

11/81 "Towards a Theology of Ordination"

Diocesan Doctrine Commission Report: 1983

This report was received by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in October 1983.

Introduction

1. This resolution requested comment upon the General Synod Doctrine Commission Report, "Towards a Theology of Ordination", with particular reference to the nature of ministerial priesthood; the relationship between ordination and presidency at the Holy Communion; and lay presidency at the Holy Communion.
2. Final deliberation of the Commission centred upon two papers -
 - (a) The Nature of Ministerial Priesthood - P. T. O'Brien.
 - (b) Lay Presidency in the New Testament and Today - P. W. Barnett.
3. The Commission, in response to 11/81, reports as follows, noting that the references to "the Doctrine Commission" within this section of this report relate to the General Synod Doctrine Commission.
4. The Report, titled "Towards a Theology of Ordination" (Sydney, 1981), was prepared in response to a series of issues raised by the modern debate, including whether men who continue in secular employment, whether lay persons might be licensed to preside at the eucharist and whether men might be ordained priests for a limited duration. These practical issues raised the question of the meaning of ordination, and the Commission addressed itself to this by evaluating the biblical and historical material.
5. The Report begins by examining the New Testament origins of ministry and then proceeds to an historical survey ("Developments after the New Testament", "The English Ordinals") before addressing specific issues, e.g. "What is priesthood?", "Indelibility", "Priests and secular work", "Lay presidency at the eucharist", "Lay ministries", etc. Historical judgements and theological assertions are loosely interwoven with exhortatory material, while doubtful interconnections frequently made, and these raise questions about the hermeneutical principles followed by the compilers of the Report.
6. Our first concern is with chapter 6, "What is priesthood?" This section (pars. 65-80) lies at the heart of the Report - the conclusions the Commission reaches derive from what is set forth in the chapter - and we shall examine both it and a number of its assumptions in due course. We shall then focus on lay presidency at the Holy Communion Service.

Remarks on Priesthood in the Biblical and Historical Survey

7. The Report correctly observes that the New Testament "certainly views hereditary, cultic priesthood as coming to an end" (par. 22). The word "priest" is never applied to a Christian minister in the New Testament, but *only* to Christ. Paul uses priestly language with reference to his own ministry of the gospel (Rom. 15:16). In the developments after the New Testament, the Report notes that from Hippolytus' time, when ordination was interpreted as separating clergy from laity, Old Testament passages about priesthood were beginning to be used as models for the Christian ministry. Clergy were regarded as a sacred group within the church and the ministry of the whole people of God began to be downgraded (par. 34).
8. During the Middle Ages the chief focus of Christian ministry was the priest. His ministry was "largely pastoral-liturgical, with the celebration of mass the key point" (par. 38). At the conclusion of this chapter (par. 43) the compilers, recognising that the "priesthood of all the faithful" (which is clearly present in the New Testament) was lost as an essential element during the Middle Ages, made the following assertion: "Any theology of ordination and its expression in an ordinal should make clear the link between three ministries: the priestly ministry of Christ, the priestly ministry of His church, and that (i.e. priesthood) of his ministers." As we shall see, this threefold view of priesthood is the crux of the argument in the Report.

The Nature of Priesthood According to the Report

9. The General Synod Commission on Doctrine notes with approval that throughout the history of Christian thought on ministry a consistent theme has been "the relationship of the ministries of all, and especially of those ordained to the ministry of Christ". Christ is the Deacon in whose *diakonia* we share, He is the Apostle in whose mission we all participate and He is "our great High Priest, and the church is His priestly body". This is of the utmost theological significance in the Report since the churches in both East and West have, quite rightly, "seen their priests to participate in Christ's continuing priesthood for the salvation of all" (par. 64). The very eternal salvation of men and women is bound up with the right kind of priestly ministry participating in Christ's ongoing priesthood.
10. When we speak of priests or priesthood in Anglican circles, we refer to this *fundamental* ministry. Intrinsic to it are the preaching of the pure word of God and the due administration of the sacraments. One might be inclined to think that this twofold emphasis on the word of God and the proper administration of the

