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The “Just Once” and “Once for Ever” of the Word of God¹

Abstract: The text asks the question about the role of the Word of God in connection with Pascha and its being made present in the liturgy. The article first refers to Joseph Ratzinger’s theology of liturgy. According to the Bavarian theologian, in Christian worship the historical event of the Passover (“just once”) corresponds to its continuous actuality (“once for ever”). The essence of Jesus’ words and actions – as the Son of the Father – at the Last Supper remains always present. It is then shown that the inspired writings can only be understood in connection with the words of institution at the Last Supper. The privileged time for listening to the word of God is the liturgy, during which Christ-the Lamb becomes the Exegete who opens up the deepest sense of Scripture (“Eucharistic hermeneutics”). An analogy is then presented between the entry of the past Passover into the present of the liturgy and the actualization of the events witnessed in the inspired books. This kind of “making present” is related to the sacramental transformation of the Jewish scriptures and feasts that Christ accomplished. The historical experience is not recreated, but recapitulated in the Eucharistic Passover. In the Blessed Sacrament Christ is also present in the spoken (and written under inspiration) word. In turn, the liturgy of the word is the verbal aspect of the sacramental action.

Keywords: Joseph Ratzinger, Christ’s Passover, inspired writings, eucharistic hermeneutics, liturgy and salvation history, making present of the word of God, liturgy of the word

In his monograph on the biblical theology of Benedict XVI, Scott Hahn has drawn attention to the relationship between Word and sacrament in the senior pope’s thought. The Word which has been heard calls the hearer into communion with that Voice which speaks;

¹ Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

the Word is received during the liturgy first in the profession of faith and then in the sacrament. The Word heard and proclaimed during the liturgy calls for conversion, worship and adoration, and leads to the sacramental “making present” of the Word, that is, to the culminating Eucharistic encounter with Christ – communion with the Word.²

This movement of Word to sacramental actualization is also a part of the original structure of revelation and the Church, according to Benedict. The Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, comes to call a people together into a “kingdom,” which is a covenant relationship with God. This covenant is made in Christ’s death and resurrection and, by his command, is to be remembered and renewed in the sacramental-liturgical action of the Eucharist³.

Theological literature devotes disproportionately more attention to the Eucharistic liturgy than to the liturgy of the word. Therefore, in this article I would like to address the function of the word of God in the liturgy. Theological considerations will be guided by the question of whether the same can be said of the Word of God as of Christ’s Passover – that it is made present in the Mass. If the “just once” of Christ’s sacrifice means “once for ever” then what would this sacramental actualization of God’s spoken word consist in? In the first section I will present Joseph Ratzinger’s understanding of Christian worship. In the following four points I will present my own attempt to take a theological look at the actualisation of God’s word during the liturgy.

1. *Ephapax* and *aiónios* of Christ’s Passover

Joseph Ratzinger, in the way proper for himself, as if from within contemporary dilemmas, posed the courageous question: should there be separate sacred spaces and sacred times, if Christian worship is intended by God to be a cosmic liturgy, and worship of God “in Spirit and in truth” demands the following of Christ always and

² Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 67–69.

³ Hahn, *Przymierze*, 69–70. All quotations from this publication are from the original: Hahn, *Covenant and Communion*.

everywhere.⁴ "Whoever asks questions like these touches on a crucial dimension of the Christian understanding of worship, but overlooks something essential about the permanent limits of human existence in this world, overlooks the 'not yet' that is part of Christian existence and talks as if the New Heaven and New Earth had already come."⁵ As we can see, Ratzinger found his answer in this tension, peculiar to the times of the Church, between, on the one hand, the New Testament fulfilment of the Old Testament promises and, on the other, their non-final fulfilment, as this can only take place in its fullness in glory, in the New Jerusalem, where God and the Lamb will be the temple (cf. Rev 21:22f).

The Bavarian theologian recalled in this context the triad of concepts used by the Fathers of the Church: shadow – image – reality. The Church of the New Testament is no longer a shadow (cf. Rom 13:12), but neither is it yet a fulfilled reality, but only or as much as its image.⁶ "Thus the time of the New Testament is a peculiar kind of 'in-between,' a mixture of 'already and not yet.' The empirical conditions of life in this world are still in force, but they have been burst open, and must be more and more burst open, in preparation for the final fulfilment already inaugurated in Christ."⁷ The veil of the tabernacle has already been torn, the heart of the Crucified One pierced, and the union of the man Jesus with God has opened heaven for people. But this openness appears to us in the mediating signs of salvation, not in seeing the Lord as he is.⁸

In Ratzinger's view, on this threefold temporal structure (shadow – image – reality) there are superimposed three more levels which are essential for the establishment of Christian worship: the foundational event, liturgical making present, and the eschatological dynamics of the liturgy and the related involvement of the communicant in the

⁴ Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 51–52. A more recent edition in: J. Ratzinger, *Teologia liturgii*, 60.

⁵ Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 52. All quotations are from the English translation: Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*.

