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When Did the Last Supper Come to an End: Polemic with the Thesis of S. Hahn

Kiedy zakończyła się Ostatnia Wieczerza?
Polemizując z tezą S. Hahna

ABSTRACT: The article is a polemic with S. Hahn's thesis that the fourth cup of the Last Supper was the tasting of vinegar / tart wine by Jesus hanging on the cross. The author of the article outlines the scheme of the ritual of the paschal meal, assuming that during the paschal meal Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist. Then he presents the hypothesis of Scott Hahn, which in turn was criticized. The author also presents an alternative hypothesis according to which the fourth cup of the Last Supper is to be drunk in the eschatological kingdom of God.

KEYWORDS: Last Supper, Eucharist, Passover meal, fourth cup

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł stanowi polemikę z tezą S. Hahna, że czwartym kielichem Ostatniej Wieczerzy było skosztowanie przez Jezusa wiszącego na krzyżu octu / cierpkiego wina. Autor artykułu nakreślił schemat rytuału uczty paschalnej, przyjmując, że właśnie podczas uczty o charakterze paschalnym Jezus ustanowił sakrament Eucharystii. Następnie przedstawił hipotezę Scotta Hahna, która z kolei została poddana krytyce. Autor zaprezentował także hipotezę alternatywną, według której Jezus wychyla czwarty kielich Ostatniej Wieczerzy w eschatologicznym królestwie Bożym.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Ostatnia Wieczerza, Eucharystia, uczta paschalna, czwarty kielich

The Polish market has seen another publication by Scott Hahn, entitled *The Fourth Cup. Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross*.¹ The

¹ S. Hahn, *Czwarty kielich. Odkrywanie tajemnicy Ostatniej Wieczerzy i krzyża*, transl. D. Krupińska, Krakow 2018 (English version: *The Fourth Cup. Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross*, New York 2018). Scott Hahn is a very well-known converter and apologist

book is an attempt to answer the question why Jesus interrupted the ritual during the Last Supper and did not give the disciples the last cup of wine. How to understand Jesus' confession: "Truly, I tell you, from now on I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25)? Why does Jesus say at the Last Supper that He will not drink the fruit of the vine until God's Kingdom comes (Luke 22:18; Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25), but then, just before His death, He asked to be given a drink (John 19:28)?²

According to the author of the book, the fourth cup of the Last Supper was the tasting of "sour wine" or "vinegar" by Jesus dying on the cross (J 19:30).³ It seems that it is impossible to maintain this thesis with a thorough analysis of the New Testament texts on the establishment of the Eucharist that takes the Jewish customs of celebrating the Passover into account. In this article, I would like to present arguments that weaken S. Hahn's thesis, and at the same time propose my own interpretation of the fourth cup of the Last Supper. I will do this in a few steps. First, it is necessary to outline – very briefly and generally by nature – the scheme of the ritual of the Paschal Feast, since one of its elements is the nucleus of the polemic with Hahn (1). Against this background, in the second part I will present Hahn's arguments for the thesis that Jesus drank the fourth cup just before his death (2). In the third part of this reflection, I will try to quote the doubts which are born about the thesis of the author of *The Fourth Cup* (3). The fourth part will constitute an attempt to indicate a different moment of Jesus' drinking of the fourth cup of the Paschal Feast (4) – in reference to Hahn's proposal. In the last one, the appropriate juxtaposition of both hypotheses will be made, and the conclusion will be formulated (5).

in the United States and, due to numerous translations of his books, also in many other countries. He abandoned presbyterianism when, through research into the Bible and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, he concluded that the Church founded by Christ continues in the Catholic Church. The discovery of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist played a significant role in this process. After some time, Scott's wife, Kimberly also became a Catholic. S. and K. Hahn, *W domu najlepiej. Nasza droga do Kościoła katolickiego*, transl. M. Majdan, Warsaw 2009.

² For a critical review of the book, see: M. Rosik, *When Did Jesus Drink the Fourth Cup of the Passover Meal? Scott Hahn's Hypothesis and a Proposal for a Different Interpretation Scott Hahn, The Fourth Cup. Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross*, "Biblical Annals" 9 (2019), no. 3, pp. 569–590. Brant Pitre's publications deal with similar issues: *Jezus i żydowskie korzenie Eucharystii*, transl. M. Sobolewska, Krakow 2018; *Jesus and the Last Supper*, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 2015.

³ The same thesis is supported by the author in his book *Uczta Baranka. Eucharystia – niebo na ziemi*, transl. A. Rasztańska-Szponar, Częstochowa 2013.

The Paschal Feast in Jesus' time

Among theologians to this day, there has been no resolution of the dispute as to whether the Last Supper was a typical Paschal Feast prescribed by the Law. Even though the answer is of paramount importance for interpreting descriptions of the establishment of the Eucharist.⁴ According to some, there is no doubt that this was the case – the Last Supper was a typical Jewish paschal feast.⁵ Many, however, do not agree with this thesis.⁶ R. Bartnicki justifies the view why, according to some researchers, the Last Supper was not a typical Jewish paschal feast, although it referred to it, as follows:

According to Mk 15:34, Jesus died at nine o'clock, i.e., three o'clock in the afternoon in Polish local time. Since according to John's Gospel, it was on Friday, Jesus died at the time when lambs were killed in the temple. Therefore, Paul already considered Jesus to be the Passover Lamb of the New Covenant (1 Cor. 5:7). The

⁴ "If Jesus celebrated his final meal the evening after the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple, then the Last Supper was clearly a Jewish Passover meal, and everything Jesus did and said at that meal needs to be interpreted in that context. However, if Jesus celebrated his final meal the evening before the Passover lambs were sacrificed in the Temple, then the Last Supper was not a Passover banquet, but some other kind of meal;" B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, op. cit., p. 254; I.H. Marshall, *Lord's Supper and Last Supper*, Exeter 1980, pp. 57–60.

