

The Power of the Table

Revising the Theology, Form and Place of the Lord's Supper in the Worship of the Christian Church

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Summary

This article aims to revise predominant theological understandings of the Lord's Supper that are present in today's Christian churches which stress that somehow Jesus is present in the elements of the bread and wine. The author argues that in the Lord's Supper Jesus is present among the believers, but he offers a critique of Zwingli's view that shapes the celebration of the Lord's Supper in free churches. Accordingly, the author argues that the Lord's Supper must be understood as a full meal around the table which is focused on mutual fellowship between believers and Jesus, and not as a sacrifice in connection with an altar. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper should be a full meal and not just a "snack", a joyful act of a gathered community and not an individualistic penitential act, and it should be a regular part of the Sunday service with an importance equal to preaching. The first part of the article offers an overview of the four major theological views of the Lord's Supper, the second part talks about the role and place of the Lord's Supper in church history and various church denominations, the third part discusses the issue of God's presence in the Lord's Supper and the fourth part offers a revision of the form and place of the Lord's Supper in church worship.

Key words: Lord's Supper, altar, table, free churches, Jesus' presence in the elements of bread and wine; Jesus' presence among the believers

Introduction

A few years ago in the classroom, I heard a professor who said something like this: "It is a shame that we Christians disagree the most about the things that

should unite us the most - about baptism and the Lord's Supper." Today, when I think about these words, there is a great chance that this article would cause even more disagreement, yet the intention of this article is to offer a revision of the Lord's Supper - its theology, place and form in the worship of the Christian church, and to offer a basis for the removal of various misconceptions that in the course of time have distorted the theology and purpose of the Lord's Supper.

The thesis of this article is that because of wrong theology, the Lord's Supper is conducted in the wrong form and manner, and therefore occupies the wrong place in Christian worship. Wrong theology is based on the fact that the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is claimed to be in the elements of bread and wine. Accordingly, the form and the manner of the Lord's Supper are defined by an altar mentality. Another product of wrong theology is that on the one hand, in the Roman Catholic Church, the Lord's Supper has become a sacramental act explained by the doctrine of transubstantiation and occupies the center of worship, while on the other hand, in some Protestant churches, the Lord's Supper is marginalized in worship because preaching has become the center event of communal worship.

The revision argued for in this article claims that, theologically speaking, *Christ's presence* should be sought and recognized *among* the believers and not in the elements of the bread and wine. Accordingly, the Lord's Supper is an invitation to participate neither in the sacrifice nor the symbolic act of remembrance connected with the altar, but an invitation to encounter God and enjoy fellowship with God at the *table* that is accompanied with a *full meal*. Finally, there is no reason that the Lord's Supper should be placed in the very *center of worship* as a sacramental act, or to be marginalized as a decoration after the preaching. Instead, it is a means of God's communication and fellowship with believers and is of equal importance to preaching in Christian worship.

In order to prove my thesis, in the first part of the article, I will briefly present four major theological views of the Lord's Supper. After that, I will present a historical survey of how Christians throughout church history have understood and practiced the Lord's Supper in the worship setting. The historical survey will be limited to the elements that lead to the current situation where in the Roman Catholic Church and major Protestant churches the Lord's Supper is either over-emphasized or marginalized during communal worship. In the third part of the article, I will offer a theological revision and argue that from the biblical perspective, Christ's presence in the Supper is *among* the believers and not in the elements of communion. Finally, I will offer a theological revision of the Lord's Supper which is currently and predominately defined by the *altar* and suggest that the form of *table* should be the standard for practicing the Lord's Supper, and in conjunction with this, suggest that the Lord's Supper should occupy an equal position with preaching in Sunday services.

The Four Major Views on the Lord's Supper

Today, in the context of Western culture, we can speak about four major views of the Lord's Supper among Christians: a) transubstantiation – the doctrine held by the Roman Catholic Church; b) consubstantiation - the doctrine of the Lutheran Church; c) the real/spiritual presence of Christ - the position held by Reformed churches; d) the memorialist position – the view argued by Zwingli which is held today by the majority of churches with a Reformation background.

Transubstantiation

Transubstantiation is a doctrine which was officially declared in the *Fourth Lateran Council* in 1215 and was based on the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents. It teaches that after the words of consecration are spoken over the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, the 'appearances' of bread and wine (such as color, smell, form, etc.) remain the same but their inner substance is changed into the body and blood of Jesus (cf. Perry, 1994, 123). After merely criticizing the reformers, the council of Trent in 1551 in the "Decree on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist" finally offered the Roman Catholic alternative against Protestant views of the Lord's Supper:

After the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially contained in the venerable sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of those physical things. For there is no repugnance in the fact that our Saviour sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to his natural mode of existing, while he is sacramentally present to us in his own substance in many other places (McGrath, 2001, 196).

Medieval Roman Catholic theology also developed other concepts that gave support to the doctrine of transubstantiation: 1. The principle of concomitance which teaches that the substance of the living Christ - his body and blood - is found in each element of the Eucharist. Therefore, lay people receive the body and the blood of Christ in bread; 2. Consecration – a teaching that claims that the greatest moment in the Lord's Supper is not fellowship with Christ, but the transformation of the Eucharistic elements into the real blood and body of Christ; 3. Since Christ is really present in the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice offered to God; 4. The sacrifice that is presented to God brings grace to participants; 5. Sacred elements of the Eucharist can be used for later usage; 6. The elements that are kept must be worshiped as the living Christ (cf. Osterhaven, 2007, 410).

The Lord's Supper in Roman Catholic theology is predominately described

and understood as a sacrifice. Šagi-Bunić explains that in the Eucharist, Christ's sacrifice on the cross is really present and the Eucharistic prayer of the gathered church is a "sacrificial prayer of the church." Such prayer not only accompanies the act of sacrifice, but through this prayer, the church is constituted as the one who presents sacrifice in the act of actualizing Christ's sacrifice in the here and now. The gathered community prays that her offering would be accepted by God, that God would look upon her and that the church community would be included with Christ as the bringer of the sacrifice. The church also prays that God would receive Christ's sacrifice as the church's sacrifice and that she would herself become a sacrifice unto God together with Christ's sacrifice (cf. Šagi-Bunić, 1973, 92-93).

Šimundža argues that the first foundational aspect of the Eucharistic mystery is its characteristic as the bloodless sacrifice and observes that "the Church has never questioned the sacrificial character of the Eucharist." Because of everything previously mentioned, Šimundža describes the Eucharist as "the salvific well of our salvation," "the well of sanctifying grace," and "the conciliatory and an offering act of the whole community" (Šimundža, 1981, 484-85). Furthermore, Christ is present *among* the gathered church community, among those who are sick and poor, as well *in* the sacraments, but above all, in the most special way, he is present in the Eucharist (cf. Mateljan, 1995, 99).