⁶ Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 52.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 57.

process towards God being “all in all” (Col 3:11).⁹ The central and proper level of the liturgy is revealed in the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper. Its meaning is derived from the fact that it refers to a real event and a reality whose essence always remains present. If Christ can call his body given up and his blood poured out, it is only on condition that the body is really given up and the blood poured out; without the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus’ words would be empty.¹⁰ Ratzinger emphasises the inseparable link between Jesus’ death and the Last Supper:

[...] the indissoluble bond between the Supper and the death of Jesus is also plain: his dying words fuse with his words at the Supper, the reality of his death fuses with the reality of the Supper. For the event of the Supper consists in Jesus sharing his body and his blood, i.e., his earthly existence; he gives and communicates himself. In other words, the event of the Supper is an anticipation of death, the transformation of death into an act of love. Only in this context can we understand what John means by calling Jesus’ death the glorification of God and the glorification of the Son (John 12:28; 17:21).¹¹

The death on the Cross and rising from the dead as a one-off event belong to the past; it is the “just once” (*ephapax*) connected with the actual entry of the eternal Son into human history through the Incarnation. But if there can be a simultaneity in the present in relation to this history, it is only because the human history of the Christ giving himself up corresponds to the Son’s relation to the Father and to his will. The Passover is not merely something external imposed on Jesus, but is at the same time the expression of his will obedient to the Father’s intentions; in other words, the passivity of the crucifixion

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 52–56.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, *Duch liturgii*, 52–53; Hahn, *Przymierze*, 208.

¹¹ Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 640–641. (I am quoting after: Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*). Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 191, 228. In the second of the quotations cited by Ratzinger, it would be better to refer to verses 1 and 4 and 5 of the seventeenth chapter of John’s Gospel.

is combined with the activity of love involving body, soul and spirit of the Incarnate.¹² Ratzinger explains:

[...] the exterior act of being crucified is accompanied by an interior act of self-giving (the Body is "given for you"). "No one takes [my life] from me," says the Lord in St. John's Gospel, "but I lay it down of my own accord" (10:18). This act of giving is in no way just a spiritual occurrence. It is a spiritual act that takes up the bodily into itself, that embraces the whole man; indeed, it is at the same time an act of the Son. As St. Maximus the Confessor showed so splendidly, the obedience of Jesus' human will is inserted into the everlasting Yes of the Son to the Father.¹³

Looking from the other side, it was none other than the Son of God who accepted the human will and in it expressed his Son's *fiat* to the will of the Father. Also, the last words of the Crucified One expressed the dialogue of the Son with the Father, and the dying itself became an act of prayer in which the Son entrusted himself to the Father. For our reflections, it is especially important that Jesus on the Cross prayed with the words of the Old Testament, and in this sense we can say, following Ratzinger, that Scripture became flesh in Him, or more precisely, the Passion of the Just One. In this way, his death was incorporated into the word of God, which he lived and which therefore also lived in him, and it was in him that it became intelligible.¹⁴ Ratzinger expresses the same in yet another way, by showing that in this way death, which normally is the end both of words and of meaning, in Jesus became a word and a place carrying meaning.¹⁵ The prayer of the crucified is at the same time

¹² Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 53–54. Jesus took up his mission not as a compulsion but as something with which he identified himself voluntarily and wholeheartedly – cf. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, 199.

¹³ Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 53–54; Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia*, 651–653.

¹⁴ Cf. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 640 (concerns the quotation and the paraphrase that precedes it).

¹⁵ Cf. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 641.

an act of worship – an hour of praise to the Father in which the Son offers himself as a sacrifice. Since the prayer of the dying Son was accepted by the Father, as evidenced by his rising from the dead, Christ enabled people to participate in his dialogue with the Father.¹⁶ “[S]acrifice has become gift, for the Body given in love and the Blood given in love have entered, through the Resurrection, into the eternity of love, which is stronger than death.”¹⁷

In this way, a single historical event can remain constantly relevant, precisely because none other than the Son himself was crucified. The external dimension of the crucifixion passes away, but the internal act of self-giving, though expressed in time, remains permanent.¹⁸ “Just as the pain of the body is drawn into the pathos of the mind and becomes the Yes of obedience, so time is drawn into what reaches beyond time. The real interior act, though it does not exist without the exterior, transcends time, but since it comes from time, time can again and again be brought into it. That is how we can become contemporary with the past events of salvation.”¹⁹ *Ephapax*, as Ratzinger writes in reference to the formulations of St Bernard of Clairvaux, is combined with *aionios* (continually); “once” then means “always,” and “yesterday” becomes present in the “today” of the Church. The Christian liturgy does not so much draw on the past as it is contemporaneous with the Pascha which constitutes that liturgy; “In the Eucharist we are caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ, in his passing from the tabernacle of the transitory to the presence and sight of God.”²⁰

¹⁶ Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 191–192.

¹⁷ Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 53.

¹⁸ Cf. Góźdz, “Czas a wieczność,” 167.

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 54. God, having created a universe with a temporal structure, must now relate to it in a manner appropriate to this temporality; this is one dimension of the kenosis of God. It is precisely the servant Lord, subjected to time, who can become the redeemer of time – cf. Wainwright, “Sacramental Time,” 138.