sacraments was at one with what might be called in other circles the ministry of a presbyter. But the compilers of the Report wish to assert more than this, and would not be happy with the simple substitution of "presbyter" for "priest". Citing with approval the ARCIC statement on *Ministry and Ordination*, the Doctrine Commission Report notes: "Despite the fact that in the New Testament ministers are never called 'priests' (*hiereis*), Christians came to see the priestly role of Christ reflected in these ministers and used priestly terms to describe them" (par. 66). Although the mediaeval church erred in making the Old Testament material on priesthood and sacrifice normative for Christians ministers without reference to Christ as the control, it is still appropriate to use priestly language of the church and Christian ministers. Commenting on the ARCIC statement, the Report asserts that it is through "the role of such ministers in the eucharist . . . (that) the Christian community participated in Christ's priestly sacrifice" (par. 66). Further, "the priest is authorised to act in his ministry *in persona Christi*"; those who receive ministry, therefore, from a priest as *priest* "may expect that through Him God's word will be spoken, forgiveness declared and the presence of Christ brought near" (par. 68).

11. On the subjective side, the compilers recognised that "the priest's life should be seen to correspond to what is ministered", since the "authentic following of Christ is the other side of ministerial priesthood as a sacramental sign" (par. 69). True priesthood should not involve the ruling over others; instead, priests, themselves, live under the authority of God's word, recognising the power they exercise is not theirs but God's (par. 79).

12. But one may ask why the notion of ministerial priesthood need continue at all, if Christian ministers are not called "priests" in the New Testament, and how the ministry of the priest in the eucharist enables the Christian community to participate in Christ's priestly sacrifice (par. 66)? The answer to these related questions is given in par. 73, which provides the crux of the argument in this sixth chapter. A correlation is attempted between three distinct but related ministries: (i) the priesthood of Christ, (ii) the priesthood of the Church, and (iii) the ministry of priests. These three categories are expanded as follows –

- (i) Christ alone is the true priest. His priesthood is perfect and continues forever in heaven.
- (ii) God's people are incorporated by baptism into the royal priesthood, and the people of God are equipped by the gift of the Spirit to sustain the life of their congregation.
- (iii) The ministry of the ordained priest is to lead in worship, intercession and service. Priests participate in Christ's continuing priesthood for the salvation of all.

13. On the "indelibility" or absolute permanence of the ministerial priesthood, the compilers admitted "it is not possible to point to any New Testament text or texts which explicitly set out the irrevocability of ordination". However, those who hold this doctrine see it "as rooted in the integrity of the biblical teaching on the priesthood of Christ, the nature of the divine call to His people corporately and individually and the faithfulness of God" (par. 88). Just as Christ's own priesthood is eternal (e.g. Heb. 7:16 ff.) so He calls His people into a royal priesthood, which we must hold to be permanent. The doctrine of the permanence of ordination is consonant with basic biblical themes and is tied in with the relationship between Christ and His Church, which is also permanent (par. 89).

14. The inviolability and permanence of the ministerial priesthood clearly bears on the issue of lay presidency at the eucharist, and the Report arrives at its negative conclusions only by doubtful argument (pars. 98-112).

15. While recognising that "there is no specific New Testament evidence as to who presided at the eucharist" (par. 106, cf. pars. 101, 109), the compilers assert "there is well nigh universal consensus since the early centuries that only those ordained to the priesthood were to preside" (par. 106). For the variety of reasons this latter tradition, according to the Report, ought to prevail: (i) Any departure from this consensus should only be made for clear and agreed theological reasons; the arguments put forward so far for lay presidency have not met the necessary criteria. (ii) To adopt a practice of lay presidency at the eucharist would be inimical to the good order of the church, and to propose a change would "call in question the very necessity of ordination itself" (par. 107). (iii) Since presidency at the eucharist is the focal point of the total ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care, this can only be carried out by one who is properly called, trained and ordained (par. 105). Why a lay person may be licensed to preach the word but not licensed as a lay president of the sacrament is not really answered.