⁵ A. Köstenberger, *Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?, The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, T.R. Schreiner, M.R. Crawford (eds.), serie: *New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology*, Nashville 2010, pp. 24–25; S. McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory*, Waco 2005, p. 259; R. Bartnicki, *Ostatnia Wieczerza nową Paschą Jezusa*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 33 (2015), no. 10, pp. 16–17; A. Jankowski, *Eucharystia jako 'nasza Pascha' (1Kor 5,7) w teologii biblijnej Nowego Testamentu*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 28 (1975), pp. 89–91; K. Hola, *Paschalny charakter Ostatniej Wieczerzy a data śmierci Jezusa*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 38 (1985), pp. 41–44; R. Pesch, *Geht das Abendmahl auf Jesus zurück?*, "RU an Höheren Schulen" 19 (1976), pp. 2–9; L. Ligier, *De la Cène du Seigneur à la l'Eucharistie*, "Assemblée du Seigneur" 1 (1968), p. 29; J. Gnilka, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Orędzie i dzieje*, transl. J. Kudasiewicz, Krakow 1997, p. 372; M. Hengel, A.M. Schwemer, *Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, vol. 1: *Jesus und das Judentum*, Tübingen 2007, pp. 582–586; S. Szymik, *Żydowska Pascha – Ostatnia Wieczerza – Eucharystia*, [in:] *Msza Święta – rozumieć, aby lepiej uczestniczyć. Wykład liturgii Mszy*, Poznań 2013, pp. 14–18; R. Pesch, *Das Evangelium in Jerusalem: Mk 14, 12–26 als ältestes Überlieferungsgut der Urgemeinde*, [in:] *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien. Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982*, P. Stuhlmacher (ed.), WUNT 28, Tübingen 1983, pp. 113–155.

⁶ S. Zeitlin, *The Last Supper as an Ordinary Meal in the Fourth Gospel*, "Jewish Quarterly Review" 42 (1951/52), pp. 251–252.

original Church saw very early in the death of the lamb, whose blood protected it from the angel of death (Exodus 12:21-33), the announcement of Jesus' death, which brought deliverance from sin and eternal death. The Last Supper took place at a time close to the Passover; thus, it was easy to interpret it as the Passover feast of the New Covenant. Therefore, already in the Synoptic Gospels, in lines that form the framework of the description, it is described as the paschal meal; nonetheless, it is difficult to consider it as such based on the description itself.⁷

What did the typical paschal meal look like? It started with a prayer, which the Jews call *kiddush*. It was an introductory prayer to a meal. After that, the first chalice of wine, called the chalice of sanctification (*kiddush*), was raised. Later, the so-called paschal *haggadah* followed, telling us why the night was so important. One of the youngest participants of the feast asked about the importance of the celebration and the father of the family was conducting the reflections on the Israelites' departure from Egypt. It was essential for the story to take the form of a testimony. That meant that each person sitting at the table should feel like a participant to events in question.⁸ After *haggadah*, the second glass of wine, called the chalice of proclamation (*haggadah*), had to be drunk and they began the consumption of prepared food, among which the Paschal lamb was the most significant. A moment later, there was time for the third chalice, called the "chalice of thanksgiving" or "blessing," was drained (*beracha*). Afterwards, the time came for singing the Hallel psalms. These are Psalms from 113 to 118 telling the story of the Israelites' departure from Egypt (the first two were sung a bit earlier). In the end, the fourth and last cup of wine, called the chalice of glory (*hallel*), was to be drunk. It was an integral part of the Paschal

⁷ R. Bartnicki, *Ostatnia Wieczerza...*, op. cit., p. 17. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are by the Wrocław Theological Review (Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny). In his earlier publications, R. Bartnicki advocated the thesis that the Last Supper was a paschal feast; *Pascha żydowska a chrześcijańska ofiara eucharystyczna. zarys historii obrzędu*, "Studia Theologica Varsaviensia" 18 (1980), no. 1, pp. 97–124; idem, *Ewangeliczne opisy męki w aspekcie literackim, teologicznym i kerygmaticznym*, vol. 3, J. Łach (ed.), Warsaw 1983, pp. 103–143; idem, *Ostatnia Wieczerza a męka Jezusa*, [in:] *Męka Jezusa Chrystusa*, F. Gryglewicz (ed.), Lublin 1986, pp. 65–85; idem, *Eucharystia w Nowym Testamencie*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 4 (1991), pp. 14–41; idem, *Eucharystia w Bożym planie zbawienia*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 50 (1997), pp. 2–16; idem, *To czyńcie na moją pamiątkę. Eucharystia w świetle Biblii*, Warsaw 2010, pp. 7–24.

