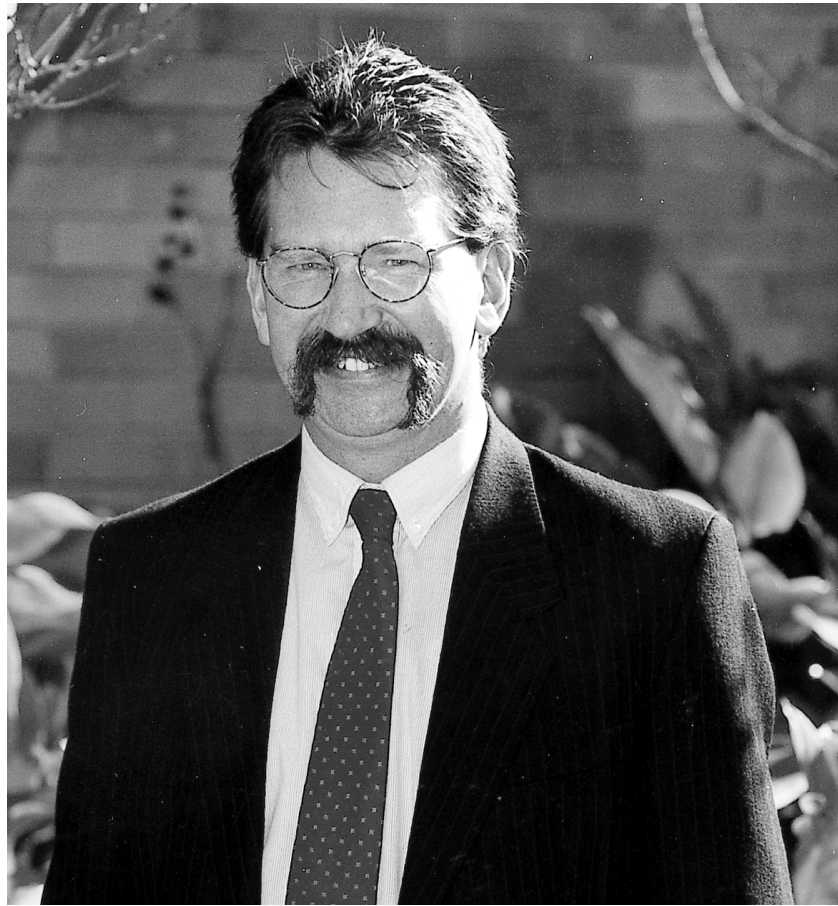
focus on form rather than content, and certain list-presenting moves—in which alternatives are simply listed, rather than analysed. Both of these strategies operate within an academic authoritarianism which demands assent simply by virtue of the supposed importance of those who have proposed the ideas. All of this works to create confusion.

Curthoys stresses that it is important to realise "the essential role of equivocation and confusion in the argument". This is also admitted by Curthoys' opponents, who maintain "that feminist thought is in its nature confused and equivocal and that that is a good thing". She cites the example of Elizabeth Grosz, widely regarded as Australia's leading feminist philosopher, who clearly believes that "clarity, logical consistency and coherence are highly suspect qualities." Under such a point of view "confusion becomes, not just an accident of sloppy presentation, but intrinsic to the argument."

Anyone who is familiar with the debates over the ordination of women across the last 20 years will recognise the same strategies at work. Key biblical texts are declared to be unclear; and the confusion over these texts is generated by the simple method of listing scholars who take different opinions. Often analysis of the texts themselves or the reasons why a particular 'evangelical' interpreter has decided to abandon the traditional position on those texts, are overlooked in favour of this simple listing of authorities (especially those who have previously gained the reputation of being 'evangelical' scholars).

'Nay, say they, the scripture is so hard, that thou couldst never understand but by the doctors [=scholars]' (William Tyndale, *Obedience of a Christian Man*)

If the episcopate is confused, then



Peter Bolt

the strategy has been effective at a high level. But, since the confusion has been artificially created through the efforts of the academic community, the way out of the confusion is also very simple: what does the plain reading of the texts suggest we should do? We appear to be in a time when the people in the pew need to teach those who should be teaching them. Where is Tyndale's 'plough-boy'? What does he read in his Bible?

Interestingly enough, even the scholars doing textual juggling tricks under the influence of feminist politics recognise that the plough-boy's reading is the obvious one—they just don't like it any more! And even our own Archbishop's confusion is obviously not over the plain reading of the text, for he acknowledges that to maintain

our current practices "satisfies the plain reading of 1 Timothy 2 and accords with the long tradition of our Church" (as well as the majority of our diocese).

