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A review of *Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology*. (Wipf & Stock, 2012) by Michael P Jensen

Sydney Anglicans are choosing a new generation of leaders during 2013: a new Archbishop, a new Principal for Moore Theological College (recently announced as Dr Mark Thompson) and a new Dean for St Andrews Cathedral. What broader impact – if any – will these significant changes in personnel have on Anglican life in and beyond Sydney?

More specifically, what impact will the younger Jensens continue to have on the diocese?

There is a striking *Vimeo* clip of Dave Jensen produced recently by the Bible Society having his chest tattooed with a bible verse.

More significantly Michael P Jensen's latest book *Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology* reveals the concerns and reflects the passions of the retiring generation of diocesan leaders.

Michael, aged in his early 40s, is an ordained minister in the diocese of Sydney, received his PhD from Oxford and has been a lecturer at Moore for nearly a decade.

Easy comparisons invite an obvious question – can a younger Jensen write a book on Sydney Anglicanism which is, by any measure, fair and objective given his own father is the Archbishop?

Sydney Anglicanism: An Apology is neither a titillating *exposé* of family dynamics of the most influential Sydney Anglican clan during the last generation (as some critics might hope), nor simply an apologetic *defence* of the family business (as some insiders might anticipate). Conscious of critiques of his father, his uncle and their close contemporaries (e.g. McGillion's *The Chosen Ones* and Porter's *The New Puritans and/or Sydney Anglicans*), Michael Jensen offers a nuanced exegesis and insightful evaluation of the Sydney Anglican diocese.

Jensen's reflective theological method – on display throughout the book, particularly in Part One ('The Bible') – is the strength of this book. His understanding and assessment of the significance of 'biblical theology' in chapter 3 is concise and compelling.

In this chapter, former Archbishop of Sydney Donald P Robinson is rehabilitated as a significant theologian for Sydney Anglicans and properly credited with 'pioneering' the biblical theology approach (34). Robinson's importance for the theology of Michael Jensen (and Anglicanism) reappears in chapter 6 on ecclesiology. In the much-debated dispute on the Knox-Robinson doctrine of the church, it is clear that Jensen sides with Robinson more than Knox (78-81).

In both chapters Jensen raises some difficult issues and thoughtful questions for Sydney Anglicans. He notes the highly valued biblical theology of the Sydney '*risk(s) becoming a very limited glimpse rather than a panoramic view*' (40). And '*the potential weakness here is that the specifically theological foundations and commitments upon which a Biblical theological method is built go 'unexpressed and unchecked.'*' (41)

The second half of chapter 6 Jensen evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the Knox-Robinson view of the church (84-88). These are among the best pages in the book. Jensen demonstrates an agile and independent spirit, yet is appropriately humble in his critique of the shoulders, upon which he stands.

Part Two ('The Church') is devoted to more controversial dimensions of Sydney Anglicanism: are Sydney churches really Anglican? (ch 7); the ministry of women (ch 9); lay administration (ch 10); and, the politics of the Anglican Church League (ch 11). In this section, Jensen appears more defensive and less convincing as a theological interpreter.

His case for a 'complementarian' relationship between men and women illustrates my point.

At least three, divergent issues are on view here: political, doctrinal and missional.

Examined first is the politics of the diocesan Synod and its opposition to the ordination of women (126-8). This is followed by the doctrine of 'eternal subordination' focusing on a report by the Diocesan doctrine commission and the subsequent debate with Kevin Giles (131-5). The third is the missional importance of complementarianism amidst the apparent general confusion in public life over gender roles (136-7). Along the way Jensen outlines a view of male headship referring to the passages in 1 Tim 2 and 1 Cor 11 (128-130) and differentiates Sydney Anglicans' position from some leading North American fellow travellers (137-8).

Jensen's conclusion – that authority can be 'other-centered' – is theologically astute and one which is shared by many across the 'complementarian-egalitarian' divide. He also notes that 'what remains, therefore, is for Sydney Anglicans to work out the full implications of their position for their common life and shared mission' (141).

It is regrettable that Jensen did not afford more space to developing these kind of implications for the future of Sydney Anglicanism. While other emerging leaders within the diocese are exploring similar issues (e.g. John Dickson's *Hearing Her Voice: A Case for Women Giving Sermons*), Jensen's conclusion reflect somewhat opposing convictions. On the one hand 'Sydney looks less like changing its mind on this than previously' (141), on the other hand 'Sydney Anglicans have to work hard to...demonstrate that they really do believe in the fundamental equality of worth of the genders' (142).

Jensen seems to admit there is a gap between belief and practice which, in this instance, plainly demands a theological solution?

Michael P Jensen demonstrates in this book the kind of theological reasoning that Sydney Anglicans need in 2013 and beyond. While he shares many of the convictions and commitments of his forebears, Michael has established himself as a wise scholar and creative thinker who will be critical in the future of Anglicanism in this country.

By **Geoff Broughton**