⁸ The Mishnah Treaty of Pesachim states: "In each and every generation a person must view himself as though he personally left Egypt" (10:5). Transl. after: Sefaria. A Living Library of Jewish Texts, <https://www.sefaria.org/Pesachim.115b.5?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en> [access: 13.10.2020].

feast, a sign of its ending. The relevant treatise of the Mishnah states: “On Easter Eve around the time of the Easter sacrifice, let no one eat until it gets dark. Even the poor man who is in Israel should not eat anything until he sits at the table. He must not be given less than four cups of wine” (*Pesachim* 10.1). Scott Hahn confirms in his book that this is how the paschal feast went:

The Passover meal was divided into four parts, or courses, and each was accompanied by a cup of red wine mixed with water. The poorest Jews were guaranteed four cups at the community’s expense, so that their experience of the festival should be complete. The rabbis’ instructions governed even the proportion of wine to water in each cup. As we’ve seen, the meal’s first course consisted of a special blessing (*kiddush*) spoken over the first cup of wine, followed by the serving of a dish of herbs. The second course included a recital of the Passover narrative, the questions and answers, and the “Little Hallel” (Psalm 113), followed by the drinking of the second cup of wine. The third course was the main meal, consisting of lamb and unleavened bread, after which was drunk the third cup of wine, known as the “cup of blessing.” The culmination of the seder was the singing of the “Great Hallel” (Psalms 114–118) and the drinking of the fourth cup of wine, often called the “cup of consummation.”⁹

Exegetes that do not agree that the Last Supper is a typical paschal feast are inclined to admit that it contained its elements.¹⁰ It was Jesus’ farewell supper with the Apostles, which over time has been interpreted as a paschal feast.¹¹ There are several important reasons for accepting this hypothesis:

1. There is no evangelical mention of the consumption of mutton (cf. Mk 14:12-16; Mt 26:26-30; Lk 22:7-8;¹² 1Kor 23-26);¹³

⁹ S. Hahn, *The Fourth Cup...*, op. cit., p. 108 (Polish version: p. 107).

¹⁰ N.T. Wright refers to such a meal as “quasi-Passover meal;” *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Minneapolis 1996, pp. 556–559. Por. J. Marcus, *Passover and the Last Supper Revisited*, “New Testament Studies” 59 (2013), pp. 303–324; B. Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*, Tübingen–Grand Rapids 2005, pp. 441–442.

¹¹ J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, serie: *Christianity in Making*, vol. 1, Grand Rapids 2006, pp. 772–773; M.A. Matson, *The Historical Plausibility of John’s Passion Dating*, [in:] *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 2: *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, P.N. Anderson, F. Just, T. Thatcher (eds.), Atlanta 2009, pp. 291–312; P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, New York 1999, p. 223.

¹² It should be emphasized that Luke’s text a rich tradition of interpretation; in our considerations we only focus on the final wording for the description of the institution of Eucharist.

¹³ J. Schröter, *Das Abendmahl: Frühchristliche Deutungen und Impulse für die Gegenwart*, serie: *Stuttgarter Bibelstudien*, vol. 210, Stuttgart 2006, p. 44.

2. The mention in the Babylonian Talmud that Jesus was hanged on the eve of the Passover (Sanh. 43a);¹⁴
3. The legal impossibility of performing the acts that led to Jesus' death during the feast days (Lev. 23:5-7);¹⁵
4. Inability to pass judgment or execute on public holidays (Treaty of the Mishnah *Betzah* 5,2; Tosefta, *Betzah* 4,4; Philo of Alexandria, *De migratione* 91);¹⁶
5. Contemporary astronomer research, according to which in the years 30 and 33 (probable dates of Jesus' death), Friday was 14 Nisan (after John), not 15 Nisan (as the Synoptics note).¹⁷

These arguments, however, do not contradict the thesis that the Last Supper contained elements of a typical Jewish paschal feast¹⁸ and can be interpreted as the Passover of Jesus and not the Passover of all Jews.¹⁹

¹⁴ It is learned that on "the eve of Passover Jesus the Nazarene was hanged and a herald went forth before him forty days heralding, 'Jesus the Nazarene is going forth to be stoned because he practiced sorcery and instigated and seduced Israel to idolatry. Whoever knows anything in defense may come and state it'" (*Sanh.* 43a). Transl. after: P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, Princeton 2007, pp. 64–65.

¹⁵ R. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From the Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, serie: *Anchor Bible Reference Library*, vol. 2, New York–London–Toronto–Sydney–Auckland 1994, p. 1358.

¹⁶ Indeed, Philo states that no court verdicts can be passed, or convicts executed on days that are festive; however, the context can only indicate the Sabbath. It is not known exactly what celebrations the Alexandrian historian had in mind; A.-J. Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*, San Francisco 2006, p. 208.

¹⁷ C.J. Humphreys, W.G. Waddington, *Astronomy and the Date of Crucifixion*, [in:] *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, J. Vardaman, E. Yamauchi (eds.), Winona Lake 1989, pp. 165–181; C.J. Humphreys, W.G. Waddington, *Dating the Crucifixion*, "Nature" 306 (1983), pp. 743–746. As for the date of the Last Supper see: A. Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper*, Staten Island 1965; E. Ruckstuhl, *Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus. A Critical Study*, transl. V.J. Drapela, New York–Tournai–Paris–Rome 1965; J.C. VanderKam, *From Revelation to Canon*, Boston 2000, pp. 81–127.