In the face of such episcopal confusion, it is time for the laity to rescue those who have been confused as a result of this strategic use of confusion to achieve the goals of the feminist agenda. The person in the pew needs to help those confused by 'evangelical' scholars whose names have been simply listed to add to the confusion. A cry needs to go up from the laity saying: "Come down to earth. Let's read the Bible for what it says. Then, because it is still God's good word for today, let us continue to do what it says so clearly." ●

Sydney's brain dead laity?

On every occasion, Sydney's laity have, on Biblical grounds, voted against the ordination of women to the priesthood. Apparently this was against their will—at least according to a spokeswoman from the Movement for Ordination of Women, cited in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (October 17, 1998):

"The middle ground of the Sydney Synod has opposed women priests for 20 years not because of its fear of women's authority so much as its fear of the clergy/theologians who lead the opposition".

Carry on John 16

Archbishop Carey, in his final lecture of the Anglican Institute Conference in Paris discussing the real meaning of a Christ-centred church, stated that it was not perfect but a place with "people seeking to live together in faith, hope and love always alert to the transforming Spirit of God who will lead them into all truth".

(From "Dr Carey on How to Avoid Division", *Church of England Newspaper* October 9, 1998)

Synod

Synod report Robert Tong

The last session of the 44th Synod began with the prospect of legislation overload (over 30 Ordinances). It ended on the last scheduled night with a call for legislation designed to reduce the tension and division over the priesting of women. A focused and clear majority of the 500-plus members present voiced their support for a motion calling for legislation to allow a five-year experiment of lay and diaconal administration.

The sovereign authority of the Scriptures was affirmed as the only way of 'doing theology'.

The Archbishop's wish to reduce the heat and relieve the tensions of continued synodical division over the priesting of women had motivated him to call the day conference of Synod members held on May 16. After considering the written responses of participants, the standing committee concluded that a motion in the terms

offered to the Synod best reflected the work of the conference. Synod forcefully rejected attempts to amend the motion to separate the administration of the Lord's Supper from the issue of women priesting. The two issues were seen to be intimately connected in our context.

When Synod took issue with the Primate's call to reconsider the church's teaching on homosexuality in the light of tradition, reason and experience, the sovereign authority of the Scriptures was affirmed as the only way of 'doing theology'. The Kuala Lumpur Statement was endorsed as a faithful statement of Biblical teaching on human sexuality in contrast to the General Synod's failure to endorse the statement.

Responding to a synod report on bioethical issues and a government report on strengthening marriage, the synod committed itself to uphold the doctrine of marriage and the 'sovereign lordship of the living God' as revealed in the Scriptures.

On both issues Synod endorsed a proactive stance for further work and

the expenditure of funds to enable church members to be equipped and encouraged in witness and ministry.

The Archbishop shocked many with his announcement that he "would not withhold his consent" to a women priesting ordinance should the Synod pass it. More questions were raised than answers given by this declaration. Why 'yes' on this issue when there is a mass of Scripture on gender role and function, and 'no' on lay administration, when the Scriptures say not a word on who administers the Lord's supper?

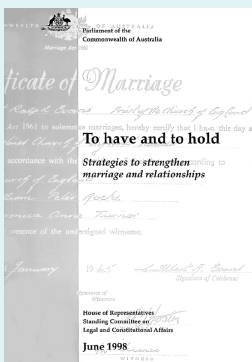
How does one weigh experience in discerning the mind of God? In an article in *The Age*, the Primate reminded readers that the Anglican Church is committed to the Bible as "the ultimate rule and standard of faith". On the homosexual issue, he expressed a

"concern to point to the framework within which the debate needs to proceed. It will not be resolved simply by quoting a few biblical verses

out of context. But nor will it be resolved by leaving the relevant biblical passages out of account. The question is: is there a further and fuller understanding of the biblical teaching we have so far not understood?"

For a long time now the people of this diocese and its synod have built faith and witness on Scripture alone. In a number of debates Synod signalled that unity with other Anglicans, pastoral pain, or the expectations of society would not erode the commitment to living under Scripture by which the mind and will of God is revealed to his creation.

On the domestic front, some five hours were wasted in order to defeat an ill-conceived proposal to remove the member's right to ask questions and to receive answers and to introduce motions from the floor of synod.



The recent House of Representatives report "To Have and To Hold" is not the first opportunity the Churches have been given to have some input on Australian Marriages. However, while the report sourced information from church agencies, its recommendations do not specifically include the churches as part of its strategies for change.