Consubstantiation

Consubstantiation is the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper. Luther rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, but he insisted that the phrase "this is my body" needed to be taken literally. That does not mean that the bread actually becomes the physical body of Christ, but that Christ's body is present in, with and under the bread of the Lord's Supper (cf. Grudem, 2000, 994). Steven Ozment explains Luther's position regarding the Lord's Supper in this way:

Luther ... argued that Christ's body possessed the quality of ubiquity, or omnipresence, by virtue of which it was able to be in more than one place at the same time... Christ's divine nature could bear his human qualities and his human nature his divine qualities. Hence, Luther argued, wherever Christ was spiritually present, he could also be corporeally present: the partaker of the Eucharist received the one, whole, crucified and risen Christ (Ozment, 1980, 336).

Luther's view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper is also connected with the purpose and role that the sacraments have in the life of the believer. As McGrath explains, "Luther understood the Word of God and the sacraments to be inseparably

linked. Both bore witness to Jesus Christ, and both mediated his power and presence. The sacraments were thus capable of creating, as well as supporting or demonstrating faith” (McGrath, 2001, 188), or as Ozment points out, “sacraments physically contained and conveyed grace” (Ozment, 1980, 332). Hence, for Luther, the Lord’s Supper was not an unimportant part of the Christian life, but “an epitome and summary of the gospel” (Davis, 2010, 125), and it is natural that Luther viewed the role and importance of preaching in the church service as equally important to the Lord’s Supper. Davis’s words faithfully reflect Luther’s view on the Word of God and the sacraments:

If Luther had been asked the question, ‘Why should the Supper be celebrated frequently?’ he might well have been astonished; we can imagine him saying, ‘Why then should the gospel be frequently preached? Why should forgiveness of sins be frequently offered in the church? Only the devil himself would promote infrequent communion and neglect of the sacrament!’ (Davis, 2010, 126).

The Spiritual Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper

This view is connected with Calvin who rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and Zwingli’s memorial view of the Lord’s Supper. Although Christ is not really present in the Eucharist, he is present in Spirit. Therefore, Christ has no real Eucharistic presence, but by the Holy Spirit there is a real communion with the body and blood of Christ. The elements of the Supper do not change in substance, but Christ is mystically and spiritually present in the communion and offers his grace and blessing (cf. Beg, 2011, 12).

To explain his view, Calvin pointed to the idea that while Christ’s body remains in heaven “by the action of the Spirit, the believer was ‘lifted up’ to heaven to have communion with the risen Christ in his glorified humanity” (Davis, 2010, 128). Accordingly, for him, the Lord’s Supper was no memorial act because the bread and wine “become the divinely ordained means and instruments through which this personal union is experienced ... and by the action of the Spirit, Christ and the believer are really present to one another, and commune with one another in body, soul, and spirit” (Davis, 2010, 129).

Calvin’s view of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper, as with Luther, was also connected with the purpose and role that the sacraments had in the life of believers. Jasmin Milić explains that Calvin believed the sacraments could not suppress the Gospel or be its surrogate because they are connected together. Through the sacraments, we receive the grace of God and they confirm to our conscience the fact that we have been reconciled to God. But since they also bear

the mark of the Gospel they must be understood in connection with it (cf. Milić, 2005, 41). In other words, “the sacraments are the columns that support the faith that is founded on the Word of God” and “they are visible confirmation of the Word of God” (Kraljik, 2009, 126).

The Memorial View of the Lord’s Supper

This view is connected with Ulrich Zwingli who argued that the word “is” in the statement “this is my body” must be taken metaphorically and not literally, which means that bread only *signifies* Christ’s body. Accordingly, the Lord’s Supper is nothing more than a commemoration by which Christians proclaim “this life-bringing death, that is, preach it with praise and thanksgiving” (Davis, 2010, 126). Christ is remembered in his absence in the Eucharist, but he is present in the hearts of believers (cf. McGrath, 2001, 189-190).

Zwingli argued that the body of Christ is now at the right hand of God in heaven, so it could not simultaneously be on earth in the bread of the Lord’s Supper (cf. Davis, 2010, 127). He believed that tangible physical things could not contain or dispense spiritual reality; they could not nourish the spiritual. Hence, those who receive the Lord’s Supper without faith receive only bread and wine (cf. Ozment, 1980, 336). For Zwingli, faith, and not physical elements, is the essential means by which the believer feeds on Christ (cf. Davis, 2010, 127). Hence, the sacraments were only signs and memorials that demonstrated allegiance to and membership in the community. The one who participated in them merely publicly demonstrated faith and nothing more.

Such a view had an impact on the relationship between the Word of God and the sacraments, and the place of the Lord’s Supper in the church service. Zwingli believed that the sacraments were subordinate to the preaching of the Word of God because preaching brings faith into existence and sacraments merely provide an occasion for the public demonstration of one’s faith. The preaching of the Word of God is of central importance and the sacraments only confirm the message (cf. McGrath, 2001, 181). Accordingly, Zwingli suggested that the Lord’s Supper should be celebrated only three or four times a year. “Where Luther included a new emphasis upon the preaching within the context of the Eucharist, Zwingli insisted that preaching displace the Eucharist from its customary weekly Sunday celebration” (McGrath, 2001, 188).

The Lord's Supper in Church History - Its Role and Place in Worship

The Lord's Supper in Church History

The purpose of this part of the article is to show how the Lord's Supper has become a sacrificial event and what its role and place in the Sunday worship service was. The best place to start with this survey is the document called *Didache* which most scholars would date at the end of the first or beginning of the second century. After quoting parts from *Didache* 9-10 and 14, Ben Witherington III notices several things:

Firstly, the instructions given in *Didache* 10–11 are almost entirely about prayer. Only at the very end of *Didache* 10 and 11 and in *Didache* 14... we have some actual instructions that involve something other than prayer. Our author's primary concern is about the sort of prayers that should be offered at the meal. Secondly, there can be no doubt that we are talking about a meal shared by the community, not just any sort of meal, and in view of what is said in some of the prayer material, it seems very probable that our author envisions the Lord's Supper being a part of this meal.... Notice as well that the meal is seen as a time where the unity of the community of Jesus' followers is both recognized and prayed for.... Furthermore, here the meal is seen as something exclusive. Only the baptized should be allowed to partake of it.... One of the more telling features of this material is its eschatological orientation.... We also have reference to the gathering of the church from the four corners of the earth into God's kingdom twice, with the kingdom viewed as future (Witherington III, 2007, 92-93).

Most importantly, Witherington concludes that the Lord's Supper is seen in the context of a meal that provides spiritual benefit, communion, and is meant to unite the community:

There is certainly nothing here that suggests some sort of magical view of the elements, and we have no commentary at all about the words of institution that Jesus himself spoke. What we do have is the clear statement that Jesus himself (not the meal) is the one who provides everlasting life and the benefits of salvation. These benefits are given thanks for in the meal, not provided by the meal or its celebration. Notice that the thanksgiving is given for the bread and for the drink and also for the gift of eternal life. The former gifts are not seen as the means of receiving the latter more crucial and permanent gift. All these gifts come from and through Jesus (Witherington III, 2007, 94).