¹⁸ The following counter-arguments can be put forward for each of them: (1) The lack of mention of the Paschal Lamb can be countered by the thesis that the Jews did not have to use the term 'lamb' at all, but spoke of 'Passover' (Exodus 12:1-14); C.K. Barrett, *Luke XXII.15: To Eat the Passover*, "Journal of Theological Studies" 9 (1958), pp. 305–307; J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, transl. N. Perrin, Philadelphia 1977, pp. 18–19; (2) the mention in the Talmud may not necessarily refer to Jesus of Nazareth; J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, serie: *Erträge der Forschung*, vol. 82, Darmstadt 1978, pp. 263–275; (3) all actions of Jesus' opponents during the feast can be justified; V. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, Grand Rapids 2005, p. 194; G. Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice*, New York 1971, p. 386; (4) the passage from the Mishnah that refers to the prohibition of judgments on public holidays (*Betzah* 5:2), concerns the resolution of ordinary matters by rabbis (the law of kosher,

S. Hahn about the fourth cup of the Last Supper

Scott Hahn very rightly observes that at some point in the Last Supper Jesus interrupts the typical pattern of the Passover feast, leaving the “liturgy unfinished.”²⁰ When Jesus takes the third ritual cup of wine, he says: “Truly, I tell you, from now on I will no longer drink [the drink] of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God” (Mk 14:25). This sudden interruption of the feast is a severe exegetic problem. It should not have happened. Even the most impoverished Jews were guaranteed to drink the fourth chalice at the expense of the community.²¹ It was possible only so that they could fulfil the Passover. When Jesus utters the words of consecration over wine, He does so over the third cup that the participants of the feast raise.²²

Why does Jesus interrupt the feast? Why does He not drink the fourth cup with His disciples? Will he finally finish the feast by drinking the last ritual cup of wine? Scott Hahn affirmatively replies to the question. The end

levirate, etc.) and has nothing to do with the Sanhedrin; H. Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford 1933, p. 187. Tosefta, the treatise of *Sanhedrin* (11,7) reads that executions of false prophets should be carried out during Pilgrim Feasts – Passover, Feast of Tents and Pentecost; J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words...*, op. cit., pp. 78–79; G. Dalman, *Jesus – Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, transl. P.P. Levertoff, New York 1929, pp. 98–100. Mishna confirms that the judgment may be made on the eve of the holiday (*Sanh.* 4,1); R. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah...*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 1361; (5) many astronomers argue that modern research cannot determine the ancient calendar since it was arranged based on human observations (such as the New Moon) rather than astronomical calculations; R.T. Beckwith, *The Date of the Crucifixion: The Misuse of Calendars and Astronomy to Determine the Chronology of the Passion, Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental, and Patristic Studies*, Leiden 2001, pp. 276–296.

¹⁹ The hypothesis seems to be supported by the view of Benedict XVI, who writes: “One thing is clear in all tradition: the essential element of this farewell Supper was not the old Passover, but the novelty which Jesus introduced in its context. Even if this encounter between Jesus and the Twelve was not a Passover feast eaten according to the ritualistic rules of Judaism, in his retrospective assessment, the inner connection of the whole with Jesus’ death and resurrection became apparent: it was Jesus’ Passover. In this sense, Jesus celebrated the Passover *and* did not celebrate it: the old rites could not be performed; by the time their hour came, Jesus had already died. But He gave Himself up, and in this way He truly celebrated the Passover with them. Thus, the old things were not abolished, but only brought to their full meaning;” J. Ratzinger – Benedict VI, *Jesus z Nazaretu*, vol. 2: *Od wjazdu do Jerozolimy do Zmartwychwstania*, transl. W. Szymona, Kielce 2011, pp. 126–127.

²⁰ S. Hahn, *Czwarty kielich...*, op. cit., p. 105.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 107.

²² D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Peabody 1994, pp. 330–332.

of Jesus' Passover Supper was to be the tasting of the vinegar that was served to Him just before death:

Finally, at the very end, Jesus was offered "sour wine" or "vinegar" (John 19:30; Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36). All the Synoptics testify to this. But only John tells us how he responded: "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished'; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (19:30).²³

After tasting the vinegar, Jesus says the words "It is finished."²⁴ According to the author, it was then that the Passover of Jesus occurred.

It is finished! At last I had an answer to the preacher's question. It was the Passover that was now finished! Nothing, it seems, was missing from his seder. All was consummated, completed, brought to conclusion with the wine the Lord consumed with his final breath.²⁵

When Jesus was first served "wine mingled with myrrh" during the Passion (Mk 15:23; cf. Mt 27:33), He refused to drink it. According to Hahn, this is a continuation of the refusal to drink wine that was declared during the Last Supper.²⁶ Only when the second time (Mk 15:36; Mt 27:48; Lk 23:36; Jn 19:30) Jesus is given sour wine/vinegar and tastes it, the ritual of the Last Supper as a paschal feast end.²⁷

²³ S. Hahn, *The Fourth Cup...*, op. cit., p. 116 (Polish version: p. 114).

²⁴ S. Mędala omits this cry of Jesus in his commentary but emphasises only to transmit the Spirit to the emerging Church; S. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 13–21*, serie: *New Bible Commentary. New Testament IV/2*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 248.

