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Theological and Biblical Basis for Construing the Eucharist as a Memorial to the Sacrifice of Christ

Teologiczno-biblijne podstawy rozumienia Eucharystii
jako pamiątki uobecniającej zbawczą ofiarę Chrystusa¹

ABSTRACT: The fundamental problem addressed in the article is the question of how, based on the Scriptures, believers participating in the Eucharist have access to Christ's salvific sacrifice on the cross. The author takes as a starting point Jesus' words uttered at the Last Supper: "Do this in memory of me" (gr. *tuto poiείτε eis ten emen anamnesin*) and considers it crucial to understand the original meaning of the word "memorial" (gr. *anamnesis*). He carries out his analysis in two stages. First, he reaches for the Hebrew word *zikkaron* as the equivalent of the New Testamental term *anamnesis* and proves it is deeply rooted in the cult language of Judaism. Then, in this context, he carries out an exegesis of the words of the institution of the Eucharist, which he extends by the explanations offered by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, where we find a full understanding of Christ's sacrifice made "once for all." The rediscovery in theology of the full understanding of the concept of memorial-anamnesis from the words of the institution of the Eucharist only took place in the biblical and liturgical research of the twentieth century, the achievements of which constitute here a fundamental point of reference for the author's search. The result of this process was the reception and return to the biblical-patristic approach to the memorial in Catholic teaching about the Eucharist as a sacrifice and the breaking of the deadlock in ecumenical dialogue in this area.

¹ This article is based on the paper *Eucharystia jako pamiątka uobecniająca życiodajną ofiarę Chrystusa* [*The Eucharist as a Memorial Making Present the Life-Giving Sacrifice of Christ*] presented during the XLIX Wrocław Pastoral Days "Wielka Tajemnica Wiary. Eucharystia – Źródło Bożego Życia" [*Great Mystery of Faith. Eucharist – Source of Divine Life*] held on 26–27 August 2019.

KEYWORDS: memorial, *zikkaron*, *anamnesis*, theology of the Eucharist, the Eucharist as a sacrifice, biblical basis of the Eucharist, Jesus

ABSTRAKT: Zasadniczym problemem podjętym w artykule jest odpowiedź na pytanie, na jakiej zasadzie, w oparciu o dane Pisma Świętego, wierzący uczestniczący w Eucharystii mają dostęp do zbawczej ofiary Chrystusa dokonanej na krzyżu. Autor za punkt wyjścia przyjmuje słowa Jezusa wypowiedziane na Ostatniej Wieczerzy: „To czyńcie na moją pamiątkę” i za kluczowe uznaje zrozumienie oryginalnego znaczenia słowa „pamiątka” (gr. *anamnesis*). Swoją analizę przeprowadza w dwóch etapach. Najpierw sięga do hebrajskiego słowa *zikkaron* jako ekwiwalentu nowotestamentalnego terminu *anamnesis* i ukazuje jego głębokie zakorzenienie w kultycznym języku judaizmu. Następnie w tym kontekście przeprowadza egzegezę słów ustanowienia Eucharystii, którą poszerza o wywód autora Listu do Hebrajczyków, gdzie odnajdujemy pełne rozumienie ofiary Chrystusa dokonanej „raz na zawsze”. Odkrycie na nowo w teologii pełnego rozumienia pojęcia pamiątki-anamnezy ze słów ustanowienia Eucharystii nastąpiło dopiero w badaniach biblijnych i liturgicznych XX wieku, których osiągnięcia stanowią tutaj zasadniczy punkt odniesienia dla poszukiwań autora. Efektem tego procesu była recepcja i powrót do biblijno-patrystycznego ujęcia pamiątki w katolickim nauczaniu o Eucharystii jako ofierze oraz przełamanie impasu w dialogu ekumenicznym w tym zakresie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: pamiątka, *zikkaron*, anamneza, teologia Eucharystii, Eucharystia jako ofiara, biblijne podstawy Eucharystii, Jezus

Introduction – the problem

The Church lives by the Eucharist” – this is how St John Paul II began his last encyclical – because, as he continues, testifying to the Church’s faith based on biblical testimonies, in the Eucharist, every believer has access to the fruits of Christ’s saving Paschal sacrifice.² Jesus himself had already made it clear to his disciples that he came to “give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45),³ and that “the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world,” while at the same time teaching: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (J 6:51,53-54). From the very beginning, the Church has lived a deep faith in the expiatory power of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, as evidenced by the New Testament texts which place this truth at the heart

² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Città del Vaticano 2003, no. 1, 11–12. See also: Jan Paweł II, *Dominicae cenae*, no. 9, [in:] *Listy pasterskie Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II [Pastoral Letters of the Holy Father John Paul II]*, Kraków 1997, p. 384.

³ Unless stated otherwise, we refer here to the USCCB Bible, available online: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible> [access: 10.05.2021].

of the Good News message. In his teaching, St Paul in particular, emphasised the faith in redemption through Christ's sacrifice: "They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as an expiation, through faith, by his blood" (Rom 3:24-25; cf. 1Cor 6:20; Ga 1:4; 3:13; Eph 1:7). We read similarly in Saint Peter's First Letter: "realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct, handed on by your ancestors (...) with the precious blood of Christ as of a spotless unblemished lamb" (1:18-19). The Apostle John also writes: "[Jesus Christ] is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world" (1Jn 2:2; see also: 1Jn 1:7; 4:10; Ap 5:9).⁴

When at the Last Supper, Jesus establishes the rite of His Passover – the Eucharist – He clearly links with His words the actions and gestures over bread and wine with the sacrifice He will make on the Cross. This is particularly emphasised by the words spoken over the bread

Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you" (Lk 22:19-20)

where Matthew adds: "which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). The formula used here – "for you" (*hyper hymon didomenon*⁵) – indicates that the sacrifice is in favour of the participants of the feast. Similarly, the phrase "blood shed for you" clearly has a cultic meaning deeply rooted in Old Testament victims, where the motif of blood has a very complex symbolism indicating the reality of the sacrifice, especially in connection

⁴ Cf. the results of the contemporary exegesis of the New Testamental texts on the propitiatory (atoning) nature of Jesus' sacrifice: A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, Freiburg 2016, pp. 63–66. Cf. also L.-M. Chauvet, *Symbol und Sakrament. Eine sakramentale Relecture der christlichen Existenz*, Regensburg 2015, pp. 290–295; Benedykt XVI, *Jezus z Nazaretu [Jesus of Nazareth]*, part 2: *Od wjazdu do Jerozolimy do zmartwychwstania [From Entry into Jerusalem to Resurrection]*, transl. W. Szymona, Kielce 2011, pp. 132, 245–255; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta – źródło chrześcijańskiego życia [Holy Mass – the Source of Christian Life]*, transl. S. Śledziewski, Lublin 2007, pp. 106–109.

⁵ Transliteration of the Greek NT text throughout the article after: *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament. Wydanie interlinearne z kluczem gramatycznym, z kodami Stronga i Popowskiego oraz pełną transliteracją greckiego tekstu [Greek-Polish New Testament. Interlinear Edition with a Grammatical Key, Codes by Strong and Popowski and Full Transliteration of the Greek Text]*, transl. R. Popowski, M. Wojciechowski, Warszawa 2014.

with making an alliance (cf. Ex 24:8).⁶ We see, then, that the Last Supper was consciously lived out by Jesus as an anticipation of the saving sacrifice of the Cross. What is even more important to us is that Jesus, in expressing his last will, commands his disciples to repeat this rite with the words “Do this in memory/remembrance of me” (Lk 22:19; 1Cor 11:24) and the Church has been doing so from its very beginning, gathering for the Lord’s Supper (1Cor 11:20).