But two Roman Catholic scholars point out something else. In analyzing the *Didache*, Adolf Adam points out that the Sunday worship gathering in *Didache* was described with the word “sacrifice” (*thysia*) based on Malachi 1:11, 14 (cf. Adam, 1993, 23). Similarly, Anton Benveniste also claims that the worship service in *Didache* was understood as a sacrifice that fulfills the prophecy of Malachi 1:1, 14 (cf. Benveniste, 1970, 15). So there are two opposite interpretations of the same document.

Early in the second century, a shift in the understanding of the Lord’s Supper can be observed in the writings of Ignatius. Ignatius identified the thanksgiving meal with the agape meal and pointed out that there can be no valid Eucharist if there is no bishop or someone authorized by a bishop to officiate it (cf. Witherington III, 2007, 101). John Mark Hicks observes that for Ignatius, the Lord’s Supper is the centerpiece of the Christian assembly and the focal point of Christian unity, yet he fills his description of the Lord’s Supper with altar language. Accordingly:

...he encourages the Philadelphians to ‘participate in one Eucharist’ which ‘is one flesh’ and ‘one cup,’ just as there is ‘one altar’ and ‘one bishop’... Consequently, he describes the assembled church as the ‘place of sacrifice’... Wherever Jesus is, the altar is. Thus, the Eucharist of the assembled church is closely associated with the altar because it is closely associated with the flesh and blood of Jesus (Hicks, 2002, 130-31).

Around the time of Ignatius, we have a letter from a Roman official Pliny who wrote to the Emperor Trajan about Christians, and unlike Ignatius, the situation is such that the meal was separated from the worship event:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then to reassemble to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent sort (Witherington III, 2007, 101).

Justin is another figure to which we owe our understanding of the Lord’s Supper in the life of the early church, and he was the first one to leave a systematic description of the Eucharistic celebration (cf. Šagi-Bunić, 1973, 184). From Justin we discover that Christians gathered on Sunday, the meeting was led by a *proestos*, or president (probably bishop), and the meeting had several elements: a) the ministry of the Word contained the reading of the apostolic writings and the Old Testament books and a homily. After the homily, believers prayed for themselves and for all people around the world; b) the Eucharistic ministry in which believers would greet one another with a holy kiss, offer the gifts of bread,

water and wine over which the *proestos* would offer prayer and thanksgiving and then everyone would partake from the bread, water and wine; c) collection of offerings which were given freely according to each one's capability. Such gifts would be stored by the *proestos* who would distribute them to the needy (cf. Benveniste, 1970, 17; Šagi-Bunić, 1973, 184-85). It is noticeable that the wine and bread were totally separated from the meal (table) as he only mentions the bread and wine without the meal (cf. Hicks, 2002, 132).

Justin also provided a theological explanation of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is called *Eucharist* and the bread and wine are not just regular food and drink, but they are the body and blood of the incarnate Christ. The sacrificial character of the Lord's Supper is also present in *Dialogue with Trypho* where Justin claims that the prophecy of Malachi 1:10 speaks about the sacrifices that are offered daily in every place among the nations, that is, the bread and the cup of the Eucharist (cf. Šagi-Bunić, 1973, 185). Witherington observes that while Justin's "analogy between the incarnation of Christ himself as flesh and blood, which is said to have happened 'in the same manner' as the food and wine is flesh and blood," points forward to the medieval doctrine of the Eucharist: "We should not read too much from the later discussion into Justin's confusing words, as it is not at all clear he is talking about a real and ontological transformation of the elements into the real body and blood of Jesus" (Witherington, 2007, 103).

In about A. D. 197, Tertullian wrote his *Apologia* in which he defends the agape meal against pagan slander. He describes how the church would meet on Sunday evenings to eat a meal. The emphasis of these meals was on feeding the needy, it was a full meal and was the context for the Lord's Supper (cf. Witherington, 2007, 105). Benveniste points out that Tertullian did not leave a detailed description of the Eucharistic meeting, but we know that Sunday worship consisted of the reading of the Scriptures, singing Psalms, exhortation and prayer (cf. Benveniste, 1970, 18).

On the other hand, Cyprian separated the Eucharist as a morning liturgical/ecclesiastic event from the agape as a domestic evening event (cf. Hicks, 2002, 132). He speaks about the Eucharist as a sacrifice and the organization of the separatist community as the setting up of another altar. He writes, "It is not possible to set up another altar or for there to be another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever has gathered elsewhere is scattering" (Šagi-Bunić, 1981, 186).

This brief historical survey shows that before the doctrines of transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or the doctrine of spiritual presence and memorial position came to existence, the church experienced some radical shifts from the New Testament records of the Lord's Supper in the first three centuries. The Lord's Supper was removed from the context of the agape feasts and fellowship around the table, and was set up as an autonomous liturgical/ecclesiastic event defined

by the context of the altar. Furthermore, the speech about sacrifice was connected with the Lord's Supper, first only to describe the offering of the sacrifice on the part of the participants (Didache), to the place where the sacrifice of the Eucharist was connected with the blood and body of Christ.

Leonardo Beg summarized the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the period prior to the Reformation. He observed that in the theology of the Eucharist, the central emphasis was on Christ's presence in the bread and wine. Mass was viewed as a bloodless sacrifice with the idea that during the mass Christ is sacrificed on the altar all over again. Therefore, every Mass was the repeatable and real sacrifice of Christ which the priest presented on the altar. Thus the primary act of Mass became the elevation of the host. The elevation of the host originated in the belief that even observing the host has a salvific effect. In the twelfth century, in many parishes, believers only received bread in the Eucharist without wine. The primary reason was practical, and theologically, it was justified with the principle of concomitance. The communion of the believers became rarer, and that was theologically justified by pointing out the unworthiness and sinfulness of the believers. The altar was separated from the believers and located in the apse and priests were turned backwards from the believers during the rite. The Mass was performed in Latin which further removed the believers from the celebration of common liturgy (cf. Beg, 2011, 83-84).

The Center of Sunday Worship: The Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism

This part of the article will show what various churches view as the most important thing in their Sunday worship gatherings. It will be shown that for the Roman Catholic Church, the sacrament of the Eucharist is the most important element of worship while for Lutheran and Reformed churches, there is, more or less, a balance between the importance of preaching and the Eucharist. The reason for this comes from the fact that for Roman Catholics the sacraments are seen as saving powers and not merely strengthening powers as in the Protestant churches (cf. Tillich, 1968, 216). For most churches with a Reformation background, preaching is the center of worship and the sacraments are not as important. This model of Sunday worship is based on Zwingli's memorial understanding of the sacraments and the importance of preaching.