Comments and Criticisms of the Report

16. Any evaluation of a report, such as that produced by the General Synod Commission on Doctrine, must bear in mind that it is a joint work, produced by a committee in which there may not have been total agreement on all points. Further, it needs to be recognised that complete consistency of language and expression is an ideal to be sought, not an achievement already attained. Our comments will endeavour to keep these factors in mind and our assessment will focus on major, rather than incidental, matters. Finally, it is not our intention to give a critique of the whole Report. The chapters dealing with "Priests and secular

work" and the "Diaconate" do not specifically fall within our area of concern at this point, though we recognise the Report appropriately addressed itself to these modern issues.

17. Several significant matters of principle and presupposition arise from the Report.

The Status of Scripture

18. After isolating several questions raised by the modern debate, the compilers have competently and helpfully summarised the New Testament teaching on ministry. An historical survey of relevant material subsequent to the New Testament period follows and then the Report addresses itself to specific questions, such as "What is priesthood?" "Indelibility", and so on. New Testament references, often with explanation, feature throughout the whole presentation and, although there is no formal statement to this effect (and it is not as though one is expected), it is clear that the members of the commission consider the Scriptures to be important.

19. However, the handling of the New Testament in the later chapters of the Report gives grounds for considerable concern for the theological conclusions reached in these later sections were frequently at variance with the survey of the New Testament teaching on ministry. Again and again it was noted that a particular doctrine is not taught in the New Testament, yet the Report arrives at a conclusion or supports a practice that endorses the doctrine. Thus, although the term "priest" is not applied to a Christian minister in the New Testament (the example of our Lord and Paul are particular exceptions, see below), it is appropriate for us to do so on the basis of later tradition. This, as we shall see, is not simply a question of semantics (as, for example, our use of "church" to describe a building) since the view of priesthood presented is, in our judgement, inconsistent with the New Testament teaching on ministry.

20. Further, the Doctrine Commission recognises that the irrevocability of ordination is not explicitly taught in the New Testament. However, it contends that the permanence of ordination is consonant with basic biblical themes as well as being bound up with the eternal priesthood of Christ. The use of certain Scripture texts here (par. 88) is unusual and one has to conclude that the notion of the irrevocability of ordination has been previously settled on grounds other than those drawn from Scripture. A particular practice may not be mentioned in Scripture; but when the Report elevates that practice to a doctrine which must be adhered to, then it is going beyond the Scripture, requiring obedience to something that God Himself has not demanded.

21. At several points where the Report sets forth a scriptural admonition which is to be obeyed, or a godly example to be followed it gives the impression that the whole of the presentation is seeking to be consistent with the Scripture, particularly the New Testament. But we must conclude, from the abovementioned and other examples, that the status of the New Testament, in the later sections where the major doctrinal issues are treated, is simply that of *one tradition* in a wider, fluid and ongoing tradition. Scripture, for the doctrinal and pastoral conclusions of this Report, is not the final court of appeal.

The Question of "Ministry in Christ's Priesthood"

22. Fundamental to the Report of the Doctrine Commission is the sixth chapter, "What is Priesthood?" This chapter reflects a modern view which seeks to correlate Christ's priesthood, the priesthood of the people of God, and the priesthood of the ordained minister. It also seeks to explain the last two as "participation in Christ's priesthood". This attempted correlation is not consistent with sound exegesis or interpretation of the New Testament as the following discussion will endeavour to show.

Christ's Priesthood

23. In the New Testament, only the Epistle to the Hebrew (esp. ch. 7) speaks of Christ as a priest, or describes His work in terms of the Old Testament priestly function. Two specific truths are brought out through this figure of priesthood: (i) our access to God through the death of Christ, and (ii) His intercession for us. Yet priesthood as such is not essential to this understanding of Christ's death or of His heavenly session, for a number of New Testament writers speak in terms of access to God through the death of Christ considered as a sacrifice (I Peter 3:18; Rom. 5:2; cf. Eph. 2:13, 17f.). The doctrine of access to God through Christ's death does not require the concept of priesthood to express it.