The fulfilment of this injunction, as the New Testament’s most ancient relations show, gives confidence to the Church gathered for the Eucharist and through the belief in the promise of Jesus that she has access to share in His life-giving sacrifice. In order to fully understand how it is possible that the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist connects us each time with the only historic sacrifice of the Cross,⁷ we need to understand what Jesus’ intentions were when he spoke of performing this rite “in memory/remembrance of me (in my memorial)” (*eis ten emen anamnesin*). Above all, the meaning of the word “memorial” (gr. *anamnesis*) or, in Louis Bouyer’s words, of what is, in a way, the substance of this memorial, is of key importance,⁸ as the full discovery of what really happens when the Church celebrates the Eucharist as the fulfilment of her Master’s command depends on it.

⁶ See more: R. Pindel, *Obecność Pana w Eucharystii według tekstów jej ustanowienia* [*The Presence of the Lord in the Eucharist According to the Texts of its Institution*], [in:] *Eucharystia na ołtarzu świata* [*Eucharist on the Altar of the World*], serie: PAT Studia 14, S. Koperek et al. (eds.), Kraków 2006, pp. 148–161; J. Ratzinger, *Eucharystia. Bóg blisko nas* [*Eucharist. God Close to Us*], transl. M. Rodkiewicz, Kraków 2005, p. 33; R. Barron, *Eucharystia* [*Eucharist*], transl. K. Rosół, Cieszyn 2018, pp. 88–90. Cf. J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, Göttingen 1967, pp. 213–214, in which the author states: *Mit den Worten den bißri ‘das ist mein (Opfer)fleisch’ und den ‘idhmi ‘das ist mein (Opfer)blut’ redet Jesus also höchstwahrscheinlich von sich selbst als dem Passalamme.*

⁷ Cf. R.F. Taft, *Ponad wschodem i zachodem. Problemy rozumienia liturgii* [*Over the East and the West. Problems with Understanding the Liturgy*], transl. S. Gałęcki, E. Litak, Kraków 2014, p. 26, in which the author states in the overall perspective of the liturgy: “The basic question at every level – historical, theological, pastoral – is the problem of *meaning*: what do we do in celebrating a Christian feast? Because the problem of every feast that arises not from a myth but from the history of salvation is a problem of time and event – that is to say, the relationship between a past and unique event and the current celebration” (transl. by WTR).

⁸ See: L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia. Teologia i duchowość modlitwy eucharystycznej* [*Eucharist. Theology and Spirituality of Eucharistic Prayer*], transl. L. Rutowska, Lublin 2015, pp. 99–100.

The Old Testament roots of the concept of memorial (*anamnesis*) used by Jesus in the words of instituting the Eucharist

It is no coincidence that Jesus uses the word “memorial” to establish the rite of the New Passover during the Last Supper. This notion is deeply rooted in the biblical tradition, especially the Passover tradition, which creates the liturgical context of the Last Supper. The problem for us is that the word “memorial” used in contemporary translations of the Bible into European languages in a general sense through its etymological connotations with words meaning only passive memorial of past events, which is an act of our memory, does not fully reflect the full range of the meaning of the original New Testament use of the Greek word *anamnesis*.⁹ It should be noted here, however, that in theological terminology, memorial has already become a universally accepted biblical category, analogous to the concept of anamnesis, derived from the liturgy.¹⁰

When looking in the Old Testament for the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term *anamnesis*, the Hebrew word *zikkaron* should be mentioned in particular.¹¹ The Septuagint translates that Hebrew word as *anamnesis*. Put otherwise, we can suppose that since Jewish translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek equated *zikkaron* with *anamnesis*, so did the authors of the books of the New Testament, who, quoting the Old Testament, mainly relied on the

⁹ Cf. D.E. Stern, *Remembering and Redemption*, [in:] *Rediscovering the Eucharist*, R. Kereszty (ed.), New York 2003, p. 2: “This Greek word is practically untranslatable in English. ‘Memorial,’ ‘commemoration,’ ‘remembrance’ all suggest a recollection of the past, whereas *anamnesis* means making present an object or person from the past. Sometimes the term ‘reactualization’ has been used to indicate the force of *anamnesis*.” Similar opinion: M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* [*The First Letter to the Corinthians. Introduction, Translation from the Original Language, Commentary*], Częstochowa 2009, p. 368: “The Greek word *anamnesis*, reflecting the Hebrew term *zikkaron*, should be translated as *re-presentation*. For a *memorial* refers to the past, while *re-presentation* makes past events present in the *here and now*, and that is the meaning of the words of Christ...” Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 35–36.

¹⁰ Cf. B. Nadolski, *Leksykon liturgii* [*Lexicon of Liturgy*], Poznań 2006, pp. 85–86. See also: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1362–1366 (hereinafter: CCC) – especially no. 1362 treats anamnesis and memorial as synonyms. Cf. also M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d'action de grâce et d'intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963, p. 26 – the author opts for using the term *memorial* (fr. *mémorial*), believing that, despite its imperfections related to etymological references (e.g., *memorial* in the sense of *souvenir*), better than the word anamnesis – a “technical” concept from the language of the liturgy – it reflects the broad biblical reality of the Hebrew word *zikkaron*.

¹¹ Cf. R. Pindel, *Obecność Pana...*, op. cit., p. 163.

Septuagint; they, too, used the Greek word *anamnesis* for Jesus' "memorial," which may have been originally spoken in Hebrew (possibly Aramaic) as *zikkaron*.¹² It should be noted here that the word derives from the Hebrew core of *zkr* (*zakar*), which in various word forms occurs as many as 288 times in the Bible and is primarily used in the religious sense in relation to the personal relationship between God and man. It occupies an important place in the cultic language of Judaism. It is most often used in combination with other words that are terms of spiritual action or in various prayer formulas. It often means calling out the name of God in the sense of confession of faith, thanksgiving or intercessory prayer.¹³ The form *zkr* in the sense of calling on someone for something, remembering something for the sake of someone, is relevant to the understanding of *zikkaron* in the sense of a cultic remembrance. The classic use of the "memorial" category in the Old Testament sacrificial cult can be indicated in the case of a grain offering (Lv 2:1-3), a sacrifice of bread offering (Lv 24:5-9), a burnt offering of incense (Sir 45:16) or a purification offering (Lv 5:11-13). It is also worth noting here that the form of *le-hazkir* – "to make a memorial," appearing in the headlines of Psalms 38 and 70, The Septuagint translates as *eis anamnesin*, that is, as in the words of the institution of the Eucharist,¹⁴ where these psalms were probably performed on the Sabbath during the burning of incense during the exchange of showbreads.¹⁵

¹² Cf. W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „pamiątka” Pana. Eucharystyczna anamneza Misterium Paschalnego i jego egzystencjalna dynamika* [Dynamic 'Memorial' of the Lord. Eucharistic Anamnesis of the Paschal Mystery and its Existential Dynamics], Kraków 1980, p. 23; D.E. Stern, *Remembering and Redemption*, op. cit., p. 2.