²⁵ S. Hahn, *Czwarty kielich...*, op. cit., p. 115. Hahn confirms this interpretation of Jesus tasting vinegar in another fragment of his book: "Jesus drinks the fourth paschal cup when he suffers on the cross. It is given to Him on a sponge put on a hyssop branch (the same kind of branch that, according to Moses' command, was to be used to sprinkle the blood of the covenant; see: Exodus 12:22). Saint John, who was an eyewitness to these events, carefully chose His words, describing what happened at that moment – and God inspired his choice of every word" (p. 168).

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 113 (English version: p. 116).

²⁷ Ibidem, pp. 114–115.

Weaknesses of S. Hahn's hypothesis

Scott Hahn undertook exciting research work. Noting that Jesus omitted the fourth chalice of the Paschal Feast ritual during the Last Supper, he mostly asked himself two questions: Why did this happen? and Can we determine the moment when Jesus completed His Paschal Feast by drinking the fourth cup of the ritual rite? The very outline of the research objective is critical, and the search for answers to those questions leads to many exciting discoveries. Although we find many valuable intuitions in Hahn's search, it seems that one can follow a different path, thus marking a moment of the end of the Last Supper that is different from those proposed by the author of *The Fourth Cup*. Let us first look at a few points of Hahn's hypothesis, which may be questionable and at which question marks can be set.

The Passover is the death of Jesus

According to Scott Hahn, when Jesus tasted vinegar / sour wine (Greek ὄξος), His Passover took place. For just after that, "He bowed His head, He gave up His spirit" (J 19:30). That is how a former Presbyterian pastor explains this moment:

"When Jesus had received the vinegar," John tells us, "he said, 'It is finished;' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30). I cannot help, here, but recall the question: *What* is finished? The Passover is finished. The Passover has been fulfilled. It began the evening before as the Passover of the Old Covenant, but it now finds fulfillment on the cross on Good Friday – as the Passover of the New Covenant.²⁸

Would the moment of Jesus' physical death be His Passover? The author justifies it: "The Passover is finished. The Passover has been fulfilled."²⁹ These statements are difficult to agree with. From the theological point of view, the Passover is not a transition from mortal life to death. Quite the contrary – the Passover is a passage from death to life, while dying Jesus passed from the earthly life to death. That is only the first stage of His Passover, which "will

²⁸ *The Fourth Cup...*, op. cit., p. 166 (Polish version: p. 168).

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

end” and “be fulfilled” (to use Hahn’s words) only when the glorified Christ will sit at the right hand of the Father.

Hahn stops halfway. It is like saying that the Passover of Israel “is finished” and “fulfilled” after the Angel of Death had passed through Egypt or after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea. Nothing is further from the truth. The full Passover of Israel did not come to fruition until after the settlement in the Promised Land. For us Christians, the Promised Land is heaven. That certainly applied to Jesus. The pastor, whose words Scott Hahn cites:

He emphasised that in his Letters to Romans 4:25 Paul said that Jesus was raised from the dead for our justification. Thereby the work ‘was fulfilled’ not at Calvary on Good Friday, but in the tomb, in the garden, the following Sunday.³⁰

was closer to the truth. Although he got closer to the truth, he did not fully express it. The Passover did not occur during the Resurrection. It happened after Jesus ascended to heaven.³¹ The Christological hymns of Phil 2:5-11³² or Eph 2:2-23.³³ contained similar messages. Jesus’ Passover did not end when the convict dying on the cross tasted vinegar. It finished when He had sat on the right-hand side of the Father.

No community drinking of the fourth cup

Scott Hahn ignores Jesus’ statement that he will drink the fourth cup with those with whom he began the Last Supper: “From now on I will no longer

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 19.

³¹ This is how some exegetes interpret Jesus’ statement on the Holy Spirit: “And when he comes he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see me” (J 16:8-10). Righteousness, or justification, was only fulfilled at the moment of ascension. Before, the act of justification was not complete; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John. Revised*, serie: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids 1995, p. 620.

³² H.A. Kent, *Philippians*, [in:] *Expositor’s Bible Commentary with The New International Version of The Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 11, F.E. Gaebelien (ed.), Grand Rapids 1984, pp. 123–127.

³³ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to Ephesians*, serie: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids 1998, p. 272; A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, [in:] *Expositor’s Bible Commentary with The New International Version of The Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 11, F.E. Gaebelien (ed.), Grand Rapids 1984, pp. 30–31.

drink of this vine fruit until the day when I drink it with **you** new, in the Kingdom of my Father” (Mt 26:29). The author of the Fourth Cup does not once explain how he understands this “with you.” When Jesus tasted vinegar or sour wine, he did it himself. His disciples were not there. Only John remained under the cross, but there is no mention in the Gospels of even this one – the youngest of the Apostles – drinking sour wine/vinegar with Jesus. Hence it is very doubtful that the fourth chalice of Jesus was to taste wine/vinegar during the death of the cross.

No justification as to what the ‘novelty’ of the fourth cup is

In two of the three synoptics, Jesus describes the fourth cup as ‘new’: “From now on I shall drink no more of this vine fruit until the day when I drink it with you **new** in the Kingdom of my Father” (Mt 26:29); “From now on I shall drink no more of vine fruit until the day when I drink it **new** in the Kingdom of God” (Mk 14:25). Hahn does not clarify in any part of his book what this novelty should be. Just as he does not discuss the expression “with you,” he omits to explain in what sense this fourth chalice would be ‘new’ in relation to the other three. It is an apparent lack in the hypothesis that the fourth chalice was Jesus’ tasting of sour wine/vinegar just before His death.

