The Lord's Supper as Eschatological Table

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The Lord's Supper is a gospel meal—"the gospel in bread and wine."[1] Consequently, its significance and dimensions are as varied as the gospel itself. It is a prism that refracts the light of the gospel in multi-faceted ways as a kaleidoscope of meaning.

The multi-dimensional nature of the Supper is quickly discerned through the common motifs that liturgies, theologians and preachers often use. The popular idea that the Lord's Supper looks upward, outward, inward, backward, and forward reflects this perspectivalism. Or, more formerly, one of the Stone-Campbell Movement's most significant sacramental theologians, William Robinson, summarizes the Supper as memorial, proclamation, covenant, communion, and feast.[2] More recently, Andrew Paris within the Stone-Campbell tradition condensed its meaning to 4 "Cs": commemoration, confession, communion, and covenant.[3] Bryon Lambert, also part of the Stone-Campbell Movement, identified ten aspects: obedience, remembrance, thanksgiving, proclamation, prophecy, covenant, altar, self-examination, communion and feasting.[4] Or, in one of the most recent contributions from Evangelical quarters Gordon Smith organizes his presentation around the themes of remembrance, communion, forgiveness, covenant, nourishment, thanksgiving, anticipation, and presence.[5] Or, ecumenically, the 1982 World Council of Churches Lima document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* defines the meaning of the Eucharist as thanksgiving to the Father, the memorial of Christ, the invocation of the Spirit, the communion of the faithful, and the meal of the kingdom.[6]

Given its multi-dimensional nature, it is impossible to offer a comprehensive theological reflection in a brief paper such as this. Rather, I will focus on a specific dimension of the Supper which has suffered a significant lack of attention in previous centuries within Western Christianity, but has received increased attention in the 20th century. It has not as yet sufficiently informed the theology nor shaped the practice of the contemporary church. I intend to explore the eschatological aspect of the Supper.

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[1] Alexander Campbell, "Ancient Gospel. No. II. Immersion," *Christian Baptist* 5.7 (4 February 1828), 414 (D. S. Burnett edition [St. Louis: Chrstian Publishing Co., 1889]). Also available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/tcb/TCB507.HTM#Essay6.

[2] William Robinson, *Essays on Christian Unity* (London: James Clark & Co., 1924), 275-278, available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/wrobinson/eocu/EOCU10H.HTM.

[3] Andrew Paris, *What the Bible Says about the Lord's Supper* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1986), 151-243.

[4] Byron Lambert, "Have We Understood the Lord's Supper?" in *The Lord's Supper: Historical Writings on Its Meaning to the Body of Christ*, ed. Charles R. Gresham and Tom Lawson (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1993), 208-210.

[5] Gordon T. Smith, *A Holy Meal: The Lord's Supper in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Leonard J. Vander Zee, *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: 2004), 187-219, discusses meaning under the headings: presence of Christ, mediation of the Holy Spirit, Supper and sacrifice, remembrance, and meal of hope.

[6] Available at http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/bem4.html.

In its seventh agreement the 1957 Oberlin Faith and Order statement recognized that "there is a growing realization of the eschatological nature of the Eucharist."[7] In the almost fifty years since that recognition, several have explored the Supper's eschatological dimensions.[8] The most significant work, and perhaps most responsible for the resurgence of interest, is Wainwright's 1971 *Eucharist and Eschatology*.[9]

Drawing on this surge of discussion, I will reflect on the eschatological nature of the Supper. First, I will contextualize the importance of thinking eschatologically by contrasting it with previous discussion, particularly in the context of the Stone-Campbell tradition. Second, I will survey the Eucharistic materials in Luke-Acts as a way entering into the eschatological world of the New Testament. Third, I will offer some suggestions regarding the significance of Eucharistic eschatology for contemporary thought and practice.

Historical Context

Wainwright's book introduced a new perspective into the history of Eucharistic thought. While previous theology and historical surveys focused on ontology (the presence of Christ), sacrifice, and individualistic reception, Wainwright brought a relatively new lens to reading the history of Christian thought and liturgy. He drew attention to the eschatological matrix of the Supper.[10] By his account, eschatological reflection, though present in the early liturgies and represented occasionally throughout the Western Church, has been significantly absent.

While eschatological themes are present in the biblical and early martyrological materials, these were eclipsed by theological and institutional developments. Wainwright

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[7] *The Nature of the Unity We Seek; Official Report of the North American Conference on Faith and Order*, ed. Paul S. Minear (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1958), 203.

[8] Some representative examples are Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 88-108; Paul E. Deterding, "Eschatological and Eucharistic Motifs in Luke 12:35-40," *Concordia Journal* 5 (May 1979), 85-94; Patrick Regan, "Pneumatological and Eschatological Aspects of Liturgical Celebration," *Worship* 51(1977) 332-350; William Hill, "The Eucharist as Eschatological Presence," *Communio* 4 (Winter, 1977) 306-320; John H. McKenna, "The Eucharist, The Resurrection and the Future," *Anglican Theological Review* 60 (1978) 144-165; Horton Davies, *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy: Newer Ecumenical Perspectives on the Eucharist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 80-116; Arthur A. Just, *The Ongoing Feast: Table Fellowship and Eschatology at Emmaus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993); Debra Dean Murphy, "Bread, Wine, and the 'Pledge of Heaven': A (Wesleyan) Feminist Perspective on Eucharist and Eschatology," *Quarterly Review* 14 (Winter 1994-1995), 401-12; Peter Leithart, "The Way Things Really Ought to Be: Eucharist, Eschatology, and Culture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (Fall 1997), 159-76; Robert G. Clouse, "Eschatology and the Lord's Supper: Hope for the Triumph of God's Reign," in *The Lord's Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, ed. Dale R. Stoffer (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997), 129-139;.Jason Fout, "Beginnings and Ends: Eucharist and Eschatology," *Quodlibet Online Journal of Christian Theology and Philosophy* 2.4 (Fall 2000), available at http://www.quodlibet.net/fout-eucharist.shtml; Rebecca Kuiken, "Hopeful Feasting: Eucharist and Eschatology," in *Hope for Your Future: Theological Voices from the Pastorate*, ed. William H. Lazareth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 192-198; Martha L. Moore-Keish, "Eucharist: Eschatology," in *A More Profound Alleluia: Theology and Worship in Harmony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). 109-132.

[9] Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971).

[10] Wainwright, 1-2. He organizes his discussion under three themes: antepast of heaven, marantha, and firstfruits of the Kingdom.

argues that the rise of Christianity under the Christian emperors of the 4th century "led to a more positive evaluation of the present age." Absorption into the political and social structures entailed "a loss of awareness" that the church was "*a witness to the coming kingdom*."[11] Accompanying this was "the increasing influence of a 'vertical' and individualized eschatology dressed in the colours of a Platonizing mysticism."[12] The combination of these two developments, among others, meant that eschatology was, on the one hand reduced to futurist individual salvation and, on the other hand, practically lost by the identification of the kingdom of God with the institutional church. The Eucharist was no longer a meal of the eschatological kingdom, but became an institutional cult identified with the City of God upon the earth through which individuals experienced salvation and mystical—even individual—vertical relationship with God.