¹³ See more: H Eising, זָכַר *zākar*, [in:] *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. 2, G.J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren (eds.), Stuttgart–Berlin–Köln–Mainz 1977, pp. 571–593. Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 83–84; L.-M. Chauvet, *Symbol und Sacrament*, op. cit., pp. 229–231; F. Mussner, *Traktat o Żydach* [The Treaty on the Jews], transl. J. Kruczyńska, Warszawa 1993, p. 167: "However, you will not understand the God of Israel, worship and feasts in Israel, the history of Israel or the essence of the history of salvation, if you do not take into account the role of 'memorial' in the Biblical and Judaic thought. No wonder, then, that theologians have turned their attention to 'memory,' 'memorial,' to the Hebrew core of *zkr*."

¹⁴ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 32–35; L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J.J. Stamm, *Wielki słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu* [The Great Hebrew-Polish and Aramaic-Polish Dictionary of the Old Testament], vol. 1, Warszawa 2008, p. 257; B. Nadolski, *Leksykon liturgii*, op. cit., pp. 86–87; D. Brzeziński, „*Chrystus wczoraj, dziś, i na wieki*". *Anamnetyczny wymiar roku liturgicznego* [“Christ yesterday, today, and forever.” *Anamnestic Dimension of the Liturgical Year*], Toruń 2015, pp. 119–123.

¹⁵ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 64–67.

However, consider in particular the concept of the memorial in relation to the Jewish Passover because it was in its context that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Let us leave aside here the almost unsolvable dispute of biblicists over whether the Last Supper was in the historical sense a Passover feast.¹⁶ One thing is certain from the New Testament accounts: Jesus very consciously chooses the time of the feast of Passover in order to inscribe in its liturgy and theology the event of his death and resurrection, and thus establish his Passover.¹⁷ If we read the description of the Last Supper in the context of Passover, we can consider the blessing of the meal (*beraka*) pronounced at that time as an opportunity for Jesus to formulate words that give a completely new meaning to this rite.¹⁸ The solemn supper, inscribed within the framework of the Passover ritual, has thus acquired a completely new meaning: Jesus' gestures and words were the beginning of a new ritual that introduced His disciples to the mystery of His death as a saving sacrifice. Accordingly, the rite of Jewish Passover becomes the basic hermeneutical key for the Passover of Jesus.¹⁹ Having already outlined the idea of a memorial in the spectrum of Old Testament texts, we can show on this basis the special meaning of Passover as a liturgical memorial.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii [Theology of the Eucharist]*, transl. S. Szczyrbowski, Warszawa 1977, p. 31 – the author claims: “It will probably never be possible to answer this historical question satisfactorily. However, stronger arguments speak in favour of treating this feast as a paschal feast,” and p. 32: “even assuming that the last supper was not a paschal feast, the paschal theology starting from the passover as a historical and salvific background has its basis in the event of Jesus' last supper itself, and even more so in the theology presented in the synoptical Gospels and the Gospel of John.” For the discussion around this issue: W. Bösen, *Ostatni dzień Jezusa z Nazaretu [The Last Day of Jesus of Nazareth]*, transl. W. Moniak, Wrocław 2002, pp. 72–83. Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 94–97; J. Gnilka, *Jezus z Nazaretu [Jesus of Nazareth]*, transl. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1997, pp. 336–337; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben. Geschichte und Theologie der Eucharist*, Freiburg 2011, pp. 42–48.

¹⁷ Cf. Benedykt XVI, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, op. cit., pp. 125–127.

¹⁸ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 96–99. In this context, it is worth emphasising, after this author, that the Jewish *beraka* refers to a memorial (*zikkaron*), p. 83. Cf. also J.A. Jungmann, *Liturgia pierwotnego Kościoła do czasów Grzegorza Wielkiego [Liturgy of the Early Church to the Times of Gregory the Great]*, transl. T. Lubowiecka, Kraków 2013, pp. 56–61.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Czerski, *Biblijny przekaz Ostatniej Wieczerzy [Biblical Account of the Last Supper]*, [in:] *Misterium Eucharystii [Mystery of the Eucharist]*, M. Worbs (ed.), Opole 2005, pp. 7–8; J. Gnilka, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, op. cit., pp. 339–345.

The fundamental text about the institution and celebration of Passover in the Bible is an excerpt from Exodus (12:1-14),²⁰ and in it verse 14 as a memorial of the fundamental biblical testimony about Passover:

So this day shall be to you a memorial (*le-zikkaron*);²¹ and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance [transl. NKJV].

This day will be a day of remembrance for you which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord; you will celebrate it as a statute forever [transl. USCCB].

Passover as a feast day is to be a memorial (*zikkaron*) celebrated by all generations as a feast for Yahweh. We see an important thing in this statement: Passover as a day, as a holiday, as a liturgical celebration is a memorial. This is an important difference from the previously discussed elements of the liturgy, which were called memorials: here the whole liturgical rite is a memorial, not just some element of it. Passover is not only some kind of remembrance of the past for the purpose of didactic commemoration of history, but above all it focuses on the grace of Yahweh.²² The motif of sacrifice is also strongly inscribed in Passover: this can be seen especially in another, older account of this holiday coming from the Yahweh tradition (Ex 12:21-27): “It is the Passover sacrifice for the Lord” (v. 27). Thus we see that Passover as a memorial highlights two dimensions at the liturgical level: on the one hand, it is, through the rite of the Passover supper, an effective, real sign of the liberation achieved by Yahweh (in other words, of salvation), and on the other hand, a sacrifice offered to God.²³

²⁰ Cf. the description in Deut 16:1-8 and the less important accounts in Num 28:16-25 and Lv 23:5-8.

²¹ Cf. *Hebrajsko-polski Stary Testament. Pięcioksiąg. Przekład interliniarny z kodami gramatycznymi, transliteracją oraz indeksem rdzeni* [*Hebrew-Polish Old Testament. Pentateuch. Interlinear Translation with Grammatical Codes, Transliteration and Index of Roots*], A. Kuśmirek (ed.), Warszawa 2003, p. 252. Jewish translations into Polish contain here the word “memorial” – cf. *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza. Druga Księga Mojżesza. Exodus, Tłomaczył i podług najlepszych źródeł objaśnił Dr. I. Cylkow* [*Pentateuch. The Second Book. Exodus, Translated and Explained According to the Best Sources by Dr. I. Cylkow*], Kraków 1895, p. 51; the Jakub Wujek Bible – “in memory of.”

²² Cf. John Paul II, *Eucharystia jako pamiątka „mirabilia Dei”* [*Eucharist as a Memorial of Mirabilia Dei*], “L'Osservatore Romano” Polish edition 3 (2001), p. 28.

²³ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 37, 43.