Glory of the Kingdom of God

Throughout his book, Scott Hahn repeatedly refers to Jesus’ refusal to drink wine at the beginning of the Passion: “There they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh, but he did not receive it” (Mk 15:23; cf. Mt 27:33). Let us quote just two of these references from the most interesting part of the book. In the chapter entitled “Cups” we read: “This account does not explain the reasons for refusal, but probably refers to the promise not to drink until His Kingdom appears in glory.”³⁴ In another place in the same chapter: “Jesus did not complete the paschal liturgy by deciding to skip the fourth cup. He stated that He would not drink wine again until the glory of His Kingdom came.”³⁵

³⁴ S. Hahn, *Czwarty kielich...*, op. cit., p. 113.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 114.

A careful reader of the Gospel will ask: where is the glory?³⁶ The one whom some considered to be the Messiah, and who claimed to be the King of the Jews, has just lost His life. He suffered the most disgraceful death in ancient times.³⁷ His almost naked body was exposed in public. His closest disciples scattered. The crowds who chanted “Hosanna!” a few days earlier turned their cry into “Crucify!” What does the author of *The Fourth Cup* mean when he claims that the glory of the Kingdom of God “has come” and “appeared”? It is not precisely known.

Regarding terminology

The ritual of the Passover meal provided for drinking four cups of ‘wine’ (Greek οἶνος). In none of the four descriptions of the establishment of the Eucharist that appear in the pages of the New Testament does the noun ‘wine’ appear. There is still talk of cups. Nevertheless, Scott Hahn notes that when ‘wine’ is spoken of in Cana of Galilee, the sign announces the institution of the Eucharist at Easter supper.³⁸ It would seem fitting that when John the Evangelist, the same who describes the event from Cana and relates the serving of a drink to Jesus during the Passion on the Cross, reaches for the word ‘wine,’ not ‘vinegar’ or ‘sour wine’ (Greek ὄξος), mingled with myrrh. His message would then be theologically more coherent. Meanwhile, the beloved disciple reports: “A vessel full of vinegar stood there. So, a vinegar-soaked sponge was put on the hyssop and served in His mouth” (J 19:29). Since John uses the term ὄξος instead of οἶνος, it seems doubtful that he means the fourth cup of the Paschal Supper.

Proposal for a different interpretation

Bearing in mind the doubts that arise about Scott Hahn’s interesting hypothesis, I would like to propose a different theological reading of the moment when Jesus raised His fourth cup of wine and thus fulfilled the ritual of the Passover Feast. He drank the first three ones in the dining room: the first after the prayer

³⁶ Only John shows Jesus’ death as a moment of revelation of His glory; S. Kim, *The Kingship of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, Eugene 2018, pp. 156–157.

³⁷ M. Rosik, *Trzy portrety Jezusa*, serie: *W kręgu Słowa*, vol. 1, Tarnów 2007, pp. 26–32; idem, *Jezus i Jego misja. W kręgu orędzia Ewangelii synoptycznych*, serie: *Studia Biblica*, vol. 5, Kielce 2003, pp. 253–255.

³⁸ S. Hahn, *Czwarty kielich...*, op. cit., pp. 122–124.

called *kiddush*, the second after the Paschal Haggadah, and at the third he did what we today call the ‘consecration’ of wine: He transformed the wine into his Blood. Immediately afterwards, He left the dining room and came to the Garden of Olives, where he prayed with words: “Father if you wish, take this cup from me! May your, not my, will be done!” (Lk 22:42).

When He spoke of the cup, He meant his death.³⁹ Since during the words establishing the Eucharist, while giving the third chalice to His disciples, He claims that it is the blood poured out “for you” (Lk 22:20), and “for many” (Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28), which means that the third cup is the same as His death.⁴⁰ Dying on the cross, Jesus shed His Blood („the blood and water flowed from His side;” Jn 19:34) – the same one that He gave to the Apostles for consumption at the Last Supper. Although He prayed in the Garden of Olives with the words “take this cup from me,” He knew that God’s will would be done, so He immediately added “Let Your will be done” (Lk 22:42). Since He was sure that God’s will would be done and the Father did not postpone this cup, already in the Upper Room, He gave the Apostles His Blood for consumption, in the theological sense anticipating His death.

What happens next? Everything that we rightly call the Passover of Jesus. It is about His death, His resurrection, ascending to heaven and sitting on the Father’s right-hand side. This is the true Passover – the transition from death to life. It is impossible to comment on the whole passages of the Apocalypse at this point, but it is enough to recall the basic ideas of the last book of the New Testament. Jesus, as the Paschal Lamb, receives glory from the saved (Rev 5:12-14); there is no longer a temple there since He himself is a temple (Rev 21:22); the saved have washed away their sins in His Blood shed on the cross (Rev 7:14); and finally He invites us to a feast: “Blessed are those who are called to the feast of the Gods of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). It is during this meal – the feast of the Lamb – that Jesus and all those who believe in Him drink the fourth cup of the Last Supper, which is a Passover meal.

The answer proposed here to the question of when Jesus drank the fourth cup of the wine of the Passover Feast seems to dispel the doubts that the hypothesis proposed by Scott Hahn raises.