In contrast, the April 1986 Report from the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on prostitution includes Recommendation 6.17, a gift

to the Churches, which has apparently remained unopened:

- 6.17 A conference or seminar be convened by churches either on a denominational or non-denominational basis to:
- Discuss the matters raised in this report and develop programmes which the churches might undertake singly or collectively which will in co-operation or conjunction with State government programmes effectively attack the underlying factors leading young women and men to enter prostitution.
 - Examine the structure of family life with particular emphasis on the question why so many married men are prostitutes' customers and determine the role churches could play in nurturing family relationships.
 - Examine the effectiveness of existing church programmes aimed at assisting women and men, in particular the young either to leave or avoid recruitment into prostitution. Such an examination also to look at ways in which some degree of co-ordination between church, social and government agencies might be developed in existing or future programmes.

To have and to hold Claire Smith

This year the Sydney Synod accepted a motion concerning the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs report entitled "To Have and To Hold: Strategies to strengthen marriage and relationships", published in June this year.

The motion encouraged our political leaders to uphold God's intention for marriage, expressed appreciation for the report, and encouraged Standing Committee to make use of the report's insights for the benefit of marriage education and services in this Diocese. An amendment expressly recognised and thanked existing bodies, such as Mother's Union, for their work in this area.

The report seeks to rebuild what it regards as the "first pillar" of section 43 of the Family Law Act.

The preface summarises this "pillar" as "the need to preserve and protect the institution of marriage as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life; the need to give

the widest possible protection and assistance to the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children; the need to protect the rights of children and promote their welfare; and the means available for assisting parties to marriage to consider reconciliation or the improvement of their relationship to each other and to the children of the marriage."

In short, the report seeks to strengthen and support marriages throughout the Australian community so that they last a lifetime.

The depth and scope of the report is extensive and impressive, focussing not just on marriage preparation, but also on marriage education for singles, young marrieds, and on-going education and support for couples throughout the various stages of life. It contains 55 recommendations for policy and funding decisions, and ways and means of increasing marriage education and therapy services.

In doing so the report includes some telling data concerning the

relative failure of *de facto* relationships, the impact of marriage breakdown on children, and the popularity and effectiveness of pre-marriage and marriage enrichment programmes.

It would be a rare person these days who has not been touched in some way by the personal tragedies of marital breakdown. In fact, the effects of marital conflict and divorce are far-reaching and virtually unavoidable in our modern society, with 34% of first marriages ending in divorce, and the statistics increasing for all subsequent marriages.

This parliamentary report and the subsequent synod motion provide an opportunity to reaffirm God's intentions for marriage and family in a society confused about what a "family" is. The motion secondly provides an opportunity to commend those whom God has appointed over us, for their wise government in this instance, and thirdly, the possibility of improving our provision of marriage services in this Diocese, in the light of this report.

Claire Smith is a lay synod representative for Christ Church, St Ives.

matters

Standing Committee’s experiment can begin

In an attempt to both preserve previous synodical decisions and to move ahead on the issue of women’s ministry, the synod has asked the standing committee to prepare legislation enabling a five-year experiment in lay and diaconal administration of the Lord’s Supper. Responding to the one clear idea that emerged from the Archbishop’s May 16 conference on women’s ministry, the Standing Committee had itself proposed the motion. It now has 12 months to bring back a workable proposal. In moving the motion on behalf of Standing Committee, Rev Phillip Jensen said that it preserved the principles on

which the Archbishop and the synod agreed (headship, the plain reading of 1Timothy 2), which was in line with the history of the church, as well as the majority of the church. The motion attempted to expand the ministry of women, which was in accord with the Archbishop’s concern to secure the future for women’s ministry. It sought to preserve the unity of the diocese, although Mr Jensen acknowledged that those at both extremes of the debate would not be happy with the Standing Committee’s proposed compromise. The motion also had an eye on the fellowship of the wider Anglican communion and the role of our leaders in it. Collette Read, the motion’s

seconder, reminded the synod of the Diocese’ “wonderful history of women ministering”, and its stand on the biblical distinction between the sexes and male headship. Ordination of women to the priesthood would only expand the ministry of some women (ie. those ordained), whereas this motion was to benefit a wider group of both deacons and laity. Mrs Read conceived of the choice as one “between a practice never mentioned in Scripture, namely who administers the Lord’s Supper and one condemned in Scripture, that is, women in teaching authority over men”. The ensuing debate was rigorous and a number of amendments were proposed, but only two refining the motion were passed. The most fre-

quently stated objection was the linkage of lay administration with the women’s ordination issues. In his reply, Mr Jensen noted that everyone had spoken in favour of lay administration, and stated that the two issues are not separate, but symbiotic. Predicting that lay administration will change the ordination of women debate, he appealed to the Synod to have a “broad enough, big enough mind to hold two changes together, rather than setting them in separate boxes”. Although the Archbishop at first declared it lost (in what some might call a ‘Freudian slip’!), the voices showed that Synod had given the idea of this experiment its overwhelming support.