The second significant text related to the feast of Passover as a memorial can be found a little further on in the next chapter of Exodus (13:3-11), where Moses gives the Israelites indications on Passover. As we know, these two feasts melted into one liturgical celebration. The most important are verses 8 and 9:

⁸ And on that day you will explain to your son, 'This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'

⁹ It will be like a sign on your hand and a reminder²⁴ (*zikkaron*) on your forehead so that the teaching of the Lord will be on your lips: with a strong hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

First of all, it should be noted here that, in line 8, the text contains strong emphasis on underlined actualisation of the historical event: "This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt."²⁵ These words spoken by the father of the family were a confession of faith that what God did at the time of the Exodus He also did for the person speaking these words and for the participants in the ritual; moreover, they themselves were participants in the Exodus from Egypt. Here, as nowhere else in the Bible,²⁶ the sacramental realism of this ritual, which consists in the actualisation of God's salvific action, carried out in the historical fact of liberation from Egyptian captivity, is stressed. And it is this rite, the explanation of which was later inscribed in the *Paschal Haggadah*, and its external expression is, according to the text on Pesach, the consumption of a matzo reminiscent of the event of the Exodus (v. 6-7), in verse 9 it was called a memorial (*zikkaron*).

Summarizing this part of our biblical deliberations, we can draw a theological synthesis of Passover as memorial. In the first place, it must be said that Passover as a feast, as a liturgical ritual, is precisely *zikkaron* – a memorial *par excellence*; its essence is to make present the salvific event of God's past. This word memorial (*zikkaron*) gave the whole meaning to the Jewish Passover feast because despite the one-time, unique character of the historic event of the Exodus, it becomes accessible at present, it becomes an event with which

²⁴ In Cylkow's translation it is a "memorial" – cf. *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza...*, op. cit., p. 59; *Hebrajsko-polski Stary Testament. Pięcioksiąg...*, op. cit., p. 260.

²⁵ The Polish translation does not render this properly in the second part of the sentence – Cylkow's translation emphasises this much stronger: *to dla tego, co uczynił mi Wiekuisty, gdym wychodził z Micraim* ["it is for what the Eternal did to me when I went out with Micraim"] – cf. *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza...*, op. cit., p. 59.

²⁶ This is slightly weaker in e.g., Deut 6:23; 16:3; 26:8.

participants identify themselves.²⁷ Through a cultic “remembrance” – a remembrance of past events – salvation and blessing associated with these facts from the past become an accessible and current reality. This is the difference between ordinary human remembrance and memorial in the biblical sense that God Himself is involved in every celebration of Passover and for Him every event is the present; His “memory” is an eternal presence, and thus the salvific events are truly present to those who remember them before Him in faith.²⁸ Fulfilling the injunction of the cultic re-enactment of the events of the Paschal Night gave the Israelites, by faith, the opportunity to come into contact with the historic event of the Passover. This is a characteristic feature of the liturgical memorial: the anamnesis, which is a link to the salvific event made in history through the liturgical actualisation in the worship, where worship is understood as a plane established by God for His meetings with man.²⁹

The theological interpretation of Jesus’ injunction “Do this in memory of me” based on the exegesis of the texts on the institution of the Eucharist

The command to repeat the gestures and words of Jesus from the Last Supper as memorial is only contained in the texts of the so-called Antiochian tradition: after the words over bread we have them in a univocal message both in Paul (1Cor 11:24) and in Luke (Luke 22:19): “Do this in memory/remembrance of me,” and after the words over the chalice they appear only in the First Letter to the Corinthians (11:25) and in a slightly expanded form: “Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” The lack of this recommendation in the accounts of the institution of Mark and Matthew (the so-called Palestinian tradition) poses a certain exegetic problem because here we have the greatest

²⁷ Cf. M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie* [*On Eucharist and Prayer*], transl. M. Tarnowska, Kraków 1987, pp. 20, and 24.

²⁸ See: X. Leon-Dufour, *Czyńcie to na Moją pamiątkę* [*Do This in Memory of Me*], “W Drodze” 1984/4, p. 25; J.-L. Marion, *Bóg bez bycia* [*God Without Being*], transl. M. Frankiewicz, Kraków 1996, p. 236, where the contemporary philosopher aptly puts it: “The memorial makes the past a decisive reality for the present.” See more: his reflections on the subject of memorial in the biblical sense in relation to the Eucharist, J.-L. Marion, *Bóg bez bycia...*, pp. 234–238.

²⁹ Cf. R. Cantalamessa, *Pascha naszego zbawienia. Tradycje paschalne Biblii oraz pierwotnego Kościoła* [*The Passover of our Salvation. The Paschal Traditions in the Bible and the Early Church*], transl. M. Brzezinka, Kraków 1998, p. 31; M. Kunzler, *Liturgia Kościoła* [*Liturgy of the Church*], transl. L. Balter, Poznań 1999, p. 20.

discrepancy between the texts of both traditions,³⁰ which liturgical researchers on their part try to explain, among other things, by the differences in the liturgical practice of individual communities.³¹

The reference of Saint Paul to the tradition received from the Lord (“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you” – 1Cor 11:23) is indicated as an important and conclusive argument for the authenticity of these words of Jesus, where he makes credible to the community his message about the institution of the Eucharist as originating from Jesus.³² The words “I received” used by Paul in this verse (*parelabon*) and “handed on” (*paredoka*) are technical terms in the Apostolic Church (cf. 1Cor 11:2; 15:3), and also in Rabbinical Judaism, meaning the process of transmission of sacred traditions.

It is also worth recalling at this point how important it was for Paul to remain in unity with the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem, with Peter, James and John (cf. Gal 1:18-19; 2:1-2.6-9). It is therefore hard to suppose that he would not be in agreement with them on such a fundamental issue as the tradition of the Lord’s Supper.³³ It is also difficult to consider it historically possible that the first Christian communities would have been able to develop the sacramental realism of the words of the institution of the Eucharist so quickly on their own – for the relevant Pauline written record was created within a maximum of a dozen years after Jesus’ death – and that Paul only took it over from them as a tradition from the Lord. We can therefore be sure that Paul here faithfully transmits the injunction of Jesus.³⁴ Moreover, the language and style – especially the conciseness of form – of Paul’s pericope about the institution of the Eucharist – is clearly different from the language and style of the entire text of

³⁰ For more information on this issue: J. Drozd, *Ostatnia Wieczerza Nową Paschą* [*The Last Supper as the New Passover*], Katowice 1977, pp. 120–140.

³¹ Cf. J.A. Jungmann, *Liturgia pierwotnego Kościoła...*, op. cit., p. 60.

³² Cf. W. Klaiber, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, Neukirchen–Vluyn 2011, pp. 183, 186; M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian...*, op. cit., p. 367; R. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical and Systematic Perspective*, Chicago 2004, p. 33, footnote 1.

³³ Cf. R. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23. By the way, it is worth noting here that the liturgy of the early Church was based precisely on Tradition – all the provisions of Scripture about the institution were only written in the second half of the first century, so at least one, or perhaps two generations of Christians celebrated the Eucharist based on Tradition alone; cf. G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London–New York 2007, p. 3.