²⁰ Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 54 (concerns the quotation and the paraphrase that precedes it). Jeremy Worthen (Worthen, “The Theology of Time,” 517) recalls that in the “theology of mystery” pioneered by Odo Casel, it is assumed that in the Eucharistic anamnesis the past becomes present through the “simultaneity” of the

To these two planes: the foundational event and liturgical making present, must also be added the plane of the future. It results from the connection between the previous planes: the essence of the past event does not pass away, but reaches into the present time, which means that the future is also present in this event (anticipation of the Coming One).²¹

2. "It is finished" of the inspired Scriptures

The Scripture accomplishes fulfillment in two ways: first, that this act of infinite and unconditional love of the self-giving Son (and of the Father's love giving out the Son) is the ultimate revelation of the deepest intuitions of the Old Testament; second, that Christ's "giving of himself" reveals at the same time that the reception of God's covenant with men was not possible except through the saving sacrifice (and that, in fact, this covenant is identified with it), and thus God, in addressing the word to people, was at the same time "giving" himself to them. The inspired word expresses the Word of God now in no other way than by standing in relation to the Passover and its liturgical making present. In other words: it serves the eternally present essence of that which was externally accomplished "once." The Old Testament now speaks above all in terms of the fact that in the past the Word of God could not have been fully uttered by God; insofar as it was the Word of God, it was humbled and even emptied – as it was to turn out – to the death of the cross (cf. Phil 2:6–8).²² The Word of God is present in the inspired texts in two ways: in what God utters and by the fact that his Word is rejected.

If Christ did not remain passive in the crucifixion, but actively gave himself out of love in sacrifice, this means that God can also speak in the rejection of God's Word by people. If even the silence of the Cross can turn out to be speech, and perhaps the loudest cry

Church's liturgical-sacramental activity with the foundational event that brought the Church into existence.

²¹ Cf. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 54.

²² Cf. Work, *Living and Active*, 98–100, 169–170.

(but only comprehensible through the Resurrection) (cf. *VD* 12, 21),²³ the Word of God really is in the pages of Scripture. All the words of the Bible express the Word of God to some degree – directly or indirectly, as if on a negative basis – though in different ways. What was a true understanding flowing from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is surpassed in Christ (e.g. the sufferings of Yahweh’s servant, the dying man’s prayer in Psalm 22, etc.), and what was an expression of the sinfulness of God’s people becomes the cause of Christ’s suffering. The sacrifice of the Servant of the Lord shows this in an expressive way: it is precisely the inability to offer oneself to God that is the content of the Old Testament and at the same time its opening to the New Testament fulfilment. The Word of God, addressed to a specific time and written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by specific people, carries God’s eternal intention and to some extent already reflects the salvific dialogue of the Son with the Father, in which Christ includes people. Only “in Christ,” however, does the veil fall and the Word of God can be understood in its proper sense as intended by God.

The relevance of the Word of God is ultimately rooted in the fact that the *Logos Incarnatus* “introduces” the Word into his dialogue with the Father. But, on the other hand, it is precisely in the “how” it is done that the answer to the question of the correct interpretation and, above all, the grasping of the Word of God lies. The Word must be understood, as it were, from within the “hour” for which the Son was sent. In this “hour,” Jesus makes use of Scripture, extracting from it the meaning intended by God and adding to it his own words, which in turn will become part of the Christian canon. It is consistent to say that the Old Testament (with which Jesus and the disciples pray at the Last Supper, and with which the Master will pray on the Cross) can only be understood with this “addition” of the words of institution from the Last Supper. The very adoption of biblical words by Jesus also implies their transformation (filial interpretation + soteriology), and even, paradoxically, it is precisely through their use that they become relativised in their original meaning and at the same time

²³ The dialogue of silence between the Son and the Father is at the same time the “loudest” revelation of the Trinity – cf. von Balthasar, *W pełni wiary*, 201.

absolutised by bringing out their deepest sense. An example of this is Jesus' Eucharistic discourse, in which he compares the manna, which did not save those who ate it from death, to his own body, the true food of eternal life (cf. John 6:31–33.49–50.58). So, the Old Testament can be the Word of God only by being transcended.

The Incarnate One, living the word of God, incarnates it in his life and in the death which crowns his earthly existence, but on the other hand Christ incarnates his life and death in the Scriptures, so that all Scripture speaks of his passion and his rising from the dead (cf. Luke 24:26–27). Only with Christ's "fullness of time" do the words of the Old Testament, which were awaiting their "actual owner," receive their full meaning.²⁴ Therefore, there is both continuity and contrast (continuity in contrast and contrast in continuity)²⁵ between the revelation of the Son and the earlier revelations. As noted in the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the fulfilment of the Old Testament in the mystery of the life, death and rising from the dead of Christ has three dimensions: continuity, discontinuity and fulfilment together with progression.²⁶ At the same time, fulfilment and progression are, we might add, two sides of the same coin. This is why the inspired books can bear witness to Him, but they are not enough in themselves – it is necessary to move from words to their "incarnation" in the living Lord (cf. John 5:39–40). Since even the end of words can become a word (the silence of the Crucified One), the Word of God needs not only human words but also their absence (silence) to speak. "The great patristic tradition teaches us that the mysteries of Christ all involve silence. Only in silence can the word of God find a home in us, as it did in Mary, woman of the word and, inseparably, woman of silence" (*VD* 66). Therefore, it must be said that ultimately it is not by the word alone that man lives, but also by God's "eloquent silence" – the living bread, the Eucharist.