The Roman Catholic Church

Jeffrey Gros describes a regular Sunday service in the Roman Catholic Church:

The normal Sunday service in the Catholic Church is the celebration of Word

and sacrament. Three lessons from the Bible are read, one from the Hebrew Scriptures, one from the New Testament Epistles or Acts, and one from the Gospels. In this proclamation the community focuses on Christ's presence in his revealing Word. Each Sunday also includes the celebration of the sacraments of Eucharist, where Christ is encountered in the reception of bread and wine, in which his bodily as well as spiritual presence is received (Gros, 2008, 17).

Sunday's church worship in the Roman Catholic Church is called Mass and it has two main parts: the ministry of the Word and the Eucharistic celebration. These two elements are closely connected with each other and make one worship event (cf. Adam, 1993, 150). Altogether Mass has four main parts: a) introductory rituals – an entrance procession of the priest followed by a hymn in which he shows honor to the altar with a kiss, makes the sign of the cross (together with the rest of community) and greets the congregation. This is followed by the penitential rite, *Kyrie* (brief petition "Lord, have mercy), *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, and opening prayer; b) liturgy of the Word which contains three readings, singing between readings, a homily, a declaration or profession of the faith (creed) and ends with general intercessions and prayer of the faithful; c) liturgy of the Eucharist which includes the preparation of the offerings, the rite of hand washing, prayer over the offerings, the Eucharistic prayer, and communion; d) concluding rite - announcements, greetings and blessings and dismissal (cf. Adam, 1993, 151).

However, in the relation between the Word and the Eucharist, the Eucharist, and not the Word, has the central place in Roman Catholic worship. Speaking about the nature of the church, the role of the priests and their connection with the sacraments, Paul Tillich observes that the basic doctrine behind all sacraments is the sacrament of ordination in which all other sacraments are united. Since priests exercise sacramental power, preaching is often secondary and even omitted, while the sacrifice in the sense of offering up the body of Christ in the Mass and the priesthood are divinely ordained. Hence, "this church of the sacramental sacrifice is the hierarchical church, and the hierarchical church is the church of the sacramental sacrifice. This is Catholicism in the Roman sense" (Tillich, 1968, 218).

Adam points out that the sacrament of the Eucharist is the center and the culmination of the sacramental event to which all other sacraments are directed and gain their strength (cf. Adam, 1993, 121). While it can be said that the Eucharist belongs to the very center of Christian worship (in the sense that it is not the very center of worship but one of the elements of the center) (cf. Benoit, 1993, 240), Roman Catholic theology speaks about the Eucharist as "the mystery of Christ's presence in the Church, the memory-act of his death and resurrection, the sacrament of Christians unity, the permanent presence of Christ's salvation act

in our history, and the source and culmination of all Christian life” (Šimundžija 1981, 482).

Protestantism: Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Reformed) and Churches with a Reformation Background

In speaking about Protestant worship in general, James F. White observes, “For most Protestants, preaching is the most lengthy portion in the service. At least a third of the time of worship is usually allotted to the sermon, and it frequently occupies half or more of the time that community is assembled” (White, 1989, 20). On the other hand, the Lord’s Supper is usually not the most important part or center of the service. The Lord’s Supper can be practiced three or four times a year or once a year, and for some churches that now have weekly celebrations, in the past they were quite content to celebrate the Lord’s Supper only occasionally (cf. White, 1989, 14). However, since the term “Protestantism” could include all denominations that do not belong to the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches (at least in the Western part of Christendom), the difference has to be recognized between Protestant churches - in this case, between Lutheran and Reformed Churches and so called churches with a Reformation background, or evangelical free churches.

Lutheran Churches

White explains that Luther’s protest against the medieval Roman Catholic Church was marked by an attack on the sacramental ministration that was built on false premises and contrary to the Word of God. Consequently, the central focus of Christian worship was moved from the sacraments to one in which the sacraments became occasional intruders in a normal pattern of worship (cf. White, 1989, 36-37).

However, the frequency of sharing as well as the manner of the Lord’s Supper changed. Lay people who once received the Lord’s Supper only a few times a year received bread as well as wine every week, making lay people equal to priests who communed and received both elements weekly or daily (cf. White, 1989, 42). However, in the course of time, as the Reformation spread, Lutheran worship developed in diverse ways in different lands. Weekly communion was normal in places like Leipzig, while in some other places the Lord’s Supper became less frequent despite Luther’s expectation that weekly communion would be normal (cf. White, 1989, 50).

With the onset of Pietism in the Lutheran tradition, a new emphasis was given to worship in small groups with a central concern for prayer life and Bible study. This emphasis would eventually influence Methodism (cf. White, 1989, 51) and would become the mark of free churches. Writing from a North American

perspective, White says that today in Lutheran worship the Lord's Supper remains only an occasional service for most Lutheran churches with ante-communion¹ as the normal Sunday service (cf. White, 1989, 56).

Yet, the contribution of the Reformation and Luther was that preaching became an essential part of Protestant worship by changing the form of worship that had been focused on the sacraments (cf. White, 1989, 28). Luther's doctrine of the church placed the existence of the church in connection with the preaching of the Word of God:

Now, anywhere you hear or see [the Word of God] preached, believed, confessed, and acted upon, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, a 'holy Christian people' must be there, even though there are very few of them.... And even if there were no other sign than this alone, it would be enough to prove that a holy Christian people must exist there, for God's Word cannot be without God's people and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's Word (McGrath, 2001, 202-203).

But it should not be said that for Luther the sacraments had a secondary place because, as already seen, the Word of God and the sacraments were linked together since both bore witness to Christ and mediated God's power and presence (cf. McGrath, 2001, 188).

Reformed Churches

Calvin, like Luther, had what could be called a balanced view of the relationship between the sacraments and the Word of God as presented earlier in this article. But this balance is also visible in Calvin's understanding of the church:

Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and listened to, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, it is in no way to be doubted that a church of God exists.... If the ministry has the Word and honours it, if it has the administration of the sacrament, it deserves without doubt to be held and considered a church (McGrath, 2001, 208-09).

Calvin believed that the Lord's Supper should be observed each Sunday because it was part of the service. Accordingly, no worship gathering should be without the Word, prayer, the Lord's Supper and the collection of offerings. The Lord's Supper is the element of the worship that reminds believers of Christ's suffering, making the believers thankful and making their faith stronger (cf. Kraljik, 2009, 131).

Ernest Gordon describes the traditional Reformed service:

1 Ante-communion is an expression used for the first part of the service (introduction, prayer, sermon. . .) that precedes the second part of the service which is dedicated to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The traditional Reformed service, like Gaul, is divided into three parts. First, there is the approach or preparation, which in most churches takes the form of the introit and processional hymn and prayers. Next, there is the liturgy of the Word; that is, the reading of the Old and New Testaments (Epistle and Gospel), care being taken that the words of God's Son, Jesus Christ, should be read at every service. The liturgy of the Word concludes with the preaching of the Word. God's Word read and proclaimed thus forms a very large part of any regular service of worship. But does it end there? In many congregations it does. After the sermon there is nothing except a hymn, and sometimes not even that, before the benediction. As far as any theology of worship is concerned, surely there is something lacking. Does the declaration and proclamation of God's Word demand nothing but a hymn? Is God's Word so passive that no response is evoked on our part? (Gordon, 1959, 480).