³⁴ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 39, footnote 46; Benedykt XVI, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, op. cit., pp. 128–130; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben...*, op. cit., p. 28; M. Stuflesser, *Eucharistie. Liturgische Feier und theologische Erschließung*, Regensburg 2013, pp. 32–34; D. Brzeziński, „Chrystus wczoraj, dziś, i na wieki”..., op. cit., pp. 141–145.

the First Letter to the Corinthians, and this suggests that it is not composed by Paul, but comes from the transmission of an earlier tradition.³⁵

Let us now move on to the very interpretation of Jesus' exegetic command "Do this in memory of me." This sentence consists of two parts. The first is the formula "do this," which is known from the Old Testament, where it was used in the sense of calling for a repetition of a rite (e.g. Ex 29:35; Lb 4:19; 15:11-13). Also, the verb "do" itself (Hebrew: *asah*) combined with the noun "Passover" meant the fulfilment of the Passover ritual.³⁶ The use of this formula by Jesus with the cultic term "memorial" reinforces its ritual sense, while its rootedness in the ritual of the Old Covenant allows us here to read Jesus' command as a call to repeat the new ritual he instituted – in the form of a sequence of his actions and words – in the cult of the New Covenant.³⁷ The sacred dimension of this new ritual also emphasises the link with the proclamation of the Lord's death, as St Paul does in his account (1Cor 11:26), since the verb "proclaim" (*katangelo*) in Paul's writings and the Acts of the Apostles always makes liturgical sense in terms of the solemn proclamation of a salvific event, where the reference to this event causes ever new effects of God's salvific action in the Church. Thus, in this verse, "to proclaim the death of the Lord" means precisely "to make it present in the liturgical action."³⁸

This brings us to the analysis – the most important for us – of the second part of Jesus' injunction "in my remembrance (memorial)." The phrase *eis anamnesin* itself appears literally in the Greek text of the Old Testament only four times (Lv 24:7; Ps 38[37]:1; Ps 70[69]:1; Wis 16:6). Nowhere, however, does it have the meaning given to it by Jesus in the texts of the institution: the remembrance of an individual person through the rite of a feast.³⁹ The key to understanding Jesus' command – a command that has no previous analogy – is the Hebrew concept of memorial – *zikkaron* – many aspects of which we have presented earlier. Particularly the divine provision for the festive ritual of Passover prescribed by Moses (Ex 12:14) shows us the source of the tradition in which the words of Jesus are rooted. Here we see how important it is for

³⁵ Cf. M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian...*, op. cit., pp. 364, 367.

³⁶ Cf. J. Drozd, *Ostatnia Wieczerza...*, op. cit., pp. 163, 164.

³⁷ Cf. W. Bösen, *Jesusmahl. Eucharistisches Mahl. Endzeitmahl. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Lukas*, Stuttgart 1980, pp. 61–63; R. Pindel, *Obecność Pana...*, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁸ Cf. M. Thurian, *Leucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 209–212; J. Drozd, *Ostatnia Wieczerza...*, op. cit., pp. 167–172; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben...*, op. cit., pp. 35–36; W. Klaiber, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, op. cit., pp. 184–185.

³⁹ Cf. R. Pindel, *Obecność Pana...*, op. cit., p. 162.

understanding the words of the institution to place them behind the synoptic Gospels in the Paschal context.

Thanks to this, Jesus' command to repeat the rite he instituted as a memorial is read in the full light that Jewish tradition gives it. The formula "Do this in memory of me" is clear to the Jewish mentality because, above all, it is deeply inscribed in the annual rite of the most important holiday – Passover. Thus, when Jesus gave this injunction to his Apostles, they understood it unequivocally as a call to celebrate the new Passover established by the Lord at the Last Supper.⁴⁰ The Hebrew *zikkaron* has a much deeper meaning than the Greek *anamnesis*, which in extra-biblical Greek usually meant only an annual remembrance of someone or something in the sense of remembering a past event. A remembrance (*anamnesis*) from the words of the Institution is not, therefore, an act of mind to bring to mind the event of the Last Supper or the memory of Jesus' death.

It is worth recalling here that Semitic languages are dynamic languages and express above all action.⁴¹ When Jesus spoke in the context of the ritual of the Jewish Passover, the words instituting his memorial – *zikkaron* – he clearly indicated that this was not just about some kind of reminding liturgical ritual, but about experiencing the presence of the saving God here and now, as the Jews experienced during Passover. At the same time, however, while preserving the continuity of tradition, Jesus is transposing Jewish Passover, explaining in the words of his "Haggadah" his actions over bread and wine, which have no previous analogy in Jewish custom. His memorial is already something ontologically new because it not only fills, but also exceeds the Jewish Passover. It should be noted here that Jesus' command, unlike the command in the Book of Exodus (12:24-25), does not concern only the repetition of the rite itself, but when He says, "Do it in memory of me," He emphasizes in this act His person – His presence at this feast, and not just the memory of His salvific work.⁴²

The latter aspect is worth developing further. So far, in the analysis of the words "in memory of me" (*eis ten emen anamnesin*) we have placed emphasis on the word *anamnesis* (memorial). Now we should also consider how to interpret this memorial as a memorial of Jesus, i.e. what is the full meaning of the term "in my remembrance/memory" (*ten emen*) in the command of Jesus. Two main

⁴⁰ Cf. B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, New York 2011, p. 73.

⁴¹ Cf. J. Czerski, *Biblijny przekaz...*, op. cit., p. 11.

⁴² Cf. X. Leon-Dufour, *Czyńcie to na Moją pamiątkę*, op. cit., pp. 26–28; W. Bösen, *Jesusmahl...*, op. cit., pp. 64–69; G. Strzelczyk, *Sakrament Eucharystii* [*Sacrament of the Eucharist*], [in:] *Znaki Tajemnicy. Sakramenty w teorii i praktyce Kościoła* [*Signs of Mystery. Sacraments in the Theory and Practice of the Church*], K. Porosło, R.J. Woźniak (eds.), Kraków 2018, pp. 373–374.

lines of interpretation are pointed out here by such classic authors as Joachim Jeremias and Max Thurian.⁴³

Jeremias interprets Jesus' words "Do this in memory of me," translating them into the following sense: "do this so that God may remember me." The possessive pronoun "my" is interpreted in the sense that Jesus is the object of memorial before God. Going on, Jeremiah refers to the prayer of the Third Blessing in the Paschal Rite, where there is a request for God to remember the Messiah. Referring to Jesus as the Messiah, Jeremiah believes that the essence of the command to repeat the memorial of Jesus is to ask God that Christ the Messiah come and realize His kingdom. The Eucharistic liturgy is therefore above all a cry for the Parousia – for the coming of Christ in glory, but it is also already a sacramental experience of the Parousia because it is the sacramental coming of Jesus that anticipates and prepares His final coming. Jeremiah points to Paul's phrase from 1Cor 11:26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes," which comes immediately after the command of anamnesis. The testimony of the Eucharist of the first Christians of the *Didache* also points to this eschatological dominant feature.⁴⁴

We can therefore see that for Jeremias, the core of the Eucharistic liturgy as a memorial is the expectation of eschatological fulfilment by appealing through God to the salvific death of Jesus. The value of such an understanding of the memorial of Jesus is to emphasise that the salvation made present in the Eucharist is at the same time a reality expected in the final fulfilment of the Parousia.⁴⁵

Thurian, starting from the Old Testament, and especially the Paschal understanding of the memorial, reads the meaning of the command to repeat the memorial of Jesus differently from Jeremias, interpreting it in words: "do this as my memorial."⁴⁶ For him, the memorial of Jesus understood in this way is above all, like the Jewish Passover, a liturgical act that makes the Lord and His salvific work present in a celebrating community. This act is also a memorial of the Father's only sacrifice of his Son, who, as High Priest, intercedes in heaven, offering his sacrifice to the Father. This is Thurian's original approach to the meaning of the memorial of Jesus. Referring to the Old Testament *zikkaron*,

⁴³ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 38–42.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, op. cit., pp. 240–246; L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., p. 113; W. Świerżawski, *Dynamiczna „pamiątka” Pana...*, op. cit., p. 220.