Christ's "exodus" from this world to the other world is accomplished by virtue of an interior act of the Incarnate Person, which, however,

²⁴ Cf. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 31.

²⁵ de Lubac, *Slowo Boga*, 55–56.

²⁶ Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People*, II, C, 1–3; IV, A. Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, III, A, 2.

does not exist without an exterior act originating in time. The whole earthly life of Christ is the life of the Incarnate Word, and in this sense everything the Lord said and did was a revelation of God and his will in time. However, this was related to the Word's "coming" to us, rather than to His "departing" with us to the Father. Widening the temporal horizon, we can say that throughout the history of salvation, the *logoi kai erga* of God cannot be separated from His eternal intentions, and in this sense they reveal the mystery of God (cf. *DV2*). However, one cannot speak of an identification of the one with the other, that is, the great salvific events, such as the exodus from Egypt, were not yet God's final action on behalf of humanity. In all this the mystery of Christ's Passover could only be anticipated. It can be said that the entire economy of salvation is an "*ephapax*" inasmuch as the Triune God, as it were, "incarnates" his intentions in time; everything tends towards the "just once" of Christ and only from this perspective does it form a single history. In all moments of salvation history there is some permanent element connected to "who" acts and speaks; but the fullest identification of the external (temporal, bodily) with the internal (coming from eternity, connected to God's intention) is realized with the Exodus of Christ, when the Son gives himself out *propter nostram salutem*. Paraphrasing the classic saying of St Athanasius, it can be said that God came in time so that time could be introduced into eternity. Everything that has happened up to then corresponded to the first part of the statement of the father of the Church, and with the Passover of Christ the second part is realised. It is also in this sense that the fulfilment of the Scriptures in Christ's Passover must be understood. Passover throws light on the understanding of all Scripture, and in turn can itself be understood through Scripture.

The inspired testimonies are appropriate to the "between" that characterises the New Testament period ("already" and "not yet"). The ultimate reality is already present, but after all it is attainable only (or "even" – it depends how one looks at it) in the image. This also applies to the biblical words, which are one aspect of this "image" – The Word of God is not available directly, but in the form of human words. And thanks to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the words of the hagiographers contain a "surplus" which illustrates

the eschatological reality.²⁷ From this follows the need to move from words to the Word of God, and from the Word to the living Christ, to whom the inspired writings bear witness. The fullness of the truth is present, Ratzinger stressed, only in the Risen One, and it must therefore be sought in the totality of the history of faith (and not in a single point) and in a tension that transcends history, which in turn is possible only in the memory of the Church.²⁸

3. Eucharistic hermeneutics of the Scriptures

The Word of God lives in the liturgy, and even more: the Logos Himself "is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church."²⁹ The Lord is present and active where His sacrifice is accepted. The divine liturgy is a time of redemption and the enjoyment of Christ's merits. When the Church gathers to celebrate Mass, God, to speak in non-theological language, "can be fully himself." The liturgy is a privileged time to listen to the Lord and to receive His presence. Just as in the Eucharist the faithful unite themselves most intimately with Christ and at the same time await the full revelation of the mystery in which they are already participating, so in the liturgy of the Word they actually hear God speaking, which in turn arouses a longing to hear fully the word of God already addressed to them.

During the Last Supper, Jesus and the disciples celebrated without the Passover lamb and the temple, because it was Christ himself giving himself who was both the Lamb and the true temple in which

²⁷ Ratzinger maintained that revelation precedes its objectification in Scripture and Tradition, and that a possible reduction of revelation to the inspired text, which would cancel out the "surplus" of revelation, would mean a reduction to historicism and a consequent subordination to one-dimensional criteria of interpretation of Scripture – cf. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu*, 549; Ratzinger, *Wiara*, I, 603; Ratzinger, *Wiara*, II, 712, 714, 831–832. According to Benedict XVI, among other things, the Paschal liturgy of the Jews contained that "surplus" which appeared at the Last Supper – cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 139.

²⁸ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wiara*, I, 162–164.

²⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

God dwells.³⁰ The “return” (*reditus*) to God, from whom creation “came forth” (*exitus*) is possible only through Christ. The Incarnate One, who as God and man exists on both “sides” of time and eternity, making the encounter of humanity with God possible,³¹ because of human sin can be a mediator only through the Passover. Therefore the Father in his eternal plan provided for the Lamb, while the Son, if created man was to remain “salvable,” had to be destined for the Cross.³² It is Christ present in the liturgy, the Christ-the Lamb of the Eucharist, who enables us to open up the deepest meaning of Scripture.³³ In heaven, the “Lamb as if slain” (Rev 5:6) hears the song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation [...]” (Rev 5:9). Scripture, to be Scripture, must become more than Scripture; Christianity is not a religion of the book but of the living Word (cf. John 5:39–40; DV 7) giving itself in the sacrament.