³⁹ In Jesus’ statement on the request of the sons of Zebedee (Mk 10:35-41; Mt 20:20-24), the cup is directly identified with the death of the Messiah; M. Rosik, *Ku radykalizmowi Ewangelii. Studium nad wspólnymi logiami Jezusa w Ewangeliach według św. Mateusza i św. Marka*, Wrocław 2000, p. 92.

⁴⁰ For more on this subject, see: S. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana...*, op. cit., pp. 256–257.

The Passover is not just Jesus' death

The term 'Passover' meant for the Jews, first, the 'passage' through Egypt of the angel of death, who knocked out all the firstborn; then the 'crossing' of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the whole desert to Canaan. Among Christians, this term extends its meaning. It indicates Christ's 'passage' from death to life, and thus also includes His resurrection, ascension to heaven, and even the sending of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ It is, therefore, the true Passover of Christ – the passage from this world to the Father, to the eschatological Kingdom of God. The Eucharist is not only the presence of Christ's death but also of His resurrection and ascension to heaven. That is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church writes about it:

By celebrating the Last Supper with the Apostles at the Paschal Feast, Jesus finally fulfilled the Jewish Passover. Indeed, Jesus' passage to the Father through death and resurrection is pre-empted at the Last Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fills the Jewish Passover and pre-empted the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the Kingdom (CCC 1340).

Christ's Passover is "the passage to the Father through death and resurrection."⁴²

According to Catholic theology, the Eucharist commemorates the Passover of Christ. If one accepts Scott Hahn's explanation that Christ's Passover took place when He tasted the vinegar, the literal understanding of this hypothesis does not even include the death of the Messiah. Jesus says, "It is finished!" while He is still alive, so even the Passover understood as death is not yet fulfilled. Jesus should have said, "It is about to happen." But even when Jesus says "It is finished!," he means His death, it would mean that according to Hahn, only Christ's death is present in the Eucharist. For if the Eucharist makes the Passover of Christ present, and the Passover occurred at the time of His death, it no longer includes the resurrection and ascension to heaven. In short, the Passover of Christ was accomplished through the ascension.⁴³ The earthly mission of the historical Jesus was "finished on the cross."

⁴¹ P.-É. Bonnard, *Pascha*, [in:] *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, X. Léon-Dufour (ed.), Poznań–Warszawa 1973, pp. 646, 649–651; H. Witczyk, *Pascha*, [in:] *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 14, E. Gigilewicz et al. (eds.), Lublin 2010, p. 1409; idem, *Pascha, Nowy słownik teologii biblijnej*, H. Witczyk (ed.), Lublin–Kielce 2017, p. 671.

⁴² Cf. also: "The Eucharist is a reminder of the Passover of Christ, that is, the work of salvation fulfilled by His life, death and resurrection. That work is made present in the liturgical activity" (CCC 1409).

⁴³ See: D. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, serie: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 1996, pp. 288–290.

A feast in the community of the saved

Following the words of Jesus, the last ritual cup was to be drunk with those who were the seed of the nascent Church (Mt 26:29). None of those who were present at the dining room when Jesus had His last meal with the Apostles remained under the cross, except John the Evangelist. It is therefore impossible to maintain the thesis that the proclamation of Mt 26:29 realises when Jesus hanging on the cross tastes vinegar / sour wine served on a sponge. It is manifested in the eschatological Kingdom of Heaven at the messianic feast prepared for all those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. That is why the Apocalypse speaks of 'crowds' (Rev 7:9; 19:1-6) who sit down to the eternal feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:7).⁴⁴

Jesus promised to have the Last Supper with the Apostles. If the Easter Supper ended for Him after He had tasted the vinegar, when did it end for the Apostles? Hahn does not answer this question as it is not possible to indicate when this meal ended by focusing on the Gospels. One must reach for the Apocalypse, where the feast of the Lamb is described (Rev 19:1-10).⁴⁵

A new dimension of the Kingdom of God

Jesus announces that the fourth cup of Passover will be the 'new' one (Mk 14:25; Mt 26:29). However, when He drinks vinegar / sour wine from a sponge, there is no evidence of the novelty of the chalice understood as such. Everything is done in the temporal order. He drank the three cups so far during his earthly life, and such is the case with the fourth one. Jesus is still alive, and His death has not yet occurred, hence it is not clear what is new in this situation. Moreover, this novelty was supposed to concern the Kingdom of God ("new in my Father's Kingdom;" Mt 26:29). Meanwhile, according to Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom of God already existed during his earthly life: "the Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21). When Jesus tastes the drink, nothing has changed in this Kingdom yet. There is nothing new. As "among you" existed during His life, it continues when He takes a vinegar-soaked sponge in His mouth. Everything undergoes a radical change after the resurrection and ascension to heaven. This

⁴⁴ The idea of the messianic feast is known from the apocalyptic texts (*Henoah etiopski* 62,14; *Druga Księga Barucha* 29,8) (Henoah Ethiopian 62:14; Baruch's Second Book 29:8) and the writings of Qumran (1QSa 2:11-22).

⁴⁵ R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation. Revised*, serie: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 1997, pp. 345–350.

stage of the Kingdom is characterised by radical novelty. It is an eschatological, eternal, and irreversible Kingdom. That is what Jesus has in mind when He announces that he will drink the new chalice in God's Kingdom.⁴⁶

Jesus speaks of the 'new' chalice in Mark (Mk 14:25) and Matthew (Mt 26:29). The announcement of the fourth cup at Luke's is somewhat different: "From now on I will no longer drink from the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18). The conclusion can be drawn that when Jesus has the Last Supper with the Apostles, the Kingdom of God has not yet come. Thus, how can we understand the earlier confession in the same Gospel of Luke: "the Kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21)? The only possible interpretation is that after Jesus' resurrection there comes an entirely new period in the Kingdom of God, and it is in this Kingdom that Jesus will drink the fourth cup of the Paschal Feast with those who believe in Him.