The loss of kingdom eschatology gave Eucharistic theology myopic vision. The church focused more on the earthly life of Jesus (especially in terms of Victim, i.e., sacrifice, atonement) than his return. Eschatological expectation waned as the church became more comfortable with its Constantinian status.[13] Without an eschatological context, the focus of the Eucharist turned to the nature of Christ's presence and sacrifice. The Eucharist became a sacrifice; the kingdom meal became a feeding on presence of Christ; and the table became an altar. The Eucharist became a re-presentation of the cross and almost solely focused on the death of Christ.

Western theology has generally participated in this trajectory. Even the Protestant Reformers continued the emphasis on altar and memoralism though rejecting or reinterpreting the sacrificial imagery. Eschatology was dimly associated with the Eucharist and primarily only in relation to the promise of the future *parousia.*

There were, however, moments of eschatological light within this history. John and Charles Wesley, for example, articulate eschatological themes in their hymns and sermons.[14] For example, their Eucharistic hymns, though predominantely a reflection on the memorial of Christ's suffering and death, also express some eschatological themes. Their Eucharistic theology was influenced by Daniel Brevint's 1673 *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*,[15] and their hymnal followed Brevint's outline. In particular, though memorializing the sufferings of the cross, they emphasized the Supper as a means of grace, a pledge of heaven, and "a sacrifice of ourselves joined to Christ."[16] Some Weslyean hymns accentuated the communion of the saints gratefully joined together in the light of eschatological joy. [17]

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[11] Wainwright, 125.
[12] Wainwright, 125.
[13] See the discussion of William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1989), 256ff.
[14] Cf. Steven T. Hoskins, "Eucharist and Eschatology in the Writings of the Wesleys," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 29 (1994), 64-80.available at http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/26-30/29-04.htm. Cf. also Murphy, "Bread, Wine, and the 'Pledge of Heaven'," 406ff.
[15] Daniel Brevint, *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice by way of Discourse, Meditation, & Prayer upon the Nature, Parts and Blessings of the Holy Communion* (Oxford: At the Theater in Oxford, 1673).
[16] J. Robert Nelson, "Methodist Eucharistic Practice: From Constant Communion to Benign Neglect to Sacramental Recovery," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 13 (Spring 1976), 280-81.See also Kathryn Nichols, "The Theology of Christ's Sacrifice and Presence in Charles Wesley's Hymns On the Lord's Supper," *Hymn* 39 (October 1988), 19-29 and "Charles Wesley's Eucharistic Hymns: Their Relationship to the Book of Common Prayer," *Hymn* 39 (October 1988), 13-21.

On the whole, however, Western theology swam in the memoralist and presentists altar traditions of the medieval church. The Stone-Campbell tradition participated in this tradition, but with a small twist. Though memoralist, and sometimes stressing the spiritual presence of Christ in the bread and wine, the original impulse of the Stone-Campbell Movement stressed the metaphor of table rather than altar. As a consequence, early traditions emphasized the role of Jesus as host at the table and the joy of table fellowship.[18]

The background to this Stone-Campbell emphasis lies in the seventeenth century when the Scottish Church began to observe "communion festivals" at tables. Participants sat at long tables as if they were sitting for a meal. They ate large portions of bread and drank wine as if at a meal. Eventually these festivals became three and four day events where hundreds and thousands communed at tables. The Cane Ridge revival in August, 1801 was designed as a communal festival.[19]

Against this background of Scottish communion festivals and the emphasis by British dissenters on the centrality and weekly character of communion (particularly Glassites, Sandemanians, and the Haldanes), Alexander Campbell focused on the "table." Campbell argued typologically that "in the house of God there is always a table of the Lord."[20] Emphasizing the weekly table, he denied all clerical distinctions and recommended joy as the primary mood of the table: "All Christians are members of the house or family of God, are called and constituted a holy and a royal priesthood, and may, therefore bless God for the Lord's table, its loaf, and cup--approach it without fear and partake of it with joy as often as they please, in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Saviour."[21] Indeed, he chided Protestants in general for their joyless celebration as their experience is more like "mourners" in a "house of sorrows" than celebrants in a house of feasting. "The Lord's house," he writes, "is his banqueting place, and the Lord's day is his weekly festival."[22] The table was so central for Campbell that he wanted to substitute the table for the pulpit. His ideal "meeting-house" would have no pulpit, but "the Lord's table and the seats for the elders of the congregation" would "be at the remote end, opposite to the entrance." The gathered disciples would be placed "immediately contiguous to the Lord's table."[23]

The table-centeredness of the Stone-Campbell Movement was a distinctive of the tradition. "Gathering around the table" was common—not just as a metaphor. Tables were more important than pulpits. When Moses Lard described his ideal church, the table extended "entirely across the house" as everyone gathered around the table and partook standing as a sign of reverence."[24] Sunday mornings were reserved for table and mutual edification, while the evening

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[17]For example, see J. E. Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), #96; #102.

[18] Paul A. Crow, Jr., "The Lord's Supper in Ecumenical Dialogue," *Theology Today* 22 (April 1965), 45-6, available at http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/apr1965/v22-1-article3.htm.

[19] Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1989).

[20] Alexander Campbell, "Breaking the Loaf," in *Christian System* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1970, reprint of 1839 ed), 265.

[21] Campbell, "Breaking the Loaf," 269.

[22] Alexander Campbell, "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, No. IV. On the Breaking of Bread, No. 1," *Christian Baptist* 3.1 (1 August 1825), 175.

[23] Campbell, "Meeting-Houses," *Millennial Harbinger* 5 (January 1834), 8.

[24] Moses Lard, "My Church," *Lard's Quarterly* 1 (1864), 150.

services were devoted to evangelistic preaching. While table-renewal was part of the original vision, it was lost in the focus on the elements (leavened or unleavened bread, wine or grape juice), frequency of the Supper (only on Sunday and every Sunday), and the rise of a professional preaching class that shifted the focus to the pulpit. Losing the tableness of the Supper, the movement defaulted to the historic "altar" mentality. While we talked about "the Lord's table," little in our assemblies resembled a table. Instead, the atmosphere, function and practice of the Supper was decidedly "altar."

Judging from the survey by Paul M. Blowers and Byron C. Lambert, the meaning of the Lord's Supper is understood as either a memorialism or a spiritual presence generally characteristic of Reformed (Calvin) churches.[25] Given the Scot-Irish Presbyterian and baptistic roots of the Stone-Campbell tradition, this is hardly surprising. Memorialism, however, dominated. Alexander Campbell, for example, when pressed on the exact design of the Lord's Supper insisted that it was "commemorative" as a "weekly reminder" of the forgiveness of sins. "It is not," he wrote, "an ordinance for receiving new blessings, but for commemorating those already received."[26]

The centrality of memorialism is nicely illustrated by Christopher's argument that the Lord's Supper as the "central and chief element of Christian worship" is established by the fact that the "atonement is the central and chief element of the Remedial System."[27] The worship of the church is "retrospective" as "the memory looks back to the great fact by which the soul is saved from sin."[28] Nevertheless, some, perhaps only a few, within the Stone-Campbell tradition have defended a spiritual presence of Christ. Robert Milligan, for example, writing at the same time as Christopher, insisted that the Supper is not "merely commemorative" and is "more than the mere recollection of facts. *It is intended to be the medium of furnishing and imparting spiritual nourishment*."[29]

Absent, however, in these materials—and in most surveys of our Eucharistic history and theology[30]—is a stress on the eschatological nature of the Lord's Supper. Given Paul's "till he come" statement in 1 Corinthians 11:27, it would be impossible for any tradition to ignore the relationship between the Lord's Supper and the second coming. But how this relation is construed is what signals the lack of eschatological reflection.