⁴⁵ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 42; R. Pindel, *Obecność Pana...*, op. cit., pp. 164–165; R. Cantalamessa, *Pascha naszego zbawienia...*, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴⁶ M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 175. However, at the same time he does not contradict Jeremias's formula – see: M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii...*, op. cit., p. 26.

the Eucharistic Memorial understood in this way is both a memorial in the sense of reminding us of Jesus and his work, our remembrance before the Father, and the Son's intercession before the Father for us. This reference to the heavenly liturgy also indicates that the memorial is not only the sacramental presence of the salvific work of the past, but also the anticipation of its future eschatological completion.⁴⁷

Although Thurian's interpretation is much more widely accepted than Jeremiah's theses, it should also be noted that the two attempts to explain the meaning of the words "in memory of me" are not contradictory, but they place different accents. What both authors have in common is, above all, an innovative approach to the Jewish understanding of the memorial and a move beyond the classic understanding of the words "in memory of me" in a sense that only pointed to Jesus as the creator of this memorial as a new ritual.

Let us therefore try to summarise our biblical inquiries. It is clear from the exegesis of the texts on the institution of the Eucharist that Jesus' intention was to leave to his disciples a new ritual that grew out of the Paschal tradition, which would be a memorial (*anamnesis*) of his sacrifice on the cross. From the juxtaposition of this logical sequence of biblical links, linking the concept of the memorial in the Old Testament with its use in the words of the institution of the Eucharist, we can draw the first conclusions as to the nature of the memorial as a Eucharistic anamnesis as understood by its author, Jesus.

In instituting the rite of the New Passover in the Cenacle on the eve of His death and ordering disciples present there that it be repeated in His memorial, the disciples who were Jews, Jesus referred to their religious experience, and especially to the celebration of the Passover, in which the category of memorial – *zikkaron* – is central. The new rite instituted by Jesus at the time is neither a simple continuation of the Jewish Passover nor some form of development within the Jewish tradition. Jesus, in uttering a new *haggadah* explaining His gestures over bread and wine, does not repeat the old ritual, but makes it original, completely new in its form and essence. Thus, the event of the institution of the Eucharist, although inscribed in the Jewish paschal ritual, has its own meaning and clear independence from it, which, through the injunction of repetition (memorial) contained in Jesus' words, has already led to the emergence of its own Eucharistic ritual in apostolic times.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 177; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 40; W. Świerżawski, *Dynamiczna „pamiętka” Pana...*, op. cit., pp. 218–219.

⁴⁸ See more: Benedykt XVI, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, op. cit., pp. 151–157. Cf. D. Brzeziński, *„Chrystus wczoraj, dziś, i na wieki”...*, op. cit., pp. 136–137.

Just as for the Jews, the Passover was not just a verbal reminder of historical events, but a living actualisation of God's saving action during the night of the Exodus, so for the disciples of Jesus, the death of the Lord became a fact that was remembered in a cultic way. Jesus on the cross fulfilled the prophecy of John the Baptist about himself – "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29) – and became, especially in the account of the Gospel of John the Apostle, the perfect Passover lamb, whose blood has the power of salvation and expiation.⁴⁹

We have shown that Jesus deliberately uses the terms known from the Old Testament's cultic language in relation to the anticipation of His sacrifice of the cross, a memorial of which He left to His disciples during the Last Supper. In particular, the terms "body given" and "blood shed," as well as the "blood of the Covenant" – as an indication of the antitype sacrifice of Moses – directly link the rite of the Eucharistic feast to the sacrifice of the Cross, which has an expiatory character, as emphasised by the words "for the forgiveness of sins." Thus, each time the Eucharistic anamnesis gives the participants of the liturgy a share in the sacrifice of Christ.

The link between Eucharistic anamnesis and the sacrifice of the Cross is even more evident in the text of 1Cor 11:25-27, which has already been discussed, albeit in a slightly different aspect. Its most important part in this context is verse 26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes." This sentence is a logical conclusion from the final words of the consecration formula written by Paul just before it, where the emphasis is on the word "remembrance" – (memorial – *anamnesis*). This is indicated by the conjunction "because" (*gar*). Thus Jesus' command to celebrate His memorial – the Eucharist – is carried out in a sacrificial feast, in which one eats the bread of which Jesus said "this is my body given for you" and drinks from the cup which He called "the New Covenant in my blood,"⁵⁰ and the purpose of this ritual is to declare the death of the Lord.⁵¹ As has already been pointed out, the word *katangéllete* – "you proclaim" – has a sacred meaning in the New Testament; it is always a solemn proclamation of the salvific event performed by Jesus. This proclamation is not just a report of a fact but conveys to listeners the consequences of this salvific fact: in this act of proclamation

⁴⁹ Cf. S. Lyonnet, *Eucharistie et vie chrétienne. Quelques aspects bibliques du mystère eucharistique*, Paris 1993, pp. 49–51.

⁵⁰ This is also confirmed in Paul's epistle: 1Cor 10:16-17.

⁵¹ This relation is maintained by the ancient liturgies: the Egyptian liturgy of St Mark and the West Syrian from Book VIII of *Apostolic Constitutions* – see: L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 240, 242.

God becomes an acting subject. This word, then, indicates here the dynamic presence, in a sacramental way, of the salvific event of the sacrifice of the cross.⁵²

In order to understand this more profoundly and to complete the image of the New Testament's understanding of memorial, it is still necessary to refer in this context to the promise of Jesus: "The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you" (Jn 14:26). The word "will remind" used here (*hypomnesei*) means, in biblical language, much more than just activating memory: it is an act of actualising and deepening of the sense of previously known facts,⁵³ and at the same time the word suggests and emphasizes the action of a reminder.⁵⁴

Looking at this promise of Jesus in relation to his other statements about the Holy Spirit, we can read this function of "reminding" as a dynamic representation of Christ's salvific action in the Church, not only in his words but also in the sacraments.⁵⁵ Thus, the word "remind" can be referred to its Semitic equivalent of *zikkaron* in the depths of its biblical meaning, and that is what it means that the Holy Spirit is "the living memory of the Church,"⁵⁶ it is to the one who fully "reminds" the disciples of the meaning of the words of the institution of the Eucharist uttered by Jesus and, in the Eucharistic anamnesis, makes it possible to effectively carry out the command "Do this in memory of me (*anamnesis, zikkaron*)."⁵⁷ At this point we can already see clearly that the Christian understanding of memorial expressed in the liturgical anamnesis, thanks to the involvement of the Holy Spirit, goes significantly beyond the original (*zikkaron*) taken from the Old Testament liturgy.

⁵² See more: D. Brzeziński, „Chrystus wczoraj, dziś, i na wieki”..., op. cit., pp. 133–134; cf. G. Strzelczyk, *Sakrament Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 350; M. Blaza, *Kościół w stanie epiklezy* [*The Church in the Epiclesis*], Kraków 2018, pp. 87–88.

⁵³ Cf. A. Jankowski, *Jedno z doniosłych zadań Ducha Parakleta – „przypominać”* [*One of the most important tasks of Paraclete is 'to remind'*], "Anamnesis" 4 (1997/1998), no. 15, pp. 37–39.