Lay Administration Bill founders on Standing Orders

After 20 years of discussion, the last night of synod was to be the time for the Third Reading of the proposed Ordinance on lay and diaconal administration of the Lord’s Supper. It was slated to follow the debate on the motion requesting Standing Committee to find a way towards a five-year experimentation period. Although the President had indicated on Day 1 that he would not assent to Lay Administration, during the debate on the five-year experiment, it had become very clear that the synod was in favour of lay administration. The third reading was looking like it would be simply a formality. As the Rector of St Ives, John Woodhouse, approached the microphone to move the third reading, the fun and games began! Justice Keith Mason objected that, in the light of the opinion of the Appellate Tribunal, and because the motion would involve the variation of trusts, the synod was not

competent to decide the issue. When a point of order was called, that Justice Mason was simply stating an opinion, the President interrupted to rule in his favour, that is that the synod was not competent to decide the question. The synod responded with a motion of dissent from the Presidential ruling. Speakers pointed out that the Appellate Tribunal had issued an opinion only, which has the same weight as the opinion of any other member of the house. In addition, on the analogy of Federal Parliament, the synod’s role was to proceed to a decision in regard to its business, and if there was any question of competency this would be decided after the event and by an external body. A question asking what had changed between the second and third reading stages was answered by reference once again to the Appellate Tribunal’s opinion. After some further debate, the motion of dissent overturned the President’s ruling on voices.

Once again, Mr Woodhouse didn’t have time to get to the microphone before another point of order was put. Mr Lambert referred the house to Standing Orders 49 and 50. The import of these was apparently taken to be that, because the first motion for the evening (five-year experiment) had dealt with the same ‘subject matter’ as the Ordinance about to be read, then the President had the right to decide whether it could not be discussed. The Archbishop ruled that the ordinance could not be read, because it dealt with substantially the same ‘subject matter’ as the first motion for the evening. From the readiness of members of the Synod to dissent once again from the President’s ruling, it is clear that it is a moot point whether or not this was a correct interpretation of these Standing Orders. No-one thought to move a suspension of these Standing Orders, which would presumably be allowable under Standing Order 57. After this ruling, the Archbishop would not allow any further discussion. An attempt to pass a motion of dissent was also disallowed. A question asking why this motion of dissent was not allowed when the previous one was, was dismissed with a joke from the chair without answer. At this point, Dr Woodhouse withdrew the motion, which means, no doubt, that it will be on the agenda for the next synod.

Standing Orders 49 and 50 announced in both the Table of Provisions and within the Standing Orders Ordinance 1968 under the heading:

‘Motions Previously Dealt With, etc.’

49. No subject which shall have been under the consideration of the Synod and disposed of, shall be again brought forward during the same Session.

50. No Question shall be entertained which in the opinion of the President is substantially the same as one which has been resolved during the same Session.

...


Standing Order 57
Any Standing Order of the Synod may at any time be suspended on motion with notice. Any Standing Order may also be suspended on motion without notice unless ten Members object.

The British Government is another to realise the importance of strengthening families. Promising the first ever Government Paper on the Family, to be tabled in November, Prime Minister Tony Blair told the October Labour Party Conference:

“I challenge us to accept a strong family life is the basic unit of a strong community. For strong families mean a strong Britain”.

Bishops: relapse and reaction

An open letter to Archbishop George and the House of Bishops Warren Irwin

 In response to the ACR's article on lay administration Warren Irwin, churchwarden at Christchurch, Springfield, wrote: "The continued presence of unbiblical pre-reformation beliefs amongst the Bishops in our church, beliefs that contradict the gospel, is a matter for continuing prayer. As well as being unbiblical, the views are not Anglican. It may be useful to draw the attention of your readers to the brief analysis that I've done of material in the ordinal."

Dear Sirs,
I read with concern several of the statements quoted from the House of Bishops' report and the opinion of the Appellate Tribunal with respect to lay administration in the first edition of the new *Australian Church Record*.