24. Similarly, although Hebrews associates "intercession" with Jesus' continuing priesthood (7:24f.), the same truth about intercession is brought out elsewhere in the New Testament without reference to priesthood, e.g. at Rom. 8:34, Paul links Christ's intercession with his session at God's right hand, not with priesthood. In v. 26, the Holy Spirit also intercedes for the people of God, but this does not mean we should call Him a priest. Access to God through Christ's death and His heavenly session are two truths expressed through Christ's priesthood. Yet, these two doctrines are formulated in the New Testament occasionally without priestly categories.

The Priesthood of the Saints

25. The so-called "priesthood of all believers" turns up in only two of the books of the New Testament: 1 Peter 2:5, 9; and Revelations 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. At 1 Peter 2:5, 9 where Christians generally are addressed, they are called "a royal priesthood" and also "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". The particular connotation of priesthood in 1 Peter (which is not tied in with the priesthood of Christ) is the privilege of access to God which Christians generally have, together with the responsibility of offering spiritual sacrifices, which is the witness of the redeemed, who are to "show forth the excellencies of God Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light". In the three relevant passages of the Apocalypse (Rev. 1:6; 5:10 and 20:6) where there is reference to the reign of the saints and their priesthood in the messianic kingdom, the emphasis is on their position of privilege and access to God. Although this position is due to the work of Christ, there is no suggestion that the image of priesthood is from any supposed priesthood of Christ (in fact, the saints are "priests of God and of Christ") although their reign is "with Christ" (20:6).

26. In sum, neither 1 Peter nor the Apocalypse relates the priesthood of the saints to that of Christ (neither book speaks of a priesthood of Christ) despite the importance given to the death of Christ in connection with the establishment of the new covenant and the privileges of the people of God under it.

The Teaching of Hebrews

27. The theme of Christ's identification with those He came to save is closely interwoven in Hebrews with the theme of His unique achievement on their behalf. This teaching is designed to encourage believers to keep on drawing near to God with confidence, holding fast their Christian confession and considering one another with a view to mutual encouragement in running the Christian race (10:19-25).

28. It is suggested in the Report that a priestly role for believers is implied by the use of the terminology of "drawing near" and the imagery of 10:19-22. However, it should be noted that the terminology was by no means restricted to the activity of priests in the Greek version of the Old Testament (e.g. Gen. 18:23, Isa. 29:13, 58:2).

29. Furthermore, Christian believers are encouraged to draw near to God through Christ to receive the benefits of His finished work (note especially 4:16 and 7:25), and not to offer anything. The high priestly work of Christ makes it possible for the people of God to *draw near with "a better hope" than they could on the basis of the levitical priesthood (7:15-19, noting especially v. 19)*. There is no suggestion in Hebrews that the people of God share in Christ's priestly ministry other than by constantly drawing on its benefits (compare James 4:8).

30. Those engaged in the ministry of the word and sacraments can only function in a way that is consistent with the picture of Hebrews when they are involved in *exhorting people to receive with gratitude the benefits already won for them by Christ*.

31. Any suggestion of active participation by Christians generally or ministers in particular in the priestly work of Christ detracts from the uniqueness of Christ and His work as presented in Hebrews.

The Priesthood of Paul

32. The apostle Paul at Rom. 15:16 metaphorically designates his apostolic work as a "sacrificial priesthood" in which he performs priestly service in the "cultus" of the gospel (Cranfield, Romans, pp. 755f., following K. Barth, has recently argued that Paul views himself as fulfilling the function of a Levite, not a priest). Clearly, Paul is not speaking of the performance of a material rite or cultic action; he means that his apostolic ministry is like a priesthood in that he is enabling the Gentiles to worship God acceptably. Whatever the precise sense of his metaphor, there is nothing in it to suggest that Paul viewed his "priesthood" as a participation in, or even related to, a priesthood of Christ; indeed, the apostle does not speak of Christ's work in terms of priesthood.

