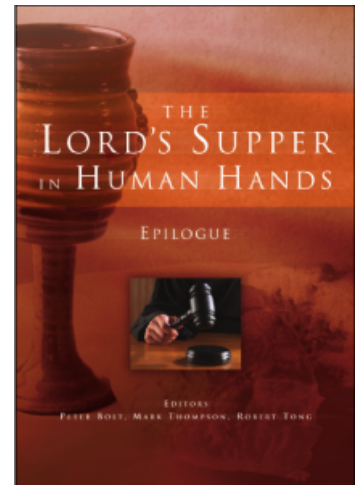


# Review: The Lord's Supper in Human Hands – Epilogue

An epilogue to *The Lord's Supper in Human Hands*, a treatise on lay and diaconal administration of Holy Communion which I reviewed some time ago, has been made available as a free pdf.



I was off-deck when the Appellate Tribunal brought its 2010 response to the Synod of Sydney's resolution accepting legal argument for non-presbyteral administration. I wondered at the time what Sydney's response would be. The synodical outcome is old news now. But now we have easy access to the booklet that outlines the basis for it.

No great commentary from me. Just a few points.

1. Bp. Peter Brain's minority report in the Appellate Tribunal's decision is I think thoughtful, balanced and well-spirited.
2. Bp. Glenn Davies' response to the decision says nothing new but brings new clarity to his argument. He does make a clear emphasis on the disparity in the logic used by the AT to recognise provision for women bishops in the current legislative corpus, but not diaconal administration. I agree with him at least to say that the disparity should never have existed: the AT interpretation that led to female episcopacy was an insipid way of recognising that practice – its proponents should have argued it into joyous acclamation and reception, not slipped it through a judicial

backdoor.

3. Bp. Davies assumes the AT decision is “advisory” not a “determination” and Robert Tong explicates this in his chapter on constitutional arrangements. I assume that this issue will be the next legal question raised.

Which in turn raises an interesting question about whether the AT will need to determine something about itself – and whether any response that it is determinative could then itself be taken as advisory!

Unsurprisingly the “judicial” aspects of the Anglican Church of Australia have failed to resolve this question. I concur with Bp. Brain’s emphasis on fellowship rather than legalism here.

---

## Evangelical Examination of Conscience

For those with a Roman Catholic heritage an *Examination of Conscience* may be familiar. It’s a series of questions, often based on the Ten Commandments or some form of catechism, which you are meant to ask of yourself before going to confession: Have I committed this or that sin? Have I had that wrong attitude? Where is my heart not right with God?



Being lumped together with confession it’s something the evangelical church has shied away from. And not for no reason – at its worst, when mixed with penance instead of penitence an examination of conscience could be taken as a desperate attempt to unearth every wrongdoing in order to avoid the

wrath of a vengeful god.

But at its best, when done in the light of the God of justice and mercy in whom forgiveness is a rock-solid given because of the cross of Christ, it is an act of devotion, a humble willingness to have oneself shaped for the Kingdom of God.

This is a thoroughly evangelical practice in line with the psalmist of Psalm 139:

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

In this I agree with David Gushee from a 2005 Christianity Today article where he sees in such examinations a “rich moral inventory” and decries the “staggering moral sloppiness that frequently characterises us” as evangelicals. And he asks:

*Which evangelical traditions today train their adherents in the kind of rigorous self-examination represented by the Catholic tradition of the “examination of conscience”? The Puritans and the followers of Wesley used to engage in such practices, but they have largely disappeared.*

*Which evangelical traditions today encourage the kind of daily self-examination and rigorous accountability represented by the evangelical Wilberforce? Can one find this kind of moral seriousness actively taught in any branch of the evangelical world?*

*Christianity is more than an event, an experience, or a set of beliefs. It is a way of life characterized by moral seriousness and the quest for holiness.*

I recently put together an Examination of Conscience for an Ash Wednesday service. I did this by looking at a whole bunch of different resources, most of them catholic, and picking the good questions without losing the hard questions. It has been

a worthwhile exercise.

---

## Wind of Change

For some reason the song by the Scorpions always tears me up.

I think it's something to do with the unrealised dreams and angst of a browbeaten Generation X.

It takes faith to keep dreaming.