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[25] Paul M. Blowers and Byron C. Lambert, "Lord's Supper, The," in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, ed. Douglas A. Foster, et. al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 493-95. See also K. C. Richardson, "The Lord's Supper as a Sacrament in the History of the Stone-Campbell Movement" (M.Div., thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 1996); James O. Duke, "The Disciples and the Lord's Supper: A Historical Perspective," *Encounter* 50 (Winter 1989): 1-28; and Richard L. Harrison, Jr., "Early Disciples Sacramental Theology: Catholic, Reformed and Free," *Mid-Stream* 24 (July 1985), 255-92.

[26] Alexander Campbell, "What is the Real Design of the Lord's Supper?" *Millennial Harbinger* 17 (September 1846), 396.

[27] Hiram Christopher, *TheRemedial System; or, Man and His Redeemer in Two Parts* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing and Publishing Co., 1876), 348.

[28] Christopher, 341.

[29] Robert Milligan, *The Scheme of Redemption* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1977; reprint of 1868 ed), 429-30. See also Robert Richardson, *Communings in the Sanctuary* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing and Publishing Co., 1872) and R. H. Boll, *Truth and Grace* (Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 1917), 272: "The import of the Lord's Supper is not exhausted in the word 'memorial'…It has a further power...the Lord's Supper is not simply a reminder of the Lord's death, but a real participation in the body and blood of Christ."

[30] It is absent, for example, in Blowers and Lambert's survey except in the person of William Robinson.

Two recent "special issues" on the Lord's Supper in periodicals published by members of the Churches of Christ illustrate the point. In a 2003 issue of the *Gospel Advocate* the article "Until He Comes" only mentions the fact and hope of the second coming in brief ways while stressing solemnity, judgment and memorialism.[31] The article focused on the judgment of God against those who eat unworthily. In the1982 *Spiritual Sward* "Lord's Supper…Looking Forward" characterizes the Supper as a "perpetual proclamation" of the death of Christ where participants testify to their understanding "that the Lord, in fact, is coming back." This expresses a "trust in the promise" since just as the Supper is "founded upon historical fact" it also "signifies future fact as well." Deaver summaries the relation of past, present and future in this way: "The keeper of the feast *presently* commemorates the *past* death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as he looks forward to His *future* return."[32]

Most often the eschatological relation is taken as a temporal frame. This is something we do until Jesus comes. In other words, Paul gives us the terminus of the Supper. We will remember him until he is once again present. Then, it is sometimes said, we will dispense with the meal. Others see Paul's words as primarily stating a fact. The meal proclaims the fact of Jesus' coming. Entailed in this proclamation is a corresponding yearning or anticipation of that future reality. We long for the future, but the eschatology is wholly future. Still others see Paul's words as a pledge of the future. It is not only proclamation but promise. This meal is his promise that he will return. The Supper becomes a pledge of heavenly glory.

These may be properly called eschatological ideas, but they are oriented to temporality, facticity and promise. They are decidedly futurist. They all emphasize the "not yetness" of the eschaton and they are anthropocentric in orientation (we remember, we proclaim, we anticipate the promise). They exist alongside a memoralism and potentially a present spiritual feeding on Christ. The spiritual dynamic of the Lord's Supper remains either memory and/or nourishment. There is no eschatological dynamic in the present but only an absent Christ whose return we await through memory and spiritual sustenance. Fundamentally, this lack of eschatological "alreadiness" engenders a solemn and funerary atmosphere that is more consistent with the metaphor of altar than table.

The eschatological dimensions of the Supper were neglected. The eschatological hope was reduced to a promised future fact, and the Supper was reduced to a singular purpose as illustrated in this recent statement in the *Gospel Advocate*: "the chief purpose of the Lord's Supper is to emphasize only one fact of the gospel, namely, the death of Christ."[33] This memorialism even pushes thanksgiving into the background so that "eucharist" is an inappropriate designation for the Supper because it does not "express the true conception of his solemn institution."[34]

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[31] David Brag, "Until He Comes," *Gospel Advocate* 145 (6 June 2003), 21-22. Other articles (pp. 12-21) included "The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day" by Cecil May, Jr., "A Memorial to the Lord's Death" by Dale Jenkins, "Discerning the Lord's Body" by Howard Justis, and "The Christian's Holy Meal" by Kevin Cauley. The overarching theme stressed memorialism and solemnity. The issue is apparently a response to my *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord's Supper* (Orange, CA: New Leaf Books, 2002) without naming it.

[32] Mac Deaver, "Lord's Supper…Looking Forward," *Spiritual Sword* 13 (July 1982), 12.

[33] J. M. Powell, "The Purpose of the Lord's Supper," *Gospel Advocate* 123 (5 February 1981), 78.

As memorialism dominanted, and preaching tended to replace the table as the focus of worship, another factor contributed to a reductionistic approach to the eschatological dimensions of the Supper. The Stone-Campbell tradition never embraced the word "sacrament" (William Robinson is an exception). Instead, it spoke in terms of "ordinances" in good baptistic fashion. Though the lists of ordinances sometimes varied,[35] the three central ordinances of the Stone-Campbell Movement were: baptism, Lord's Supper and Lord's Day.[36]

These are "positive institutions" in contrast to moral obligations.[37] Moral obligations have crutches. There are inducements, inclinations, and natural propensities. But a positive law is an absolute test of loyalty. The significance of the positive command is that it is unencumbered by the crutches of moral obligations and it gives a clear indication of the loyalty of the person involved. Positive law is, according to Franklin, "the highest test of respect for divine authority" since it "tests" the condition of the "heart" as it penetrates "deep down into the inmost depths of the soul." Obedience to positive law "rises above mere morality…into the pure region of faith."[38] Disobedience to positive law reveals the "*spirit of disobedience*."[39]

As a positive ordinance, the Lord's Supper shares the nature of other positive ordinances. Tyler, for example, characterized the ordinances as (1) "divinely appointed teachers," (2) "God's method of righteousness," (3) "our treatment of the ordinances is esteemed as our treatment of their Author," (4) "tests of loyalty," (5) "special blessings" are attached to each and (6) "obedience to ordinances should always be from the heart."[40] Each of these characterizations is framed by a legal approach to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper becomes primarily an act of obedience. This is fundamentally anthropocentric and, framed by legal conceptualizations, it reduces the Supper to a duty performed in memory of another. The Supper, in such a frame, becomes exactly what Campbell sought to oppose in his initial articles on the breaking of bread. The Supper becomes a time of dutiful mourning rather than joyful feasting.

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[34] J. W. McGarvey, "Dedicatory Sermon, Campbell Street Church of Christ, Louisville, KY (1877)," available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jwmcgarvey/DEDSERM.HTM.