Glory of the kingdom

Scott Hahn is right when he says that Jesus will drink the last cup of the Passover supper when God's Kingdom is revealed in glory. It is the Apocalypse, which describes the eschatological stage of the Kingdom, that resounds with God's glory. Of the many possible texts, let us quote only three: "The slain Lamb is worthy of taking power and wealth, and wisdom, and power, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev 5:12); "For Him sitting on the throne and the Lamb, blessing and honour, and glory and power, for the age of eternity. (Rev 5:14); "Amen. Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and power, and power to our God for ever and ever! Amen" (Rev 7:12). The greatest adoration resounds during the feast of the Lamb: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give Him glory, for the Lamb's Gods have come, and His Wife has dressed up" (Rev 19:7). It is not necessary to quote here the whole passage of Rev 19:1-10 to see that it is saturated with the theme of the glory of the Kingdom.

What is more, this motif perfectly harmonises with John's theology of glory. Scott Hahn rightly writes that the sign in Cana of Galilee was an announcement of the Eucharist. John ends his account with words: "This is what Jesus

⁴⁶ "Jesus follows His death with confidence and conviction to participate in an eschatological feast. As before, the announcement of death has always been combined with the announcement of the resurrection (cf. 16:21 etc.), so now death is not the last word. It is the eschatological fulfilment;" A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza. Rozdziały 14–28*, serie: *Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 1/2*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 562.

did in Cana of Galilee. He revealed His **glory** and His disciples believed in Him” (J 2:11). Many Church Fathers interpret the whole event in terms of Christ’s marriage to the Church. In the same key, we should read Rev 19:1-10. It is the feast of the Lamb – the marriage of Christ to the Church. Since the event in Cana is the announcement of the Eucharist established at the Last Supper, Rev 19:1-10 must also refer to the Last Supper. Indeed, it is the end of the Last Supper.

“Take this cup from me” (Luke 22:42)

There is a certain ambivalence in Jesus’ prayer in the Garden. On the one hand, He asks the Father to postpone the chalice of death, on the other hand, He prays for the fulfilment of the Father’s will: “Father, if you wish, take this cup away from me! May your, not my, will be done!” (Lk 22:42). Jesus was aware that He would pour out His Blood, and that is why He gave it to the Apostles in the third cup of the Last Supper. Like any human being, He was afraid of death, and that is why He asked for it to be delayed. He knew, however, that it was inevitable if it was to fulfil the Father’s saving plan.

This ambivalence includes the refusal to drink wine at the beginning of the Passions (“There they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh, but He did not accept it;” Mk 15:23) and the consent to drink it just before death (“I desire;” Jn 19:28). The refusal corresponds to the words of the prayer “Take this cup away from me” (Lk 22:42). The cry “I desire” corresponds to agreeing to do the Father’s will to the end. In this way, the content of the prayer in the Garden of Olives correlates perfectly with what happened during the crucifixion. In the Olive Garden, Jesus prays for salvation from death, but finally agrees to accept it as the Father’s will. At the time of the crucifixion, He initially refuses to drink wine, but ultimately tastes it in the spirit of obedience toward the Father.

Conclusion

Scott Hahn’s book is an attempt to answer the question of when Jesus ended the Last Supper by drinking the fourth ritual cup of wine. The author marks this moment, pointing to the tasting of vinegar / sour wine served on a sponge by Jesus dying on the cross. He cites many arguments for this hypothesis. Nonetheless, most of them can be questioned by giving numerous counter-arguments. A careful reading of the evangelists’ stories about Passion, death,

and the subsequent events provides a basis for a different identification of the fourth cup of the Last Supper.

After His resurrection, Jesus went to Heaven. There He still drinks the fourth cup of the Last Supper, which was a Passover meal. That is where His Passover ends – after He has gone to the Father’s house. St John saw it: “And I saw between the throne (...) and the circle of the Elderly a standing Lamb as if He were killed, and He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent to the whole earth” (Rev 5:6). *Presbyteroi*, namely “priests, is the word used to describe old people.” They celebrate the last moment of the Eucharistic liturgy before “Lamb as if He were dead.” “As if” because the risen Jesus lives as He who has the fullness of power (horns) and the fullness of knowledge (eyes), and together with the Father sends the Holy Spirit to the earth to help us go where He already is.

Christ is our Passover, according to St Paul: “For Christ was sacrificed as our Passover” (1 Cor 5:7). Our Passover will end when we receive from the Lord’s hands the fourth cup of wine, preceded by every Eucharist in which we participate, and then we will be with the Lord forever (1 Tes 4:17). Meanwhile, the Last Supper continues. It began in the Upper Room and continues by making the Passover of Jesus present (Passion, death, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven) on the altars of the whole world. That is how it will be until the moment of *parousia*. Then all who attain salvation will complete their Passover – the passage from this world to the glory of the eschatological Kingdom of God. Moreover, there will be the feast of the Lamb, during which the saved ones will raise the fourth cup of the wine of the Last Supper.

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