I would like to take up two issues regarding the nature of priesthood with the learned gentlemen.

The first issue has to do with the idea that representation is a function of an Anglican Priest, as suggested by the following:

"Ordination also empowers the persons being ordained to act in a representative capacity on behalf of the whole priestly people of God and to speak on their behalf." (Quoted on p. 9 ACR issue 1877)

The second relates to the question of the significance of the priest's role in Holy Communion.

The *Australian Church Record* article dealt well with these issues from a biblical perspective. It is also enlightening to examine the Ordinal, which shows the nature of the authority to function as a Deacon, Priest or Bishop in the Anglican Church.

Such a study shows that there is not so much as a whisper in the Ordinal of a representative function for Deacons, Priests or Bishops, whether to God on the behalf of people or to people on the behalf of God. The New Testament makes it quite clear that Christ and the Holy Spirit represent *the Father to believers* and that Christ and the Holy Spirit represent *believers to the Father*. Your Graces, have you forgotten the rock from which you were hewn? (Isa 51:1)

It is a great irony that implicit in the Bishops' words is an acknowledgment that the New Testament elevates all believers to the role of priests. However the Bishops' report creates a new category of 'super priests' who perform their functions on the behalf of the ordinary believer priests. The New Testament is subverted once again, and sadly by those who have leadership responsibilities in our Dioceses.

A second issue of concern to me

is raised by the comment from Archbishop George:

"It is hard to imagine anything more consistently central to the nature of priesthood than presiding at the Holy Communion..." (p. 8)


What is the "most central idea to the nature of Deacons, Priests or Bishops" according to the Ordinal? In the Ordinal there are:

- at least 38 references to the Word of God, true doctrine and the truth. They occur in almost every prayer and exhortation. The Word and truth are significant components of the nature of the ordained ministry.
- at least 22 references to holiness of life or exemplary behaviour. They occur in most prayers and exhortations. Holiness of life is a significant component of the nature of the ordained ministry.
- at least 15 references to the building up of the people of God. They occur in a large proportion of prayers and exhortations. Building up God's people is a significant component of the nature of the ordained ministry.


However, when it comes to the Holy Communion there is a slightly different emphasis. In the Ordinal there are:

- only four references to the administration of Holy Communion;
- what is more, there are none in the section relating to the consecration of Bishops.

In comparison with the Word of God, true doctrine and the truth, the Holy Communion (and its administration) hardly rates a mention in the Ordinal. The place of the Word of God, holiness of life, and building up the people of God, are stated, restated and even expounded in the Ordinal. The sacraments barely get a look in! This is not to deny their place and importance. But any attempt to enhance their significance by undergirding them with unbiblical, unchristian and unanglican ideas is hardly appropriate. With respect, Archbishop George, how you get from the Ordinal or the New Testament to your position on the nature of priesthood is beyond me. I can only conclude that you have authorities other than Scripture or the Ordinal. Unfortunately they appear to be neither true to the Bible nor the Ordinal.

Your brother in Christ,
Warren Irwin. 

Presidential address ripples other ponds

 The Archbishop's remark during his Presidential Address that he would not withhold his assent if the Synod decided to ordain women was evidently felt to be a bombshell by many. *The Sydney Morning Herald* announced that by it, "The cause of women's ordination in Sydney has received a dramatic boost", now that the Archbishop has "dropp[ed] his opposition to women priests in the diocese." Patricia Hayward, from the Movement for the Ordination of Women, described it as "a watershed" for the diocese.

Others, however, warned against reading too much into the remarks, and even the *Herald* itself calmed down by the end of the week. When Synod was over, and the ordination of women had, strictly speaking, not even been debated, the remarks had proved to be unnecessary.

The news of the remarks travelled quickly, courtesy of the media, to the ears of those outside the borders of Sydney. In some parts of Australia, Archbishop Goodhew's comments were hardly noticed. But elsewhere, they were met with concern by

evangelicals who feared they might find themselves alienated even further.

One minister in Newcastle Diocese found the reported statements rather confusing. What was the basis of the implied change of stance over women's ordination? Was it because "they are nice women", or was it on biblical grounds? If on biblical grounds, did that mean that the arguments about headship no longer applied? Since these are the arguments evangelicals have used to speak against ordination of women in Newcastle, then "Harry's comments add weight to the view that opponents to women's ordination are mean-spirited and non-Christian. It further marginalises us in our diocese, for we are now not even in solidarity with Sydney. The comments show that to oppose the ordination of women is no longer a mainstream issue, so to do so means that you are simply a misogynist."