Only the faith of the Church can create canonical unity out of diverse literature.³⁴ This in turn means that the discovery of the inspired character of a given book had to consist in reading it within the framework of this one Church faith. A particular book did not and could not reflect the whole faith, but only (or as much as) interact with it and indicate the depth of particular aspects of that faith. The primary place of the Church creeds, which in part were already reflected within Scripture, was in the sacramental life of the Church and in preaching. Ratzinger sees this as placing *fides* above *scriptura*.³⁵ A scripture interpreted “according to the faith” of the Church could not fail to originate in a similar way – from within that faith shared by the hagiographer with the whole community. But above all, the proper place for interpretation is faith and the life of the Church – broadly conceived, but having liturgy as its centre. It is

³⁰ Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 195–196.

³¹ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo*, 334; Chodkowski, “Ty jesteś Chrystus”, 113; Štrukelj, *Teologia*, 66.

³² Cf. Bouyer, *Syn Przedwieczny*, 656–657.

³³ Cf. Świerzawski, “Hermeneutyka w liturgii,” 131.

³⁴ Cf. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu*, 181–182; Ratzinger, *Wiara*, I, 168–169, 629.

³⁵ Cf. Ratzinger, *Wiara*, I, 364, 386–387.

in the Church, and especially in the Eucharist, that God never ceases to communicate himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the privileged time and place for the reading of the inspired books is the sacred liturgy, in which in a unique way the Word of God is living and relevant (*VD* 52).

Scripture, as a witness to Revelation, speaks to believers in the context of the communication of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, hence a hermeneutics of the inspired books is not possible outside the faith and life of the Church. The Bible must be understood in connection with the place in which it developed, namely the liturgy.³⁶ Already in the New Testament, the typological interpretation of the Old Testament turns to the sacrament of the Eucharist. The word of the Bible is fulfilled in the liturgy and the interpretation of the inspired books is connected with prayer, which is connected with the prayer of Christ Himself (Eucharistic Prayer).³⁷ Therefore, Świerzawski is right when he writes that "the liturgy has its own special set of rules of interpretation, its own hermeneutics."³⁸

Although the Polish theologian writes more about hermeneutics in liturgy, this way of interpreting the inspired writings could be called eucharistic hermeneutics. It would remain "at the service of a living synthesis between the history of Christ, the reality of the Church and Christian existence moving towards mysticism and eschatology [...]".³⁹ Świerzawski includes among the fundamental assumptions of this kind of hermeneutics:

1. Unity of the two Testaments and the organically dynamic unity of the entire history of salvation with its central Paschal event (Old Testament directed towards the New, present order of salvation directed towards the eschatological reality).
2. The existence of a fourfold dimension of the Bible: historical (contemporaneous with the creation of the writings), Christological (with the typology of the Old Testament); Christian (anthropological aspect); eschatological.

³⁶ Cf. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 988. Cf. also Hahn, *Przymierze*, 149.

³⁷ Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 150, 234.

³⁸ Świerzawski, "Hermeneutyka," 132.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

3. Liturgical understanding of the deeper meaning of Scripture – sacred texts read, commented on and updated intra *mysteriorum celebrationem*.⁴⁰

In the liturgy, what the texts speak of, the *mysterium Christi*, is present “here and now.” Scriptures are understood in the perspective of the whole tradition of the Church and the dynamic development of dogmas; liturgical actions shed light on the texts. According to Świerzawski, a deepened idea of the Covenant is the main content of a typically Christian encounter with the Bible taking place in the liturgy.⁴¹ And “the main Exegete is Christ the Lord Himself – the glorious *Kyrios*, who opens the sense of the Scriptures in the liturgical *HODIE*.”⁴²

4. Liturgical mediation of the history of salvation

In the liturgy, the past Passover steps into the present and thus influences the future. In a way, something analogous happens in the liturgy of the Word: the past events witnessed in the inspired books somehow step into the present. Telford Work even writes that “the event preached becomes effective again in the event of its preaching.”⁴³ But this does not mean that the event is “recreated”; rather, it should be said that it is God who acted in the past who, through the preaching of the Word, can act again in some analogous, but nonetheless not the same way. The Eucharist, on the one hand, affirms this possibility of making salvific events “present,” but on the other hand it relativises it, inasmuch as the reactivation of the past now takes place in a different way, and ultimately points towards the Eucharistic Christ in whom all events find their fulfilment. It is through the Eucharist that all words can be truly present and affect the future. The sequence of justification here could take the following form: The Eucharist is the making present of the Last Supper – Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, fulfilled (and transformed at the same

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 144.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*; Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 10.

⁴² Świerzawski, “Hermeneutyka,” 146.

⁴³ Work, *Living and Active*, 131.

time) the Old Testament scriptures and feasts (Passover) – in union with Him the inspired texts remain ever present – but their relevance is intrinsically linked to the sacramental transformation.