Conclusion: the "Ministry" and Christ's Priesthood

33. The priestly work of Christ is clearly related in the New Testament to Christian believers as a whole. His saving work is executed on behalf of all who believe in Him. Consequently, all believers draw near to God through Jesus, and they sit at God's right hand through Him. He unites His people with Himself both in His access to God and His kingly rule. But they do not *actively* participate in His atoning work or in His kingly rule; that is, they did not, and do not, contribute or add to His work by anything they do now. It would be better to say that *because He represents them, they enjoy the benefits of what He has achieved. Only in this sense can "participation" be used*, and it is of the utmost importance to recognise that the benefits He has won are to be enjoyed by *all* believers.

34. The Christian ministry is clearly related in a most direct way to the application of the benefits of Christ's work to the hearts and lives of men - both the benefits of His death and those of His heavenly

session (which, of course, are related). The task of the minister is *apostolic*, in that men are called and sent by Christ to proclaim His gospel and to teach disciples to observe whatever He has commanded (Matt. 28:18 ff.) or it is that of a *reconciling ambassador* discharged on behalf of Christ, urging men and women to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). We may call it a work of *shepherding* with pastors acting as subordinates to the Chief Shepherd Whose flock it is (1 Pet. 5:4). Or it may simply be called "*ministry*". But there is no room for a priestly concept where the minister's relation to Christ's work is concerned. Where the distinctively "priestly" work of Christ is in view, the minister stands not on the side of Christ but on the side of the people - as one of those for whom access to God is provided by Christ's death.

35. We conclude that the attempt made, in the Doctrine Commission Report, to correlate Christ's priesthood, the priesthood of the people of God and the priesthood of the ordained minister fails because it is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament, as is also the attempt to explain the last two as "participation in Christ's ministry". Since the Report, in our judgement, is in error regarding (a) "the nature of ministerial priesthood", it can also be shown its conclusions are incorrect regarding (b) "the relationship between ordination and presidency at the Holy Communion", (c) "lay presidency at the Holy Communion", and (d) indelibility.

Lay Presidency in the New Testament and Today

36. Presiding at the Holy Communion should not be considered in isolation from other acts of presidency at Christian meetings. Unfortunately, there are very few examples of presiding in the New Testament and such as there are (Jesus at the Last Supper, James at the Jerusalem Council, Paul on board ship) are so unusual as to be unhelpful in providing a pattern for us today.

Structures of Authority - the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers

37. The Lord's Supper is first and foremost a congregational, not a priestly, activity. If the role of the celebrant is as central as the Report assumes (p. 43) it is remarkable that the New Testament is silent in defining his identity. We maintain that the role of the President is relatively unimportant since the focus is not on what he does but on the corporate act of remembering the Lord's death through the total activity of the thanksgiving, distributing and eating together (see 1 Cor. 10:16-17).

38. Paul's failure to say who should preside at the Lord's Supper, in 1 Cor. 11, may have been deliberate. In the disorder of the Corinthian church, nothing would have been easier than to deal with the problem by means of official action. There may be a parallel in the remark that the Corinthians should be able to resolve dispute without resorting to the secular courts (1 Cor. 6:2). It may be that Paul, likewise, expected them to solve the Lord's Supper problem from within their own resources of Christian love and wisdom. Perhaps Christians are more likely to grow up spiritually if they put their sanctified minds to problems of this kind rather than simply create a ministry structure.

39. The literature, which comes immediately after the New Testament, reflects the struggle to cope with the lack of structural definition in these matters. Perhaps that means we instinctively (and wrongly) seek mechanical and organisational solutions to what are really spiritual and relationship problems.