[35] Milligan, *Scheme*, 361-441, lists seven: preaching the word, prayer, praise, fasting, baptism, Lord's Day, and the Lord's Supper.

[36] Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism: With Its Antecedents and Consequents* (Bethany, VA: Campbell, 1851), 17: "The Christian ordinances--baptism, the Lord's day, and the Lord's supper,--as taught and observed by the Apostles." Cf. Calvin L. Potter, "Thinking Our Way Into the Future with Truth Behind Our Backs," *Mid-Stream* 25 (July 1987), 307.

[37] Alexander, Campbell, "Essays on Man in his Primitive State, and under the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian Dispensations.--No. XVI. Christian Age.--No. II.," *Christian Baptist* 7.12 (5 July 1830), 656 and *Christian Baptism*, 246.

[38] Benjamin Franklin, "Positive Divine Law," in *Gospel Preacher: A Book of Twenty-One Sermon*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati: G.W. Rice, Publisher, 1877), 193, available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/bfranklin/tgp2/TGP209.HTM.

[39] Franklin, "Positive," 194. Cf. John Mark Hicks, ""The Gracious Separatist: Moral and Positive Law in the Theology of James A. Harding," *Restoration Quarterly* 42.3 (2000): 129-47, available at http://johnmarkhicks.faithsite.com/content.asp?CID=17867.

[40] J. Z. Tyler, "The Ordinances of the Lord," in *New Testament Christianity*, ed. Z. T. Sweeney (Columbus, IN: New Testament Christianity Book Fund, 1926), 113-124. This article is immediately followed by Franklin's "Positive Divine Law," 125-165, cited above. Both are available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/zsweeney/ntc2/NTC200.HTM.

Nevertheless, eschatological perspectives—even in the sense I will define below —were not wholly lacking within the Stone-Campbell tradition (and also somewhat present in Western theology). Walter Scott, for example, described the Lord's Supper as "heaven on earth" (similar to Eastern Orthodox conceptualizations).[41] Most significantly, William Robinson –who was aware of the early rumblings of eschatological thought in the twentieth century—affirmed that that the "kingdom is *both* present and future,"[42] and therefore "we *are* with Him at the Lamb's great Bridal Feast" and "tread the heavenly courts."[43]

On the whole, however, the Stone-Campbell Movement, though using the language of table, was oriented in an anthropocentric direction, stressed memorialism, occasionally emphasized spiritual feeding on Christ, and reduced eschatological perspectives to the promised fact of a future reality.

Eschatology and the Lord's Supper in Luke-Acts

Bratten and Jenson note that "the twentieth century will be remembered in the history of theology for its rediscovery of the centrality of eschatology in the message of Jesus and early Christianity."[44] The reorientation of New Testament scholarship toward eschatological and apocalyptic themes began with Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer.[45] C. H. Dodd moved the eschaton from the future into the present with his version of "realized eschatology."[46] Moltmann has been programmatic for the last quarter of the 20th century in his affirmation that from "first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present."[47] The New Testament is a thoroughly eschatological, if not apocalyptic, message. The practices of the early church, consequently, are likewise thoroughly eschatological.

Wainwright's book was the first comprehensive effort to interpret the Lord's Supper eschatologically. He contended that the "*meal*" dimension of the Supper had been obscured as "the liturgies seem to have gone to excess in disguising the fundamental phenomenological feature of the eucharist."[48] And, yet, it was the Supper's nature as a meal, as table, that embodied its eschatological realities.

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[41] Letter cited by William Baxter, *The Life of Elder Walter Scott* (Cincinnati: Bosworth, Chase & Hall, Publishers, 1874), 410, available at http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/wbaxter/lews/LEWS26.HTM.
[42] William Robinson, *Completing the Reformation: The Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers* (Lexington, KY: College of the Bible, 1955), 59.
[43] William Robinson, "The Administration of the Lord's Supper," in *The Lord's Supper: Historical Writings on Its Meaning to the Body of Christ*, ed. Charles R. Gresham and Tom Lawson (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1993), 89-90.
[44] C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson, *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), vii.
[45] Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [German original, 1892]) and Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Adam & Charles. Black, 1911 [German original, 1906]).
[46] C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935).
[47] J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Grounds and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 16.
[48] Wainwright, 18.

Some early twentieth century scholars recognized this point. Though much of Lietzmann's theory about the origin of the Lord's Supper as a contrast between the eschatological joy of Jerusalem meals and the memorialism of Pauline churches is now in disrepute, his emphasis on the meal character of the Supper and its continuity with the pre-resurrection meals of Jesus is a significant contribution.[49] Lohmeyer also emphasized the importance of the meal-parables and meal-acts in the ministry of Jesus as the impetus for the Eucharist.[50] More significantly, Cullmann reshaped Lietzmann's theory by emphasizing the post-resurrection meals and the Pauline extension of those meals back to the Last Supper.[51] Markus Barth, then, embraced the whole trajectory by recognizing the continuity between the pre-resurrection, post-resurrection and eccleisal meals of Jesus with his disciples.[52]

In the light of this trajectory of scholarship, recent study has emphasized the importance of (1) the table in the ministry of Jesus; (2) the expression of resurrection joy in the post-resurrection meals with Jesus; and (3) the eschatological presence of Christ in ecclesial meals. In this line of thinking, the presence of Jesus is the central feature of the Lord's Supper—not as present in the bread or wine, but as host of the kingdom table. The "breaking of bread" motif in Luke-Acts grounds and illustrates this continuity.

In the Gospel of Luke the table is the primary "organizing principle" of Luke's pedagogical method.[53] He eats with sinners and Pharisees. He models table etiquette in the kingdom of God. In Jesus God eats with his people and by meal-acts proclaims what the kingdom of God is like.[54] The table ministry of Jesus forms the backdrop for Luke's description of the Last Supper which, according to Wainwright, "was apparently intended to be the last of the parabolic meal-signs dispensed by the man who had coming eating and drinking, and next would come the full feasting in the kingdom."[55]

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus hosts three meals where he "breaks" bread with his disciples. Each is laced with eschatological motifs. The first is Jesus' feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9:10-17. This meal story is particularly significant for several reasons. First, it is the only meal in Luke prior to the Last Supper (Luke 22) where Jesus is the host. Second, it contains language that is explicitly tied to the Last Supper (he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples; cf. Luke 9:16 with Luke 22:19). Third, the meal has clear messianic overtones as the Messiah feeds his people and eats with them.

Just prior to this meal story, Jesus had sent "the Twelve" out to "preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:2). Upon their return, Jesus retires with them to Bethsaida (Luke 9:11). Between these two paragraphs, Luke injects the question

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[49] Hans Lietzmann, *Mass and the Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of Liturgy*, trans. D. H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979 [German original, 1926]).
[50] J. Lohmeyer, "Das Abendmahl in der Urgemeinde," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56 (1937), 217-52.
[51] Oscar Cullmann, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity," 5-23, in *Essays on the Lord's Supper*, trans. J. G. Davies (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958 [French original, 1936]).
[52] Markus Barth, *Abendmahl: Passamahl, Bundesmahl und Messiasmahl* (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945). Cf. Markus Barth, *Rediscovering the Lord's Supper: Communion with Israel, with Christ, and Among Guests* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988).
[53] John Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission* (Harrisbug, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 181.
[54] See Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998).
[55] Wainwright, 35.

which shapes the rest of the narrative. Herod the tetrarch asked: "Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" The primary question of the narrative is "who is Jesus?" The narrative answers the question in Luke 9:20 by the mouth of Peter: "The Messiah of God." Luke heightened the messianic character of this meal by placing it prior to the confession of Jesus as the Christ (9:20) so that the hospitality, preaching, healing and feeding of his people are signs by which his messianic identity is recognized.