In the rest of the article, Gordon argues that the third part of the service (which is missing) should be the ceremony of the Lord's Supper which he calls "the liturgy of the faithful" (Gordon, 1959, 482). The reason for this part of the service lies in the need for Christians to respond in thankfulness to God for his saving act. Also, in the Eucharist, "our Lord is giving himself afresh to us in healing, renewing, and holy love" (Gordon, 1959, 484).

However, Calvin's plea for weekly observance of the Supper was not heard in many Reformed churches in subsequent centuries because many of them celebrated the Supper only four times a year (cf. Davis, 2010, 130). Howard Hageman gives an insightful historical survey of Reformed worship that experienced struggles regarding the correct form and content of the Sunday service:

Must we not confess that much of our use of the Biblical factor in our worship has been an abuse?... We have in our history maintained that the Bible forbade the use of hymns in praise, banned organs and musical instruments, called for the destruction of all forms of pictorial art, demanded the virtual reduction of worship to a sermon. These became the principal hallmarks of Reformed worship—all in the name of the Bible (Hageman, 1961, 30-31).

Hence, he calls Reformed churches to find the right balance between the Word and the sacraments:

The recovery of this Biblical insight must bring us back to the conviction (so-undly Calvinist as it is) that in the act of Christian worship Word and sacrament belong together.... They belong together, not as successive or even as complementary acts, but as aspects of a single whole. Word and sacrament are but two different, though necessary, ways in which Christ comes into the midst of his people. We can be grateful to the Reformation for the recovery of the Word. We know what its loss in the Middle Ages involved.... If the sermon merely becomes words, and the sacrament an occasional meal of remembran-

ce, we have lost the vertical entirely from our worship. That is the real reason for our empty pews (Hageman, 1961, 31-32).

Churches with a Reformation Background or Free-Church Evangelicals

According to some theologians there are some churches that came into existence as a result of the Reformation but cannot be called “Protestant churches” (the term that includes the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican Churches). Therefore, Stanko Jambrek calls these churches “churches with a Reformation background,”² and in this term are included: the Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, the Restoration movement, Brethren churches, Pentecostal churches and charismatic free churches (cf. Jambrek, 2003, 14). These churches³ from the Lutheran branch of the Reformation accepted the idea that only Scripture, grace and faith are the foundation of one’s relationship with God, and from the radical branch of the Reformation they inherited the teaching about discipleship, adult baptism, the responsibility for practical implementation of Christ’s command for preaching the Gospel and a passion for evangelism. In line with the Anabaptist tradition, these churches believe in the separation of the church and State, and that each local church is fully a church, and therefore, independent and autonomous because the Word of God is preached and the Holy Spirit dwells in it (cf. Jambrek, 2003, 17).

Speaking about the churches with a Reformation background in Croatia, Jambrek observes that these churches have some Lutheran, Reformed or Anglican elements of worship, but the central part of worship is the preaching of the Word of God, though some churches together with preaching emphasize singing, and others the importance of the Lord’s Supper. Accordingly, with minor variations, these churches in Croatia have developed two models or styles of Sunday worship: the Pentecostal-charismatic and Baptist styles of worship (Jambrek, 2003, 269-70).

In the Pentecostal-charismatic style of worship, the central aspect of worship is not preaching or singing, but the activity of the Holy Spirit in the community.

- 2 Writing in Croatian, Jambrek uses the expression “crkve reformacijske baštine” or translated into English, “churches with a Reformation background.” However, since English speaking readers are unfamiliar with this expression, for this group of churches, I will use the expression *free-church evangelicals* or just *free churches*. Roger E. Olson uses this term to describe the same churches Jambrek describes with his term (see Olson, 2004, 3-6).
- 3 In a similar way, Olson describes what he calls “free churches.” According to him, they are composed of “true Christians” who were persecuted in Europe and some of them went to North America to establish new denominations of “free churches”. Some of them remained connected with their traditions and some remained independent of any particular traditions (cf. Olson, 2004, 11).

In this way, the center of worship becomes the congregation's relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, and the course of the Sunday service can be "interrupted" by the activity of the Spirit through the gifts of the Spirit. In this way, the pendulum swings from communal singing, collective prayer and participation in the sacraments toward a joyful and unpredictable fellowship with God by the Holy Spirit through singing, preaching the Word of God and spontaneous prayer (cf. Jambrek, 2003, 270-71).

The Baptist model of Sunday worship, despite some variations, has the preaching of the Word of God in the center. The service has a traditional and simple form: singing, preaching, prayer, singing, collecting offerings, greetings and announcements. The leader of the service greets the community and leads the opening prayer. The opening prayer is followed by singing after which the leader of the service invites a few people to prayer. After the preaching, which occupies the center of the Sunday service, the service is closed with prayer, singing, the collection of offerings, a final blessing and announcements (cf. Jambrek, 2003, 273).

Revising The Issue Of God's Presence In The Lord's Supper

It is interesting that the Bible does not view the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice nor does it claim Christ's presence in the elements of the bread and wine.⁴ However, only Zwingli's view reflects the idea that Christ is not present in the elements of the bread and wine, while all other views try to explain the "mystery" of Christ's presence in the bread and wine. The debate is usually focused on the expressions "this is my body" and "this is my blood" and the correct meaning of the word "is" (cf. Hicks, 2002, 73). Furthermore, the passage from 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 with the key term "communion" (*koinonia/koinonous*), deserves attention in this discussion, as well as the ideas of altar and table in connection with the Lord's Supper.

The Words of Institution for the Lord's Supper – The Gospels

Previously it was said that for Roman Catholics the expression "this is" means that the bread becomes the body and the wine becomes the blood of Christ because

4 To support transubstantiation from a biblical standpoint, Roman Catholic theology uses several verses: Malachi's prophecy about offering sacrifice in every place (Mal. 1:11); Jesus' prophecy in John 4:21 about offering sacrifice in every place; Psalm 110:4 about the order of Melchisedek; Luke 22:19-20 where Jesus speaks about his body and blood in the present tense; Paul's description of Christ as the Passover lamb from 1 Corinthians 5:7; and 1 Corinthians 10:21 where Paul speaks about the sacrifice of the altar. This article will only focus on the Lk. 22 and 1 Cor. 10.

of a change in its substance. Lutherans believe that “is” refers to the substance of the body and blood of Christ, but they believe that the substance of the bread and wine remain as well. Reformed theologians believe that Christ is spiritually present in the elements, but not with his actual physical substance. Zwingli’s view is that these elements only symbolize Christ’s body and blood (cf. Hicks, 2002, 73). The difference is whether one understands “is” literally in the sense that the bread and wine are truly the body and blood of Christ, or as a rhetorical phrase known as *alloiosis* which really means “signifies” or “represents” (cf. McGrath, 2001, 179).