40. Thus, the *Didache* directs a format for the Eucharist (9, 10) though without indicating who should preside. Prophets, however, may give thanks "as they wish" (14), that is, extemporaneously.

41. At the time Clement wrote to the Corinthians (c. A.D. 95) the local church bishops were not the first, nor the second but the third generation removed from the Apostles (44). They had been appointed either by the local church bishops who preceded them, or by other "eminent men", and also "with the consent of the whole church". So long as these men have "blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable and disinterested spirit", they cannot justly be dismissed from the ministry (44), though this apparently had happened in Corinth recently. We infer from Clement that the local church bishops gave thanks at the Eucharist (41).

42. Ignatius insisted that the bishop, that is the local church bishop, whom Ignatius speaks of in monoepiscopal terms, must be present for the Eucharist to be valid. Nevertheless, the bishop could appoint someone else to preside at the Eucharist with the bishop present. (Smyrnaeans 8).

43. If we regard the New Testament as authoritative, it will be appropriate to seek for guidance in that quarter, even if only in general principles, rather than in some later epoch of church history. It is preferable, we submit, to opt for the spiritual challenge of the New Testament rather than for organisational and structural decisions of the post-New Testament era, which quickly became rigid and divisive of Christians into fixed classes of clergy and laity. The patterns of the apostolic age should be of greater interest to us than those of the post-apostolic age.

Presbyters in the New Testament

44. It has been argued that since there is no reference to PRESBYTERS by Paul until the Pastorals he did not originally envisage the appointment of Presbyters. Against this, he does refer to the synonym, *EPISCOPOI* (local church bishops) in Philippi (Phil. 1: 1) and in his earliest letters he referred to pastoral leadership (1 Thess. 5:12-13). Since early documents like James (5:14) and 1 Pet. (5:1-4) refer to PRESBYTERS, it is probable that they were fundamental to early Christianity. The Acts refers to PRESBYTERS in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:30) as well as in the Gentile Churches established by Paul (Acts 14:23).

45. Presbyters, as pastors of the flock, were to provide for the stability and continuity in the New Testament Churches with other members expected to exercise their gifts, motivated by love, for the upbuilding of the congregation (1 Cor. 12-14). Ministry was by no means limited to Presbyters then, nor should it be today. Every member was seen as endowed with gifts for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7).

46. While there is no evidence, it is a reasonable assumption that these PRESBYTERS usually presided at Church meetings, including at the Lord's Supper. Peter's call to the PRESBYTERS (1 Pet. 5:1-4) to "shepherd the flock" and to "episcopize" (or supervise) them makes it likely that the task of presidency regularly fell to them. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that although presidency and administration were part of the congregational life of the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 12:8b) they were in the nature of an inconspicuous infrastructure and by no means so visible and important as they would later become.

New Testament Presbyters and Rectors

47. The rector in the Anglican polity may be thought of as a PRESBYTER who, by virtue of his training and gifts, as recognised by ordination, is set apart for an "official" and paid ministry within a congregation and for the period of his appointment. As such, he should be regarded as the senior PRESBYTER among the permanent local PRESBYTERS in the congregation who together provide a context of stability and continuity in which the congregation can be built up by the mutual exercise of gifts (Eph. 4:11-16).

48. From the second century it has become customary in most churches for the "official" PRESBYTER to preside at the gathering of the congregation, including at the Lord's Supper. While this paper is not advocating any change in custom, it is important to recognise that it is, nonetheless, custom and in no way an essential of theology, a point on which we take issue with the Report (p. 43, par. 105).

Lay Presidency Today

49. In our church life today, however, it is not always possible for the "official" PRESBYTER to be present. Under existing arrangements, the congregation may not engage in the Lord's Supper without an "official" PRESBYTER, a significant problem, for example, in remote country areas. In these and similar circumstances, it is appropriate that local church PRESBYTERS be appointed to preside.