The meal, then, is an identity action. This is a messianic meal as the Messiah welcomes the crowd, teaches them about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:11) and provides their "food and lodging" (Luke 9:12). Jesus, as Messiah, feeds the people of God in a "remote place" (Luke 9:12), just as God did with manna in the wilderness. The table confirms Jesus' identity as God's anointed one. The meal is characterized by joy, abundance and compassion as Jesus feeds the hungry. The text has messianic banquet overtones and is a context for interpreting the Lord's Supper.[56]

The below chart illustrates the connections between this feeding and the Last Supper. The thematic connection indicates that Luke intended his community to read Luke 9 in the light of the table in the kingdom of God. This meal is the meal of the kingdom, just as Luke 22 is the meal of the kingdom, and the ecclesial meal is the meal of the kingdom. They constitute a continuous participation in the kingdom of God. All of them anticipate the fullness of the Messianic banquet, but at the same time experience the reality of the kingdom.

Topic	**Luke 9**	**Luke 22**
Kingdom Language	Spoke about the kingdom	Fulfillment in the Kingdom
Twelve	Twelve Apostles/Baskets	Twelve Tribes/Apostles
Israel/Exodus/Wilderness	Manna in the Wilderness	Exodus Memorial
Disciples Disputing	Who's the Greatest?	Who's the Greatest?
Reclining (at table)	Table Etiquette	Table Etiquette
Liturgical Formula	Took, Blessed, Broke, Gave	Took, Blessed, Broke, Gave
Jesus as Host	Host in the Wilderness	Host at the Passover
Hospitality (Lodging)	Providing Hospitality	Accepting Hospitality
Apostolic Mission	Traveling Missionaries	Judging the Tribes
Eating a Meal	Loaves and Fishes	Passover Lamb
Service	Disciples Serve	Jesus Serves

Luke gives us the longest account of the Last Supper among the synoptics. The Last Supper, according to Luke, is a Passover meal and Luke directly links the old covenant Passover with the new covenant meal. Jesus ate this Passover in anticipation of eating with his disciples again in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16-18). What Jesus intends to eat in the future is the fulfillment of the Passover itself. The Passover supper finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God where the disciples would eat and drink at Jesus' table in his kingdom (Luke 22:30).

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[56] Albert Schweitzer offered an eschatological understanding of the Lord's Supper in relation to this feeding. Cf. *The Mysticism of St. Paul the Apostle* (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1931), 241-44.

Luke places this new covenant meal on the trajectory of redemptive history. Jesus will eat and drink with the disciples again when the kingdom comes (Luke 22:18). The fullness of the kingdom is the reign of God at the p*arousia* (cf. parable in Luke 19:11-27). However, Luke also believes that in the person of Jesus, who exorcises demons and raises the dead, the kingdom is already present (Luke 11:20), and that Pentecost was the inauguration of restored Israel when Jesus ascended to the throne of David (Acts 1:6; 2:29-35 with Luke 1:30-33). The kingdom of God is already and not yet; it is present but yet future. The Passover is fulfilled in both the church and the future messianic banquet. Thus, the fulfillment in Luke 22 has a dual import: it is fulfillment in the new covenant meal of the inaugurated kingdom as well as the Messianic or heavenly banquet.

Three days after promising he would eat and drink again with the disciples in the kingdom of God Jesus is eating with his disciples (Luke 24:30, 42-43). Jesus' actions on that Easter first day of the week in Emmaus exactly parallel the Last Supper. At the table, Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (Luke 24:30) just at the Last Supper he took the bread, gave thanks, broke and gave it (Luke 22:19). Luke identifies the Emmaus meal with the Last Supper, and thus with the Eucharist.[57]

In the breaking of the bread, Jesus was "made known" (Luke 24:35). They now "recognized" him when they previously had not. Their eyes were opened at the table (Luke 24:16, 31). Cleopas and his friend saw the risen Lord and returned to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. Then Jesus appeared to the whole group, ate with them (Luke 24:34-42) and ministered the word to them (Luke 24:44-49). The parallels between the first periscope and the second in Luke 24 are significant: the presence of Jesus, post-resurrection meal, and the ministry of the word (cf. also Acts 1:4; 10:41). And this experience is itself the continuation of the meals with Jesus during his ministry.[58]

The table, then, is a table of hope as it declares the presence of the kingdom through the resurrection of Jesus. The table proclaims the living Christ. The risen host is present at the table eating and drinking with his disciples. The table is about hope, joy, communion, and thanksgiving. The table on that first Easter Sunday was a table of joy and celebration (cf. Luke 24:52).

The new community of Jesus' disciples is described in Acts 2:42 as those who "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers." Daily, this new community gathered in the temple and in homes (Acts 2:46-47). They apparently gathered in the temple for prayers and teaching (cf. Acts 3:1; 5:21 [daily]).And this new community also gathered daily in homes to break bread.[59]

They shared food with joy and generosity. There is no substantial reason to distinguish between the breaking of bread in Acts 2:42 and Acts 2:46--they refer to a meal in the context of which the liturgical pattern was displayed [breaking bread], the

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[57] Augustine, Letter 149: "And no one should doubt that his being recognized in the breaking of bread is the sacrament, which brings us together in recognizing him" (cited by Arthur A. Just, Jr., ed., *Luke*, ACCS, NT III [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 382). Cf. Just, *Ongoing Feast*, for an extended defense of this identification.

[58] Jon A. Weatherly, "Eating and Drinking in the Kingdom of God: the Emmaus Episode and the Meal Motif in Luke-Acts," 18-33, in *Christ's Victorious Church*, ed. Tom Friskney and Jon A. Weatherly (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001).

[59] Cf. Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Breaking of Bread: The Development of the Eucharist According to Acts* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998).

Lord was remembered, and his presence experienced.[60] Whatever this "breaking bread" is ought to be interpreted against the background of Luke 9, 22 and 24 so that those texts inform our understanding of Acts 2. It seems improbable that Luke would use the same language ("breaking bread") to describe two different things within the space of five verses, especially when the Gospel of Luke informs our understanding of what it means to break bread. Consequently, "breaking bread" in Acts 2:42 and 2:46 refer to the Lord's Supper which was experienced as a daily meal in Jerusalem church.[61]

Luke intends his readers to link the "breaking of bread" with the previous events in his Gospel. Three times in his Gospel Luke gives a full description of Jesus' actions as host when he took the bread, blessed (gave thanks) it, broke it and gave it to his disciples. When Luke summarily and cryptically refers to the "breaking of bread" in Acts, he assumes the reader knows the fuller stories of his Gospel. Indeed, he assumes they understand the theological significance of "breaking bread." That significance is indicated by Luke 24:35 as the hinge text in the "breaking of bread" stories.[62] As the chart below visually represents, when the disciples of Christ broke bread they experienced the presence of the risen Christ.