From Western Australia, where some priests have lost their ministry over this issue, and others have met with ridicule, marginalisation and ostracism because of their view point, the reaction in some quarters was swift. Although


the media report suggested that the Sydney Archbishop was apparently equivocating, one evangelical clergyman explained that, due to the respect given to Sydney's Archbishop elsewhere, even a fairly weak comment can spark "a reaction of tidal wave proportions".

Although he had heard no reaction from others, a minister in Adelaide remarked that if Sydney is perceived to have changed their view on what the Bible teaches, then that will have implications for evangelicals who have used similar arguments. "If Sydney sneezes, we catch a cold."

In November, when the initial reactions seemed to be almost ancient history, the Archbishop used his column in the *Southern Cross Newspaper* to explain the reasons behind his remarks. If the Synod decided in favour of ordaining women, and he withheld his assent, then the matter could be passed on to Provisional Synod. Given that it is legal within the Australian church, it would almost certainly be approved, which would then make it law in Sydney Diocese. Presumably, the Archbishop's assent would prevent the decision being

handed to Provisional Synod, thereby enabling the Ordinance to go through locally. The Archbishop would then be free to exercise his discretion in ordination. This would, in theory, still enable the Archbishop of Sydney to exercise a lead in a conservative direction.

The fact that so many were quick to seize on the Presidential remarks shows the potential he has to affect, for better or for worse, those who struggle to remain conservative elsewhere. If this is the correct implication of the *Southern Cross* explanation, then those elsewhere who struggle to maintain their conservative, biblical stand could have taken heart! As it turns out, the remarks may indicate that the Archbishop of Sydney could be a champion for the conservatives outside Sydney, even if the Sydney Synod moves elsewhere!

But, of course, all these questions are now simply academic. The dust has settled. Both President and Synod remain conservative, and the debate has moved onwards in a positive direction. 

Synod asks Standing Committee to boost church planting endeavours

Church planting received a boost when Synod overwhelmingly endorsed the motion that the Standing Committee bring legislation to the next Synod “to enable the establishment of congregations as provisional parishes without requiring them to own any property”.

During the debate, the many proposed amendments showed that the far-reaching ramifications of the motion were well recognized. All amendments were, however, defeated by the house, indicating that Synod wished the Standing Committee to consider the proposal on the widest possible terms.

Two speeches especially brought strong applause from the Synod. The Rev Ernest Chau, Curate in Charge of St John the Baptist, Kirribilli, without prior preparation, rose to speak “from the perspective of Chinese Anglicans”. He revealed to the Synod that there were twelve Chinese congregations in the diocese, with his own being the only one represented in Synod. From the early 1970s his congregation met in the Chapter House and numbers grew steadily. Without a permanent base for ministry, the congregation was considering leaving the Anglican Church when it moved to Kirribilli. In 1994, Rev Chau was appointed Curate-in-Charge, enabling him to have a seat on Synod.

Saying that the Synod was “still very Anglo-Saxon”, Mr Chau urged

that, rather than forcing them to follow the long and circuitous route taken by the congregation now at Kirribilli, “by establishing provisional parishes without property we give other ethnic congregations representation to the synod”. This would be, of course, only the first step, for “we would expect every ethnic congregation would become a full parish in due course”. After the wide applause following his support of the motion, the Archbishop pointed out, to further applause, that this was the first time that a Chinese minister from Sydney Diocese had addressed the Synod.

Alan Höhne, a layman from St Matthew’s, West Pennant Hills, in a speech given extra time, told of his congregation’s church planting efforts in Cherrybrook. In the early days of this venture, the congregation decided to be Anglican, so that the question of Church affiliation would be off the agenda to enable energies to be devoted to teaching and evangelism. For various reasons, the Diocese was not interested in placing a church building in Cherrybrook, so the congregation sought to plant their church through a small group model. Mr Höhne said God’s hand could be seen in the process, which eventually resulted in the calling of a pastor and a larger weekly meeting in the local community centre.