50. There is no difficulty in establishing a statement of biblical qualifications and responsibilities for the PRESBYTER. The qualifications for the PRESBYTER/*EPISCOPOS* are clearly laid down in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-8 as are their responsibilities in Acts 20:18-35 and 1 Pet. 5:1-4. These qualifications and responsibilities are as applicable to local church PRESBYTERS as to the "official" PRESBYTER.

51. It is suggested that such PRESBYTERS be appointed by the rector for a three-year period as ratified by a congregational meeting and approved by the diocesan bishop. The ministry of such persons should be confined to their congregation. With the benefit of experience of the appointment of lay assistants at the Holy Communion, it should not be difficult to provide for the appointment of local church PRESBYTERS (or whatever they will be called - one suggestion is "local church leaders") by ordinance or canon. Just as the lay assistant has in time been accepted by church people, it is expected that lay presidency will also, in time, find acceptance. It will be consistent with the spirit of the New Testament if their appointment and ministry is low key and relatively unobtrusive with maximum emphasis given to the loving exercise of gifts by the wider membership.

Conclusion on Lay Presidency

52. If the Christians of the sixteenth century rediscovered biblical doctrine of the *Priesthood* of all believers, Christians of the twentieth century are rediscovering the *Ministry* of all believers. Fundamental to that ministry by all believers is the word-ministry of the pastors and teachers in the congregation which equips the other members for their ministries (Eph. 4:11-12). One of these ministries is leadership to be exercised by those members whose gifts of experience and maturity commend them to the congregation. Presiding at the Eucharist is a proper expression of such gifts, and one which is thoroughly in keeping with the "body members" gifts' pictures of church life within the New Testament.

Recommendation on Lay Presidency

53. *The Doctrine Commission believing, therefore, that there is no Scriptural or doctrinal barrier to lay presidency at the Eucharist RECOMMENDS that the Synod explore immediately the desirability and constitutional aspects of such a presidency.*

Ordination of Deaconesses to the Diaconate

54. The Archbishop forwarded a copy of the report of the Standing Committee of the English General Synod - October 1982 - to the Commission, seeking advice on the possible theological implications of some questions raised within it, in particular, on ". . . whether in the event of our church making provision for women to be admitted to the Order of Deacon, those who at present belong to the Order of Deaconesses should be automatically considered eligible, and indeed whether an additional step should be to either admit them all as Deacons, or even to declare them to be so . . ."

55. The Commission is responding to a paper prepared by D. B. Knox and, upon completion of its deliberation, will forward the reply to the Archbishop.

21/82 Remarriage of Divorced Persons

56. This question has been a major focus of activity for the Doctrine Commission. Papers have been prepared and presented as follows –

- (a) Divorce and Remarriage - P. T. O'Brien (a paper presented to the National Evangelical Anglican Congress 1981).
- (b) Divorce and the Bible - D. G. Peterson.
- (c) The "One Flesh" concept as it relates to Marriage, Divorce and Possible Remarriage - R. H. Goodhew.
- (d) Some Questions and Comments Re the Covenant of Marriage and its implications for Divorce - R. E. Lamb.

57. Some further discussion and analysis is required before the Commission can determine the final shape of the report. If this cannot be done before October, it will be necessary to request the leave of Synod to continue the work into 1984.

36/82 The Family in Modern-day Life

43/82 "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"

58. (The substance of the Commission's reports on these matters has not been printed as those reports have been dealt with in the Standing Committee Report and in the separate report on 36/82.)

Doctrine Commission Working Papers

59. A number of working papers are referred to in the body of this Report which issues of space, printing costs, etc., do not allow to be printed with the Report. However, copies could be made available to any interested persons through the Commission Secretary for a small cost. It is the hope of the Doctrine Commission that it will be possible at some future date to publish a booklet containing some of the working papers prepared for the Commission.

60. While particular papers and reports are usually the primary work of one or two members of the Commission, all are forwarded only after careful consideration by the full Commission, and with the necessary concurrence of the whole body of members.

For the Diocesan Doctrine Commission

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July 1983