Roman Catholic theologians claim that when Jesus said the words of institution he actually decided and commanded the elements to become the body and blood, that is, that from that point on this is how it would be. So Benoit recognizes that on a purely grammatical level, it would not be possible to argue that this verb “to be” in Aramaic has such a realistic meaning because it can also have a metaphorical meaning. But the weight of the situation reveals that Jesus is not speaking in a parable in which concrete items would be used to support some abstract truth. He presides over the feast in which ritualistic blessings impart a different kind of value to the elements (cf. Benoit, 1993, 244). The other argument that Roman Catholic theology uses in its argument is the present tense of the verbs “is given” (Lk. 22:19) and “is poured” (Lk. 22:20). Accordingly, since Jesus spoke in the present tense, at that very moment he was sacrificing himself. That makes the Last Supper the first sacrifice, the first Mass of every other consecutive Mass (cf. McCarthy, 2004, 136).

There is no easy way to reconcile the different ways of understanding these verses because one’s understanding depends on two things: a) whether or not Jesus spoke metaphorically and; b) whether or not the argument based on grammar is valid. Since I believe that the text can have only one meaning and this meaning is determined by the original intention of the author and the context, I do not believe that the text can mean something differently from what it meant to the author. Hence, if Jesus did not understand his Last Supper as a sacrifice, or that he was or would be in some sense present in the elements of the bread and wine, then additional interpretations which add new meanings to Jesus’ words are not acceptable.

I agree with McCarthy that the context clearly teaches that Jesus was using the present tense since he spoke about his coming death which was near. So he was describing a future event by using the present tense (cf. McCarthy, 2004, 136). Armstrong observes that since Jesus was standing among them and had not yet died, if the change of the substance during the Last Supper occurred or he was somehow actually present in the bread and wine, “we would surely expect Him to make this clear to His own disciples” (Armstrong, 1999, 85). It is

also significant that in Matthew's account of the Lord's Supper after the words of institution when Jesus allegedly changed the bread and wine into his body and blood in Matt. 26:29, he still speaks about the wine as wine and not as something else (cf. McCarthy, 2004, 117).

The use of the present tense in the words of institution as proof that Jesus is in some sense present in the bread and wine is an argument that can be stretched to the absurd if the two following verses in Luke 22:21-22 are interpreted with the same *modus*. Hence, in v. 21 Jesus speaks about his betrayal in the present tense which would mean that he is still being betrayed by Judas. In v. 22, Jesus speaks about his "going" in the present tense – does that mean that he is still going to the cross continuously and that Judas is still in trouble because "woe to the man who betrays" is in the present tense? Does that mean that Christ's sacrifice still needs to be accomplished? If that is true, then Jesus has not yet gone to the cross and we cannot talk about the body and blood of Jesus in the Last Supper. Also, since Judas is dead, who is or are the person/s whose hands on Jesus' table are betraying him? Accordingly, arguments based on grammar, although necessary, can sometimes lead to wrong conclusions.

The symbolic explanation is the best way to understand Jesus' words of institution at the Lord's Supper because otherwise we are forced to find complicated theories that will explain how Jesus can be present in the Supper. Therefore in this matter, I agree with Zwingli who ascribed symbolic meaning to Jesus' words in the upper room. However, I think that Zwingli's view needs to be corrected in some capacity which I will address later.

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

1 Corinthians 10:14-22 is another interesting passage which speaks about the Lord's Supper since it raises the debate as to whether the Lord's Supper should be understood as an altar or a table, and what the nature of fellowship with the Lord's body and blood is for those who eat it.

Hicks argues that the nature of *koinonia* with the body and blood of Jesus is not connected with any kind of physical presence of Christ or his spiritual presence in the elements of bread and wine, nor that the bread and wine are merely symbols of Jesus' body and blood (cf. Hicks, 2002, 108-09). Davis also observes, "It is clear from this text that to have 'participation' in the body and blood of Christ means much more than simply to remember his death as a past event; participation implies living communion and personal contact" (Davis, 2010, 140). But what is the nature of this *koinonia* if it does not include previously mentioned views? Or based on Davis' words, we can ask this: What is the nature of this living communion and personal contact?

Davis continues to explain that Paul correlates the Lord's Supper with a fellowship meal between the Israelites and Yahweh and pagan rituals in the Greco-Roman world: "In the Old Testament sacrifices, the fellowship offerings were understood as a fellowship meal between the Israelites and Yahweh who was present at the meal....Yahweh was not thought of as absent when the priest and people shared in some of the meat offered on the altar" (Davis, 2010, 140-41). Also, in the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament, there are numerous texts that indicate that gods in whose honor meals were held were understood to be present at the table, participating in the meal in some spiritual way (cf. Davis, 2010, 141).

Based on all this, Hicks concludes that the presence of Christ in the Supper is not so much *in* or *about* the bread and wine as much as it is about his presence at the table as host because "Christ sits at the table with us rather than primarily locating himself in the bread and wine. The bread and wine evoke the memory of Christ's work, but the table is the presence of Christ as one who eats and drinks with us" (Hicks, 2010, 74).

Yet since Paul mentions the altar and table in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22, for Roman Catholics, this is an argument that Paul understood the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice: ". . . the Apostle Paul has clearly indicated when he says, that they who are defiled by partaking of the table of devils cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, understanding by table in each case the altar" (Supreme Pontiff, Pius IV). However, this observation is not correct for two reasons: a) the text clearly connects an altar with Old Testament sacrifices and a table with the pagan's worship of demons and the Christian's worship of the Lord's Supper (cf. McCarthy, 2004, 137-38); b) even if the Lord's Supper was connected with the altar, Witherington points out that Jews never understood their participation in the altar as an actual consummation of the deity (cf. Witherington III, 2007, 45).

In conclusion, it must be said that although Roman Catholics acknowledge that Christ is present *among* his people in the Eucharist (cf. Mateljan, 1995, 99), Zwingli found it unfortunate that the discussion about God's presence in the Eucharist was focused on finding the presence in the elements of the Eucharist, completely neglecting the fact that God is *among* his people. Such a distorted focus led to the doctrines of transubstantiation, consubstantiation and the Reformed view of spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper. Likewise, such focus led Zwingli in the direction where he turned the Supper into a symbolic act of remembrance. So Davis is right when he points out that the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance, but involves *koinonia* as well (cf. Davis, 2010, 139). If we stress that the Lord's Supper is just an act of remembrance, then the only *koinonia* with God in the Lord's Supper is our memory. It seems that the text from 1 Corinthians teaches otherwise. Paul's understanding of *koinonia* in the Supper

is based on the OT model of God's presence in meals, but he does not connect the New Testament fellowship meal with God with the altar, but with the table, because the Lord's Supper was not understood as a sacrifice, but as fellowship with God. God was and is present with believers at the table while they eat the meal. However, we must ask what happened to the full meal that was a part of the Lord's Supper, and why a table was replaced with an altar. The last part of the article will offer a suggestion on how to incorporate these elements back into the Lord's Supper.