Although St Matthew’s had bud-

geted to fully underwrite Cherrybrook Anglican Church (CAC) financially, “ten months into 1998, CAC is 75% financially self sufficient. Weekly costs are about \$1150 dollars. This includes pastor’s stipend, rent for a four bedroom house and only \$36 per Sunday (\$12 per hour) for use of the Cherrybrook Community Centre. For this we get a meeting room accommodating 200, a piano (kept tuned for us), two smaller rooms accommodating up to 50 (used for infants and lower primary Sunday School), a kitchen with permanent hot and boiling water and a fridge, a lobby or a verandah (for morning tea). It is cleaned by others and soon we will get permanent storage space (for projector, screen and Bibles etc).” By way of contrast, Mr Höhne pointed out that if they were to contemplate owning property, the church would be faced with capital works of the order of \$2 million and a weekly interest bill of up to \$4,000 even on today’s record low interest rates. “How much better to put every cent of extra income into evangelism using the Community Centre for gatherings, rather than needlessly spend it on buildings with the attendant diversion of most of the interest of the Church Committee which at present spends most of its time on outreach related activities.” ●

Christian community church

Andrew Heard

Community’ has become a buzz word in church life. Our chief priority now as a church is ‘creating community’. The nature of community doesn’t seem to matter as long as it is people together, able to share with each other, feel known and valued. Quite naturally this is attractive to outsiders. People in our day are hankering after community. If we can offer them a viable one—something warm, friendly and supportive—they will be drawn like moths to a light. We want to grow. Give them what they want. Community!

Being involved in church planting is good for the soul. It forces you to think about what is of first importance. Where does community fit in?

As I think back to the early church as presented in the New Testament it is hard to see them deliberately setting out to ‘create community’, first and foremost. Sure, they had it, but did they set out to create it? Is this what

church planting is about? I don’t think so. What the first followers of Christ set out to do was to proclaim the news of Christ and him crucified. This activity of proclaiming the gospel naturally and inevitably created a new community as God used his word to call his people together. However, it wasn’t just any community, it was the community of the redeemed gathered together around their redeemer. What mattered about the community was that it was gathered *around Christ*.

When the priority of community supersedes the priority of gospel preaching we end up simply with friendships. No doubt they are distinct friendships—Christian friendships—but surely God is on about more than just creating a community made up of Christians. The community gathered around Christ is gathered around him in his word, not a cup of tea.

If this insight is right then the first agenda for a church planter is to

establish a platform for preaching the word, for heralding the gospel. This will naturally and inevitably (if it is the gospel of Christ) create community, but it will be a unique community. It will be the community gathered around Christ. As I have thought further about this, isn’t it simply the age-old difference between Catholicism and the reformers? The church did not give rise to the gospel; the gospel created the church. The reformers were right again.

First and foremost our agenda in the world is to be heralds of the gospel. First and foremost were are to be people who establish platforms from which the gospel can be publicly proclaimed. As a consequence community will come. If we keep the gospel as our priority the community that comes will most certainly be the community of the redeemed, not just a community of those who love community. ●

The authority of the Bible: what do we mean? Mark Thompson



What do we mean when we talk about ‘the authority of Scripture’? To many in our world that expression is next to meaningless. How can such a collection of disparate writings, the last of which

was probably written about 1900 years ago, be considered authoritative in a way which determines both our beliefs and our practices? Some people point to the vast expansion of human knowledge in the last 2000 years, our cultural development, our almost inexpressibly different lifestyles—especially in the West. To appeal to the authority of what must be considered ‘an ancient book’ doesn’t seem to make sense. Surely we must supplement this with our own observations of what appears to be the work of God in our world. Increasingly this is the approach to decision-making adopted even in some ‘evangelical’ circles.

If we decided truth by democracy, then the clamour of voices pushing this point of view would indicate that we ought to abandon previous evangelical commitments and adopt this more recent position. But, in fact, there is no reason to abandon our confidence that the Bible can and does speak to our situation.

The authority of Scripture is actually another way of speaking about the authority of God, for the Bible is not just a collection of human documents; it is the Word of God to us. The God who addresses us in these pages is the same God who created all things and who describes himself as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev 22:13). His knowledge is never superseded. He is not surprised and unprepared for the developments in human knowledge, culture, or lifestyle over the last 2000 years. It is extraordinarily arrogant to claim that we understand the world, human relationships, or effective patterns of ministry better than God himself. But that is precisely what is being claimed when we appeal to twentieth century ecclesiastical ‘wisdom’ over and above the teaching of the Bible.

We need to remind ourselves and each other of the words of Christ’s apostle in the midst of a discussion of life and ministry ‘in the last days’: “all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). God has not left us only partially prepared to face the challenges of the modern (and post-modern) world. His Word means that we can be thoroughly prepared. The real challenge is that we take the Bible seriously, shaping our lives and ministries by its message. Only as we do this are we genuinely listening to God. ●

Strange Days Indeed

A casual glance
at themes, moods,
events and signs
of the times.