According to Work, Israel's practices were subject to a kind of epiclesis when they were transformed by Jesus (and later also by His disciples) into messianic practices (John's baptism into the sacrament of baptism and the Passover Seder into the sacrament of the Eucharist). Already in the Old Covenant period, baptism of the Baptist or the Israelite Passover was more than water and a meal. Christ and the community gathered around Him, while participating in them, redefined their meaning, and thus in the assimilation and at the same time in the Christological transformation they achieved a new meaning and at the same time a pneumatic power to mediate Christ's salvation. The Scriptures also underwent a similar transformation. However, the language of epiclesis could bring to mind Adoptionism, which would amount to denying any special status to the books of the Old Testament prior to their reinterpretation by Christ and the early Church. It is important to remember the dialectic of Christ's obedience to Scripture (this obedience to the Word could be conceded even by the Ebionites) and the Lord's simultaneous sovereignty over it (to which Marcion would probably subscribe); this was what the scholar calls "dominical obedience." Jesus and his followers proved to be both servants and masters of Old Testament words and institutions.⁴⁴

The Old Testament and Jewish feasts will be able to be actualized in Christian liturgy:

On liturgical feasts the deeds of God in the past are made present. The feasts are a participation in God's action in time [...]. The individual events are now ordered toward the Christian sacraments and to Christ himself. [...] We are taken into the

⁴⁴ Cf. Work, *Living and Active*, 174–175. Cf. *VD* 40: "The paschal mystery of Christ is in complete conformity – albeit in a way that could not have been anticipated – with the prophecies and the foreshadowings of the Scriptures; yet it presents clear aspects of discontinuity with regard to the institutions of the Old Testament." Cf. also: Świerżawski, "Hermeneutyka," 134: "The institutions of the Old Testament are merely figures of Christ. The technical terms *typos* and *antitypos* define precisely this relationship of the two Testaments."

events. The events themselves transcend the passing of time and become present in our midst through the sacramental action of the Church. The centering of all history in Christ is both the liturgical transmission of that history and the expression of a new experience of time, in which past, present (*Gegenwart*), and future make contact, because they have been inserted into the presence (*Gegenwart*) of the risen Lord.⁴⁵

The actualisation of revelation takes place through the liturgical reading of Sacred Scripture – which bears witness to the foundational revelation and the Church’s response to it – but is inseparable from the celebration of the sacraments. Inspiration makes it possible to move from the words to the reality signified by them. This reality, and ultimately the very presence of Christ and with him the whole Trinity, can “happen” in the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit. The exalted Lord, who promised His disciples that He would be with them until the end of the world (Matt 28:20), makes himself known to the assembly of believers above all in the Eucharist (cf. Luke 24:13–32). This is a special time when God becomes present in the Church and the Church comes before the Triune God. Contact with the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit takes place both in the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. In this sense, one could speak of an epiclesis taking place during the liturgy of the Word, except that it should be seen in connection with the epiclesis over the gifts of bread and wine. Telford Work shows in his monumental and strongly ecumenical monograph that scholars from very different Christian traditions have spoken of the epiclesis in connection with the Word. The Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae wrote about the invocation and reception of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Word as it occurs in the sacraments of the Church. Karl Barth, in turn, a Reformed theologian, following the Last Supper, compared the presence of God through the Word with the call of the Holy Spirit (prayer before and after the proclamation of the

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, 106–107 (slightly differently translated in: Ratzinger, *Teologia liturgii*, 99). Cf. Hahn, *Przymierze*, 233–234.

Word).⁴⁶ From a Catholic perspective, such positions must be judged as misguided. It is true that the presence of the Lord in the Word can be seen in analogy (a non-similar resemblance)⁴⁷ to the presence in the Blessed Sacrament, but one must bear in mind the inseparable bond of the one with the other, and therefore avoid any parallelism suggesting two different presences of the one and the same Lord, or even more so the presence of "two Christs." There is a different kind of presence of the Incarnate One in the sacrament and a different one in the Word. Thus a different kind of unity is established in the liturgy of the Word and another in Holy Communion. The former serves the latter, but the latter does not replace the former. Christ is not to be found outside the word, but He is even less to be found in the word itself if it would not lead to Eucharistic union. The mystery of the sacrament goes beyond words, but this in turn does not exempt us from stating the truth that in the Blessed Sacrament Christ is also present in His spoken (and written under inspiration) word, only that his word is here spoken "sacramentally." Once again, this directs our attention towards the "eucharistic hermeneutics" that needs to be undertaken.

5. The Word of God made present in the Mass

It is only through the Eucharist that the intention of the saving and self-revealing God can be realised "once for ever." A Catholic theologian could subscribe to the following words of Work only with the proviso that the "recovery" of past events means at the same time their Eucharistic "transformation":

Yet it is not just the original epiphanic events that illustrate the saving work of God's words. Equally compelling is the anamnesis that makes historiographical recovery of the original events both possible and difficult. Both the remembering and what is remembered are crucial to the power of Scripture. The promises are retold because of their power in shaping the

⁴⁶ Cf. Work, *Living and Active*, 265, 272.