Revising the Lord's Supper from the Altar Back to the Table, and its Place in Sunday Worship

The Form of the Lord's Supper

If my observation that the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper should be claimed and recognized *among* the believers at the table and not *in* the elements of the bread and wine, that affects the form in which the Lord's Supper should be observed and the place that the Lord's Supper should have in church worship. My suggestion is that the *form* of the Lord's Supper should include a *table* and a *full meal* that are accompanied with thanksgiving, joy and mutual communication. Also, this "sacrament" should be observed every Sunday and share an equal importance and place in worship with preaching, or any other element of Christian worship. In other words, the atmosphere and interaction of the *table* should replace the individualistic and sorrowful atmosphere of the *altar*; a *snack* should be replaced with a full *meal*; and the Lord's Supper that in some denominations is observed *occasionally* should become a *regular* part of the church service.

Looking at the New Testament records of the Lord's Supper shows that the Lord's Supper was a meal (Gospel accounts; Acts 2:42-46; 20:7-11; 1 Cor. 11:17-22), and in its form, it was a meal of fellowship with God and other believers. However, admittedly, nowhere does the Bible command us as to how often we should observe the Lord's Supper. But we can be sure that the Lord's Supper was driven by a table mentality and not an altar mentality. Still, in order to find an answer to the question as to what the difference is between the table and the altar, we need to hear all over again Davis', Hicks' and Witherington's words because they point to the true nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper which was lost over the years.

Here is Davis' observation:

Various scholars have drawn attention to other factors that altered the character of the Eucharistic experience in the patristic and medieval periods. Krister Stendahl, for example, has argued that the piety of the Western church became dominated by an “introspective conscience” that reflected more the experience of Augustine (and later, that of Luther) than it did that of the Apostle Paul or the New Testament generally.... The practical center for Penance shifted from Baptism, experienced once and for all, to the repeated preparation for the Mass. This mood of penitence and self-examination came to dominate Eucharistic experience, replacing the more joyful experience of the New Testament and early church. The reality of a corporate celebration was being replaced by one of individualistic introspection and penitence – and this ethos was inherited by the Reformers and, to a great extent, not overcome by their attempted reforms (Davis, 2010, 119).

Similarly, Hicks points to the core problem in coming to a correct understanding of the Lord’s Supper:

Too easily we assume that our experience of the Lord’s Supper is equivalent to that of the primitive church. We lose a sense of historical perspective as we collapse our practice into theirs and assume their practice was functionally equivalent to ours. Their supper was home-based, a full meal with food and drink, an interactive fellowship at a table and characterized by joyous celebration.... our practice of the supper as a silent, solemn, individualistic eating of bread and drinking of wine is radically dissimilar from the joyous communal meal that united Christians in the first century house churches (Hicks, 2002, 9-10).

Hicks points out the fact that today the Lord’s Supper has become dominated with the form of an altar and not a table:

Altar is the dominant model for the supper in the contemporary church. It fosters individualism (privacy), silence, solemnity, and sorrow. To revision the supper as ‘table’ will foster community, interactive communication, gratitude and joy (Hicks, 2002, 10).... The altar is a place where the guilty bring their sins for atonement, but the table is where the forgiven experience communion with God. The altar is a place of death and sorrow, but the table is a place of hope (life) and joy. The believer seeks reconciliation at the altar, but experiences reconciliation at the table.... The Lord’s Supper is a meal eaten at a table. It is not a sacrifice offered at an altar (Hicks, 2002, 185-86).

Speaking about the problem in Corinth, Witherington observes:

The meeting was not just a reading circle of Christians, but a regular worship meeting when they all came together. The meal taken in the context of that meeting was a love feast, or a specifically Christian one shared by the

body meeting in that house. Within the context of that meal the Lord's Supper was taken. And yet somehow, somehow, there were those who treated even this meal in that specific religious context as if it were another Greco-Roman dinner party. This I would suggest explains the very strong response and rhetoric of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. (Witherington, 2007, 48).

If we compare the last Supper Jesus had with his disciples with our modern practice of the Lord's Supper, and especially if we take the Last Supper as a model and example for our modern practice, strange differences surface. In Luke's account in 22:14-38, no one repented or felt sad because of his sin during the Supper. They did eat a full meal, they argued with each other about who was the greatest, Peter offered his ultimate devotion to Jesus, the betrayal occurred, and some "shopping" was done. They sung psalms, and asked Jesus questions. Jesus used this time for teaching and conversation, which can especially be seen in the Gospel of John (chap. 13-17). How similar is that to our modern celebrations of the Lord's Supper?

The Place of the Supper in Church Worship

Evangelical free churches and Protestant churches have a tendency to emphasize preaching the Word of God over the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholic Church holds the Eucharist as the central and the most important part of the Mass. The tendency in the Pentecostal-charismatic style of worship is to put the activity of the Holy Spirit in the community in the center. However, we can tentatively conclude from early church history that the early church held all these elements in equal importance. In other words, the Eucharist was not more important than the Word of God and vice versa. I believe this is also the teaching of the New Testament. The major problem is that if we divide what belongs together, then we have to choose one over the other, and the New Testament is not familiar with this concept.

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a command or explicit direction regarding how often the Lord's Supper should be observed or what place the Supper should hold in the church gathering compared to the other elements of Christian worship. But there are some records which show that the Lord's Supper was observed daily and weekly and was an integral part of the Christian gathering (cf. Hicks, 2002, 178). Interesting information about the Lord's Supper comes from Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11 and 1 Cor. 11:17-22.

Benoit observes that the breaking of bread found in Acts 2:42 and 46 was probably not the Lord's Supper, but from that custom of communal eating the Lord's Supper was later connected and was probably observed weekly. He also

thinks that in texts like Acts 27:35 and Luke 24:30, 35, it can not be said with certainty whether those are examples of the usual breaking of bread or the Lord's Supper (cf. Benoit, 1993, 242). Schreiner thinks that the breaking of bread likely refers to the Lord's Supper which was celebrated at the end of meals. These meals were not family meals but rather meals in homes in which the church gathered (cf. Schreiner, 2008, 699). Hicks argues that "the breaking of bread" in Acts 2:42, 46, the expression which Luke also uses and explains in Luke 22 and 24 refers to a meal with Jesus (cf. Hicks, 2002, 90). Hence, when the disciples broke bread in Acts 2, that refers to the Lord's Supper - "a meal in the context of which the liturgical pattern was displayed, the Lord remembered, and his presence celebrated" (Hicks, 2002, 91), and this was a daily meal in the Jerusalem church (cf. Hicks, 2002, 92). He also points to a possible interpretation of Acts 2:42 where the fellowship of the new community was expressed through the breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Hicks, 2002, 89).