Walking on the Moon?

Bill Salier

Summer is coming. I can tell because I have eaten my first Bogong moth. It happened while I was jogging; must remember to breathe a little easier next time.

Ahh the Bogong—that furry denizen of the summer night—how do they get into the house? Apparently the Bogong is one of the few creatures in Australia that goes crazy over Parliament House in Canberra—they are attracted by the light on their migration northwards to that other great light, the metropolis of Sydney. Imagine looking for the light and finding Sydney or Canberra!

They are not as bad as a plague I seem to remember a few years ago, but here they are again and summer's here.

I knew summer was coming when I went for a walk on King St, Newtown on a recent balmy Thursday evening. The joint was jumping. Three people asked me for money before I stopped feeling guilty for saying no. Kevin was walking up and down the street taking off his shirt and telling anyone who would listen that his name was Kevin. I was scared of Kevin.

Walking down the street I passed the gay pub, the bondage and leather shop, the new age emporium offering peace in a thousand different ways; an art installation in another shop window with a crucifix and a version of the Twenty Third Psalm criticising heroin use and abuse (I think). There were people on the street handing out material about Jesus. There were ads for bands, plays, festivals and an Anthony Robbins seminar that would change my life and unleash my

potential. I thought for a while about my potential.

Most people seemed to be out for a good time. Restaurants from all nations seemed to be attracting people from all nations, haircuts and varieties of body-piercing.

I was walking down the street because I was going to one of the greatest Woolworths in the Southern Hemisphere. It's not quite as good as the greatest Coles in the Southern Hemisphere but that was too far to walk to. Both shops are great. Nowhere else can you be paralysed by choice so quickly and so completely. I think that shopping in this way is the closest that a male can get to the feeling of being a hunter/gatherer again. The challenge of finding the bargain; of providing for the family amongst the confusion and danger of the consumer jungle.

It was with these Homeric thoughts that it took all of ten minutes to sort through the varieties of ice cream before deciding and then it was over to the wall of chocolate for another ten minutes of decision making. How many decisions can a man make in one evening?

A girl with blond and black hair and an eyebrow ring took my money.

On the way back home I saw Kevin again; he was coming towards me but he didn't see me or rather he seemed to look right through me with eyes I think I last saw on a Ron and Valerie Taylor shark documentary.

I stopped to look for a copy of Doug Coupland's book *Generation X* (how old is

generation X anyway?) that I had seen a few weeks ago in the window of the second hand store. While I was looking I heard a voice behind me say "Maybe she doesn't love you". He wasn't talking to anyone and I wondered if he was talking to me; and if he was, who was she and how did he know and was it true? I was worried for a moment that it might be true. The words of prophets and all that.

And then he kept on talking and I wondered if perhaps he was Kevin's dad.

There were more Bogongs flying around the neon.

I bought a cake from a girl with pink hair, a nose ring, shaved underarms and unshaved legs and as I walked home I passed three guys talking about Kevin and what a weirdo he was. They looked scary too; big, and I started to maybe fear for Kevin if he got too close to them. A police car went by and I wondered if they were after Kevin as well—he was doing some mighty strange things amongst the traffic a little while ago.

Passing by Cordobes' Pizza place I wondered how long he had been there and what he had seen and what he thought. Bob Gould shuffled past on his way back to the bookshop; he looks as if he has seen and thought just about everything. A couple of others looked like they didn't think about anything. Except maybe their haircut and having a good time.

I wondered again how people ever got the ideas for the art work in Mura Clay and noticed that the same people were still

waiting to get their meal in the new restaurant near our place about 30 minutes after I first saw them.

The new Thai takeaway on the corner was full too—it's only got three tables but at least they were doing good business. The little statue of the Buddha that watched over the stove must have been smiling on them.

I saw more Bogongs hovering around the street lights and the bottle brush outside our place and the noise was deafening as three of those semi-trailers that carry cars seemed to be racing down King Street on their way to town.

Once inside I watched a few minutes of television. *The Nanny* was on but the newish show on the other channel looked more interesting. It was about a religious cult that was looking for the return of an alien space craft to come and take them away. It's sort of complicated but they (the cult that is) were going to kill everyone except themselves within a two mile radius so the space craft could land. The FBI and the army intervened and there was a big gunfight, a few people were killed and I think the real spacemen got away.

There were two more Bogong moths hovering around the light.

Summer's here (that's good); these are strange days indeed. Others are around: so many and so different; so diverse. And is it only the Bogongs who are looking for the light?