The Gospel of Luke	Hinge Text	The Book of Acts
Luke 9:16 Jesus took bread, blessed, broke and gave it		Acts 2:42 the disciples continued in the breaking of bread
Luke 22:19 Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke and gave it	Luke 24:35 Jesus was "made known to them in the breaking of the bread"	Acts 2:46 the disciples broke bread daily in their homes
Luke 24:30 Jesus took bread, blessed, broke and gave it		Acts 20:7 the disciples gathered to break bread

Luke also narrates that the church continued to break bread as a community (Acts 20:7). The church gathered to break bread as its explicit purpose for assembling. The story combines several elements which illuminate the connection between breaking bread, the first day of the week and resurrection, just as in Luke 24. On this particular first day of the week when the disciples were gathered to break bread the church

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[60] Cf. William A. Dowd, "Exegetical Notes: Breaking Bread (Acts 2:46)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 1.4 (October 1939), 358-62, for an extended defense of this understanding.

[61] Many support this understanding of Acts 2:42 and 2:46. For example, Brad Blue, "The Influence of Jewish Worship on Luke's Presentation of the Early Church," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 489 and C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:164-5.

[62] R. J. Dillon, *From Eyewitnesses to Ministers of the Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24*, Analecta Biblica, 82. (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 105, regards Luke 24:35 as the "connecting link" between the ministry of Jesus and the Eucharistic meals in Acts.

experienced firsthand a resurrection from the dead. The narrative links between Luke 24 and Acts 20 confirm that Luke wanted his readers to relive the resurrection of Jesus in this resurrection.[63] The resurrection of Eutychus functions as an existential reality that embodies the truth of Jesus' own presence at that table.

Topic	Luke 24	Acts 20
Gathering of Disciples	24:33	20:7
Breaking of Bread	24:30,35	20:7,11
Eating Together	24:42-43	20:11
First Day of the Week	24:1,13	20:7
Teaching the Word (*logos*)	24:17,19,44	20:7
Conversation (*homileo*)	24:14-15	20:11
A Rising from the Dead	24:5,46	20:10,12
Fear	24:37-38	20:10
The Living One (*zotan*)	24:5	20:12

"Breaking bread" in Luke-Acts is a covenant meal where the Lord is present as host and the disciples sit together as a community not only in the hope of the resurrection but in the present experience of the alreadiness of the eschaton. Disciples share food with each other as an expression of the communion that exists among the disciples by virtue of God's redemptive act in Jesus. As they eat, they anticipate the eschatological kingdom. But they did more than anticipate. They actually experienced the presence of the risen Christ at the table. "In the reading of Scripture and at the breaking of the bread," Marshall comments, "the risen Lord will continue to be present, though unseen."[64]

"Breaking bread," then, was not a solemn funerary ritual but the new community's celebration of the presence of the risen Jesus through which God revealed the eschaton. The disciples ate with joy and generosity as they praised God for his redemptive work. They ate with hope as they re-experienced the victory of Jesus over death through eating together and eating with Jesus. Indeed, these celebratory meals were filled with joyous interaction and enthusiastic praise. Joy is pervasive in Luke's meal stories (cf. Acts 2:46) and is particularly appropriate to the Eucharist as well as analogous to the joy that characterized the sacrificial meals of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26; 27:7).[65] It is one of the great discontinuities between the meals in Luke and the contemporary church that joy is not the most prominent way in which the contemporary Supper is experienced.

And this joy is an eschatological joy. It is rooted in the presence of the living Christ at the table. As I. Howard Marshall notes, "Above all, Luke's contribution is to stress that the Lord's

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[63] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series, 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 358: "Is it by accident that the story takes place on the first day of the week (Luke 24:1), or that it occurs in an "upper room" (Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13), or that the disciples are gathered to "break bread" (Luke 24:30-35)? All of these are clear verbal pointers back to the resurrection of Jesus and the experience of his risen presence by the first disciples."

[64] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 900.

[65] Cf. Philippe Henri Menoud, "The Acts of The Apostles and the Eucharist," in *Jesus Christ and the Faith*, trans. E. M. Paul (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978 [French original, 1953]), 84-106; cf. Barth, *Rediscovering*, 74.

Supper is the joyous celebration of the experience of salvation in the presence of the risen Lord."[66] In Lucan theology, it is "the Eucharist which gives the risen Christ, living and present, to the faithful. So it is that for Christians the Eucharist is the great sign of the Lord's Resurrection, the sign by which they recognize the Lord as living and present."[67]

Theological Reflection

Systematic Theology

The continuity between ministry meals (e.g., Luke 9), the Last Supper (Luke 22) and post-resurrection meals (Luke 24) is the presence of the living Christ in the breaking of the bread. "The eschatological prospect held out by Jesus at the Last Supper," Wainwright writes, "did not have to await the church's eucharist for its fulfillment, let alone remain unfulfilled until a coming of the kingdom which has even yet not occurred, but was *already fulfilled in the meals which Jesus took with His disciples immediately after his resurrection*."[68] The continuity between the Gospel of Luke and the breaking of bread in Acts is the eschatological reality of the resurrected Jesus. It is the continuation of the post-resurrection meals. "The Last Supper and those resurrection appearances," Torrance writes, "belong together in one sacramental whole. Though Jesus has withdrawn His visible presence from us, there is such an intervention by the risen Lord as the invisible reality behind each celebration of the Lord's Supper. Jesus Christ is as really present in the Eucharist as He was on that Easter day to His disciples."[69]

Yet, as we reflect on the continuing presence of the risen Christ at the Lord's table in the church, we are confronted with the tension that the risen Christ is also absent. Torrance calls this the "eschatological reserve" in the sense that there is "an eschatological lag waiting for the last Word or the final Act of God."[70] In our post-ascension but pre-*parousia* situation, we live in the tension that Jesus is both absent and present. He is absent – he no longer walks upon the earth as one of us, but sits at the right hand of God. He is present, however, sacramentally at the table. Consequently, there is continuity and discontinuity with the post-resurrection meals. While the table mediates the presence of Christ, it is clear that Jesus is not physically present in the same sense in which he was present at the post-resurrection meals. The Eucharist continues the post-resurrection meals but in a post-ascension context. Thus, the Eucharist is an anticipation of the "not yet" character of the eschaton, but is also a participation in its "alreadiness." It is more than a pledge of what is to come—it is the present experience of the future itself, but it is not yet the fullness of face-to-face fellowship with the risen Christ.

This tension shapes the Eucharistic practice of the church. The one who bridges that tension is the Spirit of God. Pneumatology—being in the Spirit—unites the church

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[66] I. Howard Marshall, *The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 133.

[67] Jacques Dupont, "The Meal at Emmaus," in *The Eucharist in the New Testament: A Symposium*, ed. J. Delorme, trans. E. M. Stewart (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965), 121.

[68] Wainwright, 38.