⁵⁴ Cf. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu* [*Great Greek-Polish New Testament Dictionary*], Warszawa 1995, p. 629 – headword "hypomimnesko;" p. 627 – headword "hypo."

⁵⁵ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Eucharystia jako pamiątka...*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵⁶ CCC 1099.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. Czerski, *Znaki sakramentalne w Nowym Testamencie* [*Sacramental Signs in the New Testament*], Opole 1989, p. 13; W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „pamiątka” Pana...*, op. cit., p. 270.

The sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist as a memorial in the light of the Letter to the Hebrews

We have already shown that there is a fundamental ontological difference between the Jewish Passover festival and the rite of Christ's Passover, which goes beyond novelty in form and content. What else is it? Well, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews gives us a fundamental clue in the search for a deeper answer to this question, where we find the only place in the New Testament, apart from the texts of the institution of the Eucharist, in which the word *anamnesis* (Heb 10:3) is used.

This verse, which speaks of the memorial or reminding (*anamnesis*) of sins, is within the context of a greater argument about the superiority of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ over the worship of the Old Covenant (Heb 7:1-10:18).⁵⁸ The content of this verse refers specifically to the practice of confessing the sins of all Israel by the high priest over the scapegoat (see: Lev. 16:21) on the feast of Yom Kippur. Thus, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, in his introduction, links in an innovative way the theme of Christ's expiatory sacrifice of the cross with the sacrifice for sins made on the Day of Atonement.⁵⁹

The whole of this part of the letter can be summarised in the following two conclusions. The Old Covenant did not have, through its bloody sacrifices, a real possibility to forgive sins – it could only confess them – to “remind” of them before God, but these actions and the sacrifices associated with them had to be repeated constantly because they were imperfect (Hebrews 10:4-11). Only the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross “once for all” (Heb 10:10,12; cf. 7:27) took away all sins.⁶⁰

Here opens up a fundamental question regarding the Eucharist: if Christ, as the High Priest of the New Covenant, made the sacrifice “once for all” (Heb 7:26-27), how can we regard every Eucharist as a sacrifice and as a propitiation? Yes, Christ's sacrifice is perfect and therefore unique, unlike the sacrifices

⁵⁸ It is worth noting that some exegeses consider the Eucharist to be the main theme of this epistle in general, and its Eucharistic doctrine had a significant impact on the theology and liturgy of the Eucharist in the Eastern Fathers; R. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb...*, op. cit., p. 70, the author also points out two places in Heb 6:4 and 13:10 directly referring to the Eucharist – pp. 75–76. Cf. R. Barron, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 93–95.

⁵⁹ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 202; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben...*, op. cit., pp. 72–75; G. Strzelczyk, *Sakrament Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 357.

⁶⁰ See more: R. Bogacz, *Dzielo zbawienia w ludzkiej krwi Jezusa według Listu do Hebrajczyków [The Work of Salvation by the Human Blood of Jesus according to the Letter to the Hebrews]*, Kraków 2007, pp. 121–124, 164–172.

of the Old Covenant, which required constant repetition, but it has the endless permanence of His Resurrection and Ascension. This is confirmed by the text of this whole part of the Letter to the Hebrews, which states that the priesthood of Christ is not only a sacrifice on the cross, but that it found its fulfilment after the Ascension only when he “offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God” (10:12).⁶¹ Thus his priesthood is different from that of the priests of the Old Covenant, because it is eternal (7:24), so that “he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them” (7:25; cf. 9:24; Rom 8:34, 1J 2:1-2).

This last sentence shows us the link between the enduring priesthood of Christ and the idea of a memorial. Christ “enter[ed] into (...) heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf” (9:24; cf. 6:19-20; Acts 7:56). He “lives forever” and, as “high priest,” presents to the Father His only and perfect sacrifice in the true tabernacle (cf. Heb 8:1-2; 9:12).⁶² His present priesthood in heaven is an intercession before the Father – an enduring, fully effective living memorial (*anamnesis*) of the only sacrifice of the Cross.⁶³ It is here that we find an in-depth biblical argumentation to guarantee the eternal effectiveness of the Eucharistic anamnesis (memorial).

However, how can we understand the Eucharist as a real sacrifice in the face of such an absolute statement that Jesus made a sacrifice “once for all”? The Greek word *ephapax* – “once for all” – appears three times in the Letter to the Hebrews (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and always expresses the unique and ultimate character of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, but also the permanent sanctification of God’s people through Christ’s entrance into the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 10:12-14). If, therefore, this sacrifice, made in a unique and perfect way “once for all,” extends from the Cross to “heaven itself,” where Christ entered, “that he might now appear before God on our behalf” (Heb 9:24), we can see that

⁶¹ Only the Letter to the Hebrews emphasises that Jesus enters the heavenly sanctuary in order to offer his own blood (9:12). For more on the meaning of the Ascension for the liturgy: J. Corbon, *Liturgia – źródło wody życia [Liturgy – the Source of the Water of Life]*, transl. A. Foltńska, Poznań 2005, pp. 56–63.

⁶² In this context we should consider the sacramental ministry of the New Covenant priests *in persona Christi* – see: R. Barron, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 95–96. Cf. CCC 1548; John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, no. 8, op. cit., 382.

⁶³ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 143–144. See also: E. Schillebeeckx, *Chrystus Sakrament spotkania z Bogiem [Christ as the Sacrament of the encounter with God]*, transl. A. Zuberbier, Kraków 1966, p. 84 – “Christ is glorified by the sacrifice of the cross placed in glory (...). And this glorified Christ is ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’” (Heb 13:8).

it has become eternal.⁶⁴ Literally this “to appear” is in the original rendered by the verb *emfanidzo* meaning “to make oneself visible” – Christ stands before the Father in our name and shows him the stigmata of his torment, makes his sacrifice constantly visible.

Let us note that, in such a context, the term “once for all” cannot be read statically in the sense of its relation to the past: in other words, with emphasis on “once.” If we place emphasis on the word “for all,” we discover that the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice does not mean that it is just some isolated fact from the past, but it is above all a historical fact, the effects of which, however, continue uninterruptedly through the eternal priesthood of Christ in heaven. Yes, the formula “once for all” underlines the absolute, complete and enduring nature of Christ’s sacrifice, but this does not imply the view that this unique event in history cannot be recalled, experienced and made present in various ways because, as we have shown, it also lasts “for all [times],” through Christ’s constant intercession up to the Parousia (Heb 9:28; 10:12-13).⁶⁵ Furthermore, the same Christ who “took his seat forever at the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12), is at the same time present in his Church, as confirmed by Scripture in many places (e.g. Mt 28:20; Jn 15:4; Acts 9:5; Eph 1:23). The sacrifice of Christ in this sense is therefore a unique and exceptional act, but also a dynamic one, since it appears to be the beginning and the source of the eternal work of Redemption, which can be experienced by anyone who approaches the Father through the Son. In this sense, we can say that Christ’s only sacrifice on the cross is also an eternal sacrifice.⁶⁶

At this point we come to the link between the whole argument of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews about the “once for all” sacrifice, giving forgiveness of sins, and the Eucharist.⁶⁷ Well, recalling the words of the institution of the Eucharist, which in every version – as we have shown – referred to Christ’s expiatory sacrifice, words which in Matthew’s particular way spoke directly of the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28), we see a link between the “forgiveness

⁶⁴ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Eucharystia jako pamiątka...*, op. cit., p. 28: “the sacrifice of Christ, a unique event, accomplished *ephapax*, that is, “once for all,” fills the time and space of human history with its salvific presence.”