⁴⁷ Cf. Krapiec, "Analogia."

people Israel; and the retelling of the promises unleashes and multiplies their power anew. Israel and Church owe their very existence to the powerful arrival and the powerful residence of God's words in their histories.⁴⁸

The inspiring influence of Scripture, so emphasised by Gerald O'Collins,⁴⁹ is only possible because "remembering" the foundational revelation means entering into that revelation which is (from the beginning and constantly) present and actualised in the Church. In the same way, salvific events are not only recalled in the Church, but they are still taking place in the Church. This would mean that Scripture for revelation has a role similar to the anamnesis in the Mass, but, again: it would not be a parallel anamnesis, but the same anamnesis, only stretched over the time of the celebration. Scripture recalls everything that points to Christ. What then takes place is a kind of making present the foundational revelation, to use Gerald O'Collins' terminology. In this sense, however, the term "dependent revelation" used by the Australian would be misleading – just as we do not say about the sacrifice of the Mass that it is dependent, but that it is the "making present," so perhaps we should write about the revelation taking place during the Eucharist that it is made present, but in a "bloodless," sacramental way. It is not that all historical events are made present, but that they are recapitulated in the Passover of Christ, who is himself the revelation. Already everything "is finished!" (cf. John 19:30), which is why "we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*DV* 4; *CCC* 66). The foundational revelation has already taken place and, in a sense, is now "absent" – precisely so that God may become present in a sacramental way, in the celebration of the "memorial"; not in "further" words and works, but in making present what has already been spoken and fulfilled. This does not diminish the role of Scripture; on the contrary, man's union with God remains "in its authentic expression always bound up with Scripture, since

⁴⁸ Work, *Living and Active*, 139.

⁴⁹ Cf. O'Collins, *Inspiration*, VII–IX, 24, 61, 63–67 (the role of sacred writings in the Mass), 128–129, 195–196; O'Collins, *Revelation*, 152–153.

revelation has already ended and now depends on the sacramental action through which the grace of Christ is given.”⁵⁰

Ratzinger points out that historical actions – and, we should add, words too – become present in the Christian sacrament and in Christ himself. This means that in the Old Testament texts we came into contact with the mystery of Christ, now sacramentally present; we understand what it meant that the Scriptures testify of Him. Those stories remain relevant insofar as they are actualized by their inclusion in the action of the Risen One. On the other hand, those testimonies have an imperishable value, because they “explain” to us (it is about something more than mere intellectual understanding) what is now happening *intra mysteriorum celebrationem*. The word is the verbal aspect of this sacramental action (one dimension of the “image” of reality), which reaches man not without words. Scott Hahn writes that “typological reading tends toward mystagogy, toward bringing about a kind of communion with the events proclaimed in the sacred pages.”⁵¹ This kind of typological exegesis is only possible because there was first an “event of Christ” that made it possible to discover this kind of reading of the sacred books.

In the early Church, the mystagogical introduction to the sacraments consisted, among other things, in explaining them in the light of the biblical history of salvation. The Paschal mystery was seen in its connection with the whole history of the Old Testament. The faithful, however, were not so much informed as introduced into participation in the saving mysteries, now celebrated in the symbols and rituals of the liturgy.⁵² *Figura transit in veritatem* (image has passed into reality),⁵³ and “the divine economy continuing in the Church’s sacramental liturgy. We enter into the salvation offered by

⁵⁰ Świerzawski, “Hermeneutyka,” 135.

⁵¹ Hahn, *Przymierze*, 233. Elsewhere, Hahn (*ibid.*, 163) writes that Benedict XVI’s reading of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion is based on typological interpretations.

⁵² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 64; Hahn, *Przymierze*, 184–185; Hahn, *Letter and Spirit*, 25–32.

⁵³ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 11.

Christ through the liturgy, which is an encounter with his lifechanging Word.”⁵⁴

During the Eucharist, earthly time is brought into the present of Christ’s time. Could we also say of God’s Word that it is “current,” and then that present time is in some analogous way “introduced” into the time of the Bible? Only insofar as all Scripture is related to Christ, who came in the fullness of time (cf. Gal 4:4), and thus remains somehow connected to all time. Of course, individual events or biblical words more or less “of themselves” contact the “current” God, but the full identification of the present time with these past events is not achieved except indirectly, through the connection of the particular reading with the living Word. The participants in the assembly, then, are not so much brought into the past tense as the Scriptures are made present by virtue of the current fulfillment of the Scriptures in what happens in the liturgy.

Recapitulation

The Church lives in the tension between the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises and their non-fulfilment, between the “already” and the “not yet.” According to Joseph Ratzinger, on the triad of shadow – image – reality, three levels characteristic of Christian worship should be superimposed: the founding event, liturgical making present and the eschatological dynamics of liturgy. The essence of Jesus’ words and actions during the Last Supper remains always present. The death on the Cross and the resurrection took place “once” (*ephapax*), but the human history of Christ giving himself up corresponds to the relationship of the obedient Son to the will of the Father. The inner act of the Son’s surrender to the Father remains permanent, even if the outer dimension of the crucifixion passes away. Time has been introduced into what transcends time, and henceforth the simultaneity of time with eternity is possible. Therefore, a one-time historical event remains constantly (*aiônios*) present. The Christian liturgy can be contemporaneous with the Passover establishing this liturgy.

⁵⁴ Hahn, *Przymierze*, 185.