[69] T. F. Torrance, "Eschatology and Eucharist," *Intercommunion*, ed. Donald Baillie and John Marsh (NY: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1952), 334

[70] T. F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 2nd ed (Edinburgh: T & T Clar, 1993), p. 45. I am indebted to Vander Zee, *Christ*, 216 for this reference and the substance of this paragraph.

with the absent Christ so that he is truly present at the table. When Christ ascended, he poured out the Spirit upon his people. The Spirit unites heaven and earth. Moreover, this is an eschatological Spirit who brings the future into the present. He himself is not only a down payment, an earnest, or pledge of the future, but the future is now present through the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is the presence of the eschaton.

As we think about the relationship between the Eucharist and eschatology, pneumatology must be front-and-center. While there is not sufficient space to develop this point, the witness of John (John 4:24) and Paul (Philippians 3:2; Ephesians 5:18-19) is that the people of God worship in the Spirit. We worship in Spirit as people who "have immediate access to God through the Son" by the Spirit.[71] We approach the Father through the Son in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). The Spirit mediates our presence to the Father, just as the Spirit mediates the Son's presence in us. We are the habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). At the table we are united sacramentally with the Father and Son through the Spirit in a communion that is given to us in concrete form as bread and wine at a table.

Deeper reflection on this function of the Spirit gives significance to the historic emphasis of the Orthodox tradition. They remind us that the gathered church is a "sacrament of assembly."[72] The assembly, with the Eucharist at its center, involves the sacramental presence of God. The assembly is sacred—the whole assembly—because, by the Spirit, the gathered community has been lifted up into the throne room of God. There the assembly encounters the divine presence. This moves assembly, and consequently Eucharist, beyond proclamation and memory. Rather, the "newness, the uniqueness of the Christian *leitourgia* [is] in its eschatological nature as the presence here and now of the future *parousia*, as the ephiphany of that which is to come, as communion with the 'world to come'." The day of assembly, the "Lord's day," is a "symbol, i.e., the manifestation, now, of the kingdom."[73] This is no mere corporate vertical relationship, but it is a present experience of the future. We see the world with eschatological eyes in the Eucharist and authentically experience the future.

The presence of the eschatological reality in the assembly gathered around the table pulls us into the fullness of the kingdom of God. By the Spirit we experience the alreadiness of the kingdom as we are present in the throne room of God. The assembly is "the sacrament of the coming of the risen Lord, of our meeting and communion with him 'at his table in his kingdom'." Through the Eucharist the church ascends and enters "into the light and joy and triumph of the kingdom" in such a way that the Eucharist is a "fully realized symbol."[74] This is the truth of the Orthodox mantra that the assembly of the church is "heaven on earth," or "standing in the temple we stand in heaven."[75] "Let us beware," Chrysostom warns, "that we do not remain on the earth."[76]

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[71] J. E. L. Oulton, *Holy Communion and Holy Spirit: A Study in Doctrinal Relationship* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 129

[72] Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir's, 1987), 27ff.

[73] Schmemann, 43.

[74] Schmemann, 43-44.

[75] Schmemann, 45.

[76] As quoted by Schmemann, 169. Cf. also Pope John Paul II, "Eucharist: Pledge of Future Glory," (General Audience, October 25, 2000) available at http://www.cin.org/pope/eucharist-glory.html.

The remnants of this idea are found in Western liturgical traditions. When the church sings the *Sanctus* ("Holy, Holy, Holy") it joins the heavenly chorus surrounding the throne of God. This is no mere distant praise. Rather, "the earthly church actually and already participates in the worship of heaven."[77]

The Wesleys also discerned this picture and spoke of it in terms of a "foretaste" of heaven. Though the imagery is "rare," according to Wainwright, "its value as an expression for the relation between the already and the not yet is undeniable."[78] In the minds of the Wesleys, this realized eschatology joined the church "in its mission of a liturgical union of praise with the whole company of heaven. The supper was understood as a vehicle that transformed the assembly of believers and gave them a present place in the 'Church Triumphant'."[79]

The eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, therefore, is not simply a proclamation of a future fact (either the Second Advent or the Kingdom of God), nor is it merely a promise or pledge of the future reality, but it is the experience of that future in the present through the Spirit who unites us with the living Christ in the throne room of God. Jesus invites us to his table even now, and we participate in the eschatological banquet even now. We already eat at the eschatological table of the Lord; we already sit at the table with Jesus in his kingdom.

Practical Theology

Liturgical Orientation. The solemnity and apparent sadness of our current experience of the Supper in the contemporary church does not fit the Emmaus road experience. The church needs to revision the Supper as an experience of resurrection joy at the kingdom table rather than as an altar of sacrifice. As Torrance explains, "Those Easter meals gave [the disciples] their understanding of the rite in the Upper Room."[80]

Just as the Emmaus narrative moves from the non-recognition of Jesus to the recognition of Jesus at the table, so the church recognizes Jesus at the table. There we recognize the victory of the resurrection as we eat and drink with Jesus in hope. At the table we bring all our "Fridays" to Jesus and celebrate the victory of Christ on Sunday. The table transforms "Friday" into "Sunday." Unfortunately, the church still generally practices the Supper as if it were still Friday rather than Sunday. But the point of the Supper is that we celebrate Sunday and experience the reality that God has overcome Friday. Sunday reinterprets and renews our Fridays. Torrance, again, comments: "the mystery of the Resurrection is sacramentally present in the Eucharist."[81]

If the church embraces the theological idea of eschatological presence at the table as the already of a not-yet future, the Eucharistic liturgy of the church should be primarily shaped by hope, joy and spiritual communion. The Disciples' hymnal *Thankful Praise* is a good example of a move in this direction. For example, it emphasizes a table theology

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[77] Wainwright, 117.
[78] Wainwright, 152. Cf. also Rattenbury, 61-78.
[79] Hoskins, "Eucharist and Eschatology."
[80] Torrance, "Eschatology and Eucharist," 333-34.
[81] Torrance, "Eucharist and Eschatology," 338.

where Jesus sits as host.[82] It embodies a "meditative" or "contemplative joy."[83] But this joyous experience is a "present sharing in the eschatological banquet" rather than simply an "anamnetic thanksgiving."[84] Certainly contemplative joy is consistent with the nature of the eschatological banquet, but there is also a broader sense of joy than contemplation or meditation. The joy of the eschatological banquet should not be limited to contemplation.

Missional Table.[85] If we understand the Lord's Supper as the continuation of the table ministry of Jesus in the church, it will have profound implications for the significance and practice of the table.[86] The table is a place where Jesus receives sinners and confronts the righteous; a place where Jesus extends grace to seekers, but condemns the self-righteous. Jesus is willing to eat with sinners in order to invite them into the kingdom, but he points out the discontinuity between our tables of social/ethnic/gender/economic/religious cultures and the table in the kingdom of God. The last (sinners, poor, and humbled) will be first in the kingdom of God, but the first (self-righetous, rich and proud) will be last and excluded from the kingdom of God (Luke 13:26-30).

The meal stories have theological and Eucharistic meaning for Luke's community. The table during Jesus' ministry should shape the table in the church because the table of Jesus is the table of the kingdom. The table of Jesus' ministry continues in the church. Jesus' table etiquette is kingdom etiquette, and the Lord's Supper is the Lord's kingdom table.

The table announces the presence of the kingdom. It announces that "today" salvation has come to the world as God communes with his people. The Jubilee motif, articulated in Luke 4:16-19, not only invests the table with great joy, but it also calls the disciples of Jesus to embrace all those who are invited to his table. The table is inclusive and is intentional about the poor, blind and oppressed (Luke 14). The table reaches across all socio-economic, racial and gender barriers as it unites lost humanity at one table. It embraces the "other" as we break bread in the presence of Jesus.[87] This inclusiveness testifies to the socio-ethical character of the table as a uniting moment in the kingdom of God.

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[82] Keith Watkins, ed., *Thankful Praise: A Resource for Christian Worship* (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1987), nos. 55 (p. 73), 178 (p. 140), and 179 (p. 140). Cf. also Keith Watkins, *Celebrate with Thanksgiving* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1991).

[83] Keith Watkins, *The Feast of Joy: The Lord's Supper in Free Churches* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1977), 19-20.

[84] Gerard Francis Moore, "The Eucharistic Theology of the Prayers for Communion Service of the Lord's Supper of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): 1953-1987," (Thesis, Licentiate of Theology, Catholic University of America, 1989), 125.

[85] See Koenig, *The Feast of the World's Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission*, 215-59.

[86] Hicks, *Come to the Table*, ch. 4.

[87] Jim Forest, "In the Breaking of Bread: Recognizing the Face of Jesus," *Sojourners* 14.4 (1985), 34-36; cf. Murphy, "Bread, Wine, and 'the Pledge of Heaven," 402-04.

Moreover, the table becomes a political,[88] economic,[89] and ecological[90] act within culture and against culture. It expresses the kingdom of God in all its political, economic and ecological dimensions.[91] It bears witness to how the kingdom of God in the present should transform life here and now. Our allegiance is to the kingdom, not human political institutions. Our commitment is to the poor, not to consumerist capitalism. Our concern is for the integrity of God's creation, not self-serving humanistic exploitation of the earth. To understand that the Eucharist is the kingdom meal that embodies kingdom life not only in the new heaven and new earth but here is to see the Eucharist as the presence of the future that transforms the present and propels us toward the realization for the fullness of God's kingdom on the earth. The Eucharist is the meal which not only prays "Thy Kingdom Come," but also shapes the presence of that kingdom in the lives of disciples now.[92]

Ecumenical Openness. One of the most significant ways in which the eschatological significance of the Supper has been employed in the last fifty years is in service to ecumenics. This partly motivates Wainwright's work, but it was pioneered by Torrance in 1952.[93]. In 1993 Davies surveyed the impact of various understandings of the Supper upon ecumenics, and in 2000 Welker did the same.[94] All give significant attention to the eschatological meaning of the Supper where the primary focus is on the divine act which generates joy and gratitude in worshippers in an eschatological unity.[95]

Again, if the table ministry of Jesus is to shape our understanding and practice of the Eucharist, and if the eschatological reality is already present in the Supper, then this will move us toward emphasizing the divine invitation. Jesus invited all to the table and sat with all. If the table embodies the gospel and bears witness to the gospel, then it should reflect the universal intent of the gospel. Just as our preaching invites all to faith, so the table invites all to eat. The table, just as the ministry of the Word, offers grace and testifies that Jesus died for all. The table is a place where sinners can not only hear but

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[88] William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

[89] Cf. Joseph A. Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

[90] Cf. Leithart, "The Way Things Ought to Be."

[91] William Robinson, *Completing the Reformation*, 51, writes: "No one can partake of the Christian sacraments without realizing the terrific impact this ought to have on his life in economic and political realities, in fashioning the events of our time nearer to the pattern of 'God's time' which will be fulfilled in the 'last time.' We cannot escape the responsibility laid upon us if we are truly 'partakers of Christ.'"

[92] William Robinson, *Completing the Reformation*, 60, writes: "Men and women should see in the church, in its fellowship life, in those who commune with the body and blood of Christ, the *spearhead* of the kingdom. It is our Lord's express purpose that the will of God should be *done on earth* as it is in heaven, and it cannot be so done until it is done *in us.* What this is to mean in the sacrifice of our own selfish interests, in the economic, social, and political life of our time may be left to the imagination of each reader, as he comes face to face with the reality of our Lord's sacrificial life and death in the service of Holy Communion. If he does not find here that judgment upon his own conscience and that strength and grace to enable reformation, he will find them nowhere else."

[93] Torrance, "Eschatology and Eucharist," 303-350.

[94] Davies, *Bread of Life and Cup of Joy*, and Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

[95] See also Paul A. Crow, Jr., "The Lord's Supper in Ecumenical Dialogue," *Theology Today* 22 (April 1965), 39-58, available at http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/apr1965/v22-1-article3.htm.

experience the gracious message of the gospel through eating with the community of faith. The community of faith today, just as Israel in the past, receives aliens at its table.[96]

This should resonate with the Stone-Campbell tradition, especially in terms of ecumenics. Our historic beginnings involved significant conflicts regarding the table. Thomas Campbell was censured and ultimately defrocked for sharing communion with Presbyterians outside the Seceeder tradition in Western Pennsylvania. Alexander Campbell refused to take communion at the approval of a token-giving clergy. In the last 150 years the slogan "we neither invite, nor debar" has characterized our practice but this was mostly rooted in an individualistic understanding of "self-examination" rather than a call for unity.[97] Unity assumes an invitation to the table where all are welcome, unlimited by institutional lines. An eschatological vision turns the discussion away from institutional concerns toward the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Conclusion:

Through the Lord's Supper disciples experience the eschatological joy of the risen Christ as he hosts our communal meal. The Lord's Supper is an eschatological meal of the partially realized kingdom of God.

The church should not abandon, of course, memorialism (we remember Jesus) or a sense of mystical presence through the bread and wine (Calvin's emphasis). But these perspectives must be brought under the horizon of the eschaton.[98] As Dix reminds us, "The whole conception of anamnesis is in itself eschatological…What the church 'remembers' in the eucharist is partly beyond history-the ascension, the sitting at the right hand of the Father and the second coming."[99]

The horizon of the Christian faith is the eschaton. In the Eucharist we "remember the future"[100] because the eschatological human, Jesus the Messiah, is present at the Eucharist as an earnest of the future. In the Eucharist we experience the presence of Christ—not so much in the bread and wine, but at the table.

The eschatological horizon reminds us that the root metaphor of the Eucharist is neither tomb nor altar, but table.[101]

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[96] Here is where the "breaking of bread" on the ship in Acts 27 contributes to a missional understanding of the Eucharist. For a defense of this reading, see Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1208-10.

[97] Blowers and Lambert, 492-93.

[98] Dupont, "The Meal at Emmaus," 121: "We are familiar with the idea that the Eucharist is the memorial of the Saviour's Passion, and so it is. But it would be to restrict it significance if we saw in it only the death of Jesus without seeing his Resurrection at the same time. For the early Christians the death and Resurrection formed only one mystery, which was likewise inseparable from its third factor: the *parousia*.

[99] Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945), 264.

[100] Kuiken, "Hopeful Feasting," 197.

[101] See Leithart, "The Way Things Ought to Be," 166, 172-73. Cf. Paul H. Jones, *Christ's Eucharistic Presence: A History of the Doctrine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 45. This is the major thesis of my book *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord's Supper*.