If we accept the idea that the Lord's Supper was associated with daily meals in the Jerusalem church, that means that for some reason it was an important part of church life and fellowship. Based on Acts 2:42, we cannot say that one element of church life and worship was set above another since apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer were equally important parts in the life of the church.

Acts 20:7-11 is another place where the breaking of bread is described, and two interesting things can be observed here: a) the purpose of the gathering was the breaking of bread, and this is probably a reference to the Lord's Supper taken in the context of a meal just as it was in Acts 2 (cf. Witherington, 2007, 99, Hicks, 2002, 93). Interestingly, the purpose of gathering was not described with "we came together to hear the Word of God"; b) Luke describes that this gathering was characterized by the exposition of the Word, the breaking of bread and the presence of the power of the risen Lord to heal and restore (cf. Davis, 2010, 144-45).

From 1 Cor. 11:17-22, we can observe two things: a) the expression *epi to auto* (when you come together) may connote not only the gathering of Christians in one locality, but also their assembly for the purpose of sharing a meal together and celebrating the Lord's Supper (cf. Fitzmyer, 2008, 433-34). If that is correct, this is the second record from the New Testament which states the Lord's Supper as a purpose for Christian gathering. Also, if the purpose for their gathering was the Lord's Supper, can we suppose that at these meetings manifestations of the Spirit (chap. 12-14) were also present?; b) the Lord's Supper in Corinth involved a full meal. Language like "hungry", "gets drunk" and "eat and drink" presume a full meal unlike in today's churches where there is only a snack of bread and wine/juice.

Although the New Testament does not present a systematic exposition of church worship, there are three examples (Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11; 1 Cor 11-14) where the emphases are evident which today divide Protestants - the Word of God, Roman Catholics - the Eucharist, and charismatics - the miraculous activity of the Spirit as having once been connected and supplementing each other. The New Testament church had all three worship aspects in one place in some capacity – the charismatic aspect, preaching and table fellowship were regular parts of church worship.

Conclusion

A revision of the Lord's Supper needs to be undertaken because bits and pieces of truth about the Lord's Supper have been divided and dispersed throughout Christendom. Various denominations have only partially correct theology and practice. Therefore a revision of the Lord's Supper requires taking what is good and rejecting what is wrong in every church tradition.

I support Zwingli's view of the presence of God in the Supper, but also believe that his view must be corrected by stressing the presence of God in the Lord's Supper *among* the believers more strongly. It is possible that his failure to see that during the Lord's Supper Jesus is present at the table among the believers was due to the fact that he lived in a time when the debate was focused on the presence of Christ in the elements of the Eucharist. However, those churches who support his view have the Lord's Supper once a month or not even that often, so that makes those churches who observe the Lord's Supper each week more faithful to the witness of the Scriptures. Unfortunately, even those free evangelical churches that observe the Lord's Supper every week have a symbolic view of it, and the importance of the Supper is marginalized and incomparable to the importance of the preaching.

On the other hand, those churches that view God's presence in the elements of the Supper have a tendency to put the Supper more closely to the center of worship (Lutheran and Reformed Churches), or even in the very center of Sunday worship (Roman Catholic Church), but the emphasis on the presence of Christ in the elements turns the Supper into an individualistic pious activity in which the element of mutual communication and fellowship among the believers is denied because the emphasis is on Christ's presence *in* the bread and wine and not *among* his people. Furthermore, all churches previously mentioned have a tendency to perform the Supper in the form and manner of an altar and not in the form of a table.

The only solution for this division of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper is to take Zwingli's view of the presence of Christ in the Supper (because

Jesus is not present in the elements of the Supper) and stress the fact that the Supper is not just a symbolic act of worship (contra Zwingli), but a time and place where God communes and fellowships with his people. Furthermore, the form of the Supper needs to be changed from the form of an altar to the form of a table that includes interaction among the believers present, a full meal, and an atmosphere of gratitude, joy and humility. Accordingly, the Lord's Supper has an important place in weekly Sunday gatherings of believers because it serves as a corrective and a balance to the preaching. Many wonderful sermons about many wonderful topics can be preached, but the Lord's Supper always reminds us of the foundations of Christian faith.

As Davis reminds, there are two good reasons why the Lord's Supper should have a more central place in evangelical worship. First, for more than 1,500 years, the Eucharist was an integral and indeed the culminating feature of Sunday worship. Secondly, the Lord's Supper is crucial because it is a Christ-commanded way of remembering and summarizing the gospel itself, and we can be reminded weekly of the fundamentals of the faith, and also actually experience the benefits of the work of Christ and have a time of joy of friendship and communion with the risen Christ who is truly present with his people in the table event (cf. Davis, 2010, 115-16). To that I would like to add that the Lord's Supper is unique in one other way. When we sing songs or listen to the Word of God, all believers present are turned and focused toward one particular place in the church. Similarly, when we pray, we have a tendency to close our eyes and bow our heads. What is missing is eye contact with other believers. The Lord's Supper as a full meal at a table is that part of the worship service when we face each other, and that is also one additional thing that makes the Lord's Supper unique.

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Ervin Budiselić

Snaga Stola – Revizija teologije, forme i uloge Gospodnje večere u bogoštovlju kršćanske crkve

Sažetak

Ovaj članak nastoji preinačiti prevladavajuće shvaćanje Gospodnje večere koje je danas prisutno u većini kršćanskih crkava prema kojem je Isus na neki način nazočan u elementima kruha i vina. Autor tvrdi da je Isus nazočan Gospodnjoj večeri među vjernicima, ali ujedno i kritizira Zwinglijev stav koji prevladava u slobodnim crkvama. U skladu s time, autor predlaže da se Gospodnja večera uzima u sklopu pravog obroka oko stola gdje je naglasak na međusobnom zajedništvu vjernika s Isusom oko stola, a ne na žrtvi koja se prinosi na žrtveniku. Nadalje, to bi trebao biti radosni čin sakupljene zajednice, a ne individualistički čin pokore. Također, Gospodnja večera trebala bi biti redovni i sastavni dio nedjeljnih bogoslužja od jednake važnosti kao i propovijedanje. Prvi dio članka nudi pregled četiri glavna teološka pogleda na Gospodnju večeru, drugi dio govori o ulozi i mjestu Gospodnje večere u crkvenoj povijesti i raznim crkvenim denominacijama, treći dio promišlja pitanje Kristove nazočnosti u Gospodnjoj večeri, a u četvrtom se dijelu nudi revizija forme i uloge Gospodnje večere na nedjeljnim kršćanskim bogoslužjima.