The Scripture achieves fulfilment in two ways: the self-giving Son reveals the most profound intuitions of the Old Testament, but also shows that the reception of God's covenant with man could not be accomplished except through a redemptive sacrifice. In addressing his word to the chosen people, God not only humbled himself, but in a way already gave himself up. The inspired books remain in an intimate connection with the Passover and its liturgical actualization. God also speaks in the rejection of the word of God; the loudest speech of God appears to be the silence of the Cross. The word of God must be understood from within the "hour" for which the Son came into this world. The Old Testament can only be understood in connection with the words of institution at the Last Supper. The incarnate One living the word of God incarnated it in His life and death, and thus all Scripture speaks of His Passover. The entire salvific economy is this *ephapax* due to the fact that the Triune God "incarnates" his intentions in time, but in such a way that everything moves towards the "just" of Christ and only from this perspective does it form one history.

The liturgy is a privileged time for listening to the Lord and receiving His presence. As in the Eucharist the faithful unite themselves most intimately with Christ, so in the liturgy of the Word they hear God speaking to them. But it is only Christ-the Eucharistic Lamb who makes it possible for them to grasp the deepest meaning of Sacred Scripture. Christianity is not a religion of the book, but of the living Word given in the sacrament. In the Eucharist God does not cease to communicate himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which is why the sacred liturgy is the privileged time and place for reading the inspired books. The word of the Bible is fulfilled in the liturgy and the interpretation of the inspired books is united to the prayer of Christ himself, hence it is possible to speak of the Eucharistic hermeneutic of Scripture. The Word of God is read, proclaimed and actualised *intra mysteriorum celebrationem*. In the liturgy, the content of Scripture, the *mysterium Christi*, is present "here and now." The Lord himself becomes the Exegete of the inspired books.

As in the Eucharistic liturgy the past Passover enters the present, so in the liturgy of the Word something analogous takes place – the events witnessed to by the inspired books somehow enter the

present. Or rather, it is God, who acted in the past, who acts again. The activation of the past happens differently now, and ultimately moves towards the Eucharistic Christ, in whom all history finds its fulfilment. If Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, fulfilled and transformed the Old Testament scriptures and feasts (Passover), this means that the relevance of the inspired texts is linked to the sacramental transformation. The Old Testament and the Israelite feasts are made real in the *hodie* of Christian liturgy, made present in the sacramental action of the Church. Ultimately, it is in the Blessed Sacrament that Christ is also present in the spoken (and written under inspiration) word, only that his word is here spoken “sacramentally.”

The role of Scripture for revelation is similar to that of anamnesis in the Mass, but in the liturgy of the word all historical events are not made present, but recapitulated in the Passover of Christ. God becomes present in a sacramental way, in the celebration of the “memorial,” that is, not in “successive” words and works, but in making present what has already been spoken and fulfilled. The Scriptures become present by virtue of the present fulfilment of the Scriptures in what happens in the liturgy. In the Old Testament texts, we contacted the mystery of Christ, now sacramentally present. That history remains relevant insofar as it is actualized by its inclusion in the action of the Risen One. The Old Testament testimonies, however, have an enduring value because they introduce us to participation in the celebration of the mysteries and explain the sacramental liturgy. This should not be reduced to a mere intellectual understanding, rather it should be accepted that the Word is a verbal aspect of the sacramental action, inseparable from it.

„Raz jeden” i „raz na zawsze” słowa Bożego

Abstrakt: W tekście postawiono pytanie o rolę słowa Bożego w związku z Paschą oraz z jej liturgicznym uobecnieniem. W artykule odwołano się najpierw do teologii liturgii Josepha Ratzingera. Według bawarskiego teologa w kulcie chrześcijańskim wydarzeniu historycznemu Paschy („raz jeden”) odpowiadają jej nieustanna aktualność („raz na zawsze”). Istota słów i działań Jezusa – jako Syna Ojca – w czasie Ostatniej Wieczerzy pozostaje zawsze tańżejsza. Następnie ukazano, że natchnione pisma mogą być zrozumiane jedynie w powiązaniu ze słowami ustanowienia z Ostatniej Wieczerzy. Uprzywilejowanym czasem słuchania słowa Bożego jest liturgia, w czasie której Chrystus-Baranek staje się Egzegetą otwierającym najgłębszy sens Pisma

(„hermeneutyka eucharystyczna“). Kolejno zaprezentowano analogię pomiędzy wkroczeniem przeszłej Paschy w terażniejszość liturgii a uaktualnieniem wydarzeń, o których świadczą księgi natchnione. Tego rodzaju „uobecnienie” jest związane z przeobrażeniem sakramentalnym pism oraz świąt żydowskich, którego dokonał Chrystus. Nie następuje ponowne odtworzenie historycznych doświadczeń, lecz ich zrekapitulowanie w eucharystycznej Paszce. W Najświętszym Sakramencie Chrystus jest obecny również w wypowiedzanym (i spisany pod natchnieniem) słowie. Z kolei liturgia słowa jest werbalnym aspektem działania sakramentalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: Joseph Ratzinger, Pascha Chrystusa, natchnione pisma, hermeneutyka eucharystyczna, liturgia a historia zbawienia, aktualizacja słowa Bożego, liturgia słowa

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