⁶⁵ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150 – the author points out the error of the Protestants during the Reformation, who considered this “once for all” from a purely historical perspective, without reference to the eternal priesthood of Christ in heaven, and at the same time the author shows the ecumenical opportunity offered by the new reading of this formula. Cf. R.F. Taft, *Over the East and the West...*, op. cit., pp. 27–28, 37–38.

⁶⁶ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit.; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta...*, op. cit., p. 114; J. Corbon, *Liturgia*, op. cit., p. 53; R.F. Taft, *Over the East and the West...*, op. cit., pp. 322, 324.

⁶⁷ Cf. R. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, op. cit., p. 87.

of sins” and memorial.⁶⁸ In the rite of the memorial of the New Covenant, in contrast to the rite of the Old Covenant – which was the starting point of our analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews – the memorial (*anamnesis*) is no longer just a reminder of sins (Hebrews 10:3), but it is about the forgiveness of sins. In the Eucharist, the Church experiences the Father’s mercy, presenting sacramentally the only sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins made by the Son on the cross. Of course, the forgiveness of sins is the fruit of this unique act of sacrifice on the cross, but this sacrifice can be made present because it is constantly present before the Father in heaven in the eternal liturgy of the Son – a priest for ever, who continues in the state of sacrifice.⁶⁹ In the light of the Letter to the Hebrews, it is not possible, as we have already shown, to regard Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and the forgiveness of sins resulting from this sacrifice, as an isolated act alone that has been done in the past, but as a work of Christ that continues and results in sanctification in all sacramental acts⁷⁰ (Heb 9:14; 10:10.14⁷¹). Let us stress this once again: making Christ’s only sacrifice present is possible because the Risen Lord has entered into the glory of heaven “for us,⁷² to become High Priest for ever and forever like Melchizedek” (Heb 6:20).

Conclusions

In view of the results of the exegetic and theological analysis of the biblical texts presented here, we can call the Eucharist a true sacrifice; it is not an independent sacrifice with power or effect in itself, but it has its salvific power from Christ’s only sacrifice, which it presents sacramentally and makes present.⁷³ The Eucharist is a sacrifice in the sense that it is the memorial-anamnesis of

⁶⁸ Cf. M. Thurian, *L’eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 201. This relation also emphasises the joint use of words ‘blood’ and ‘covenant,’ which appear together in NT only in the texts instituting the Eucharist and in the Letter to the Hebrews. The Eucharistic allusions to the term “blood of the covenant” in the verses Heb 9:20; 10:29 are indicated by R. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*, op. cit., p. 72.

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia. Sakramenty, Kościół, Najświętsza Panna Maryja. Historia dogmatów* [*Signs of Salvation. Sacraments, Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary. History of Dogmas*], vol. 3, transl. P. Rak, Kraków 2001, p. 275.

⁷⁰ This idea is also confirmed by 1J 2:1-2.

⁷¹ Particularly the verse Heb 10:14 in the original speaks of those who are “being consecrated” – see: *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament...*, op. cit., p. 1061.

⁷² Literally “on our behalf” – see: *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament...*, op. cit., p. 1045.

⁷³ See: John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, no. 8, op. cit., pp. 381–382; John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, op. cit., no. 11–12.

Christ crucified, risen and interceding for us before the Father with His only sacrifice. In other words, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because, in the liturgical act, the Church presents to the Father the Son's only sacrifice on the cross in communion with the heavenly intercession of Christ himself. The Eucharist is therefore a sacrifice, since on the one hand it is a liturgical memorial (*anamnesis*) to the only sacrifice of the Cross, and on the other hand it is a reference to the eternal (ever-present) anamnesis of that sacrifice made by Christ to the Father in the heavenly sanctuary, which is most clearly expressed in the Eucharistic prayer by doxology.⁷⁴ It can therefore be said that, in a way, the "substance" – the essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice is the fully biblically understood memorial (*zikkaron*), or the anamnesis (gr. *anamnesis*) of Christ's salvific sacrifice on the cross,⁷⁵ and thus the Church, in celebrating the Eucharist, makes it present, constantly giving the faithful of all times access to this source of salvation. Here, too, we discover this fundamental ontological difference between the memorial in the life of the Old Covenant – particularly in Passover – and the Eucharistic anamnesis: The Eucharist, like Jewish Passover, is a memorial, but re-presents a completely different reality – the death and resurrection of Christ, who, through His Passover, gives liberation not in an earthly but in an eternal dimension.

Closing this theological and biblical sketch of the concept of a memorial, it should be stated that the memorial (*zikkaron, anamnesis*), understood in the Bible as the cultic effective presence of God's salvific works in history, is of central importance in the interpretation of the Eucharist, especially in the dimension of sacrifice. Such a significance of this biblical concept stems above all from the fact that Jesus Himself wanted the Eucharist to be a memorial (*anamnesis*), as He expressed in the words of the institution. At the same time, however, it must be made clear that the biblical category of memorial does not exhaust the whole mystery of the Eucharist, but is only one of the keys, models that bring us closer to this great mystery of faith;⁷⁶ although it must be acknowledged that, particularly in the aspect of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, it is

⁷⁴ Cf. M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 148–150, 206–207; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 232; M. Stuflesser, *Eucharistie*, op. cit., pp. 198–201; R. Barron, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., p. 92; CCC 1365–1366.

⁷⁵ See: L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., p. 165; R.F. Taft, *Over the East and the West...*, op. cit., p. 326.

⁷⁶ For more on the model of the Eucharist as a memorial and its place among other models: K.W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist*, New York-Mahwah 2005, pp. 122–143. For an overview of other contemporary proposals for translating the mystery of the Eucharist: R. Barron, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 134–141.

a key that links it incredibly closely to all dimensions of the Eucharistic mystery, and without it, it is therefore difficult to imagine today's Catholic theology of the Eucharist. It is even more important here to emphasise the importance of contemporary value in biblically understood theology of memorial for opening up new perspectives of rapprochement in ecumenical dialogue, especially for significant progress towards overcoming the Catholic-Protestant controversy in the study of the Eucharist as a sacrifice.⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ See more: J. Froniewski, *Jedność Kościoła urzeczywistniona w znaku wspólnoty eucharystycznej – cel, który się oddala? Stan dialogu katolicko-protestanckiego o Eucharystii jako ofercie 50 lat po Dekrecie o ekumenizmie [Unity of the Church Realised in the Sign of the Eucharistic Community – an Objective that is Moving Away? The State of Catholic-Protestant Dialogue on the Eucharist as a Sacrifice 50 Years After the Decree on Ecumenism]*, “Communio” Polish edition 35 (2015), no. 2 (190), pp. 35–59; J.A. Scampini, *Luther and the Eucharist. A Catholic re-reading in an ecumenical perspective*, [in:] *Vermitteltes Heil. Martin Luther und die Sakramente*, F. Körner, W. Thönissen (eds.), Paderborn–Leipzig 2018, pp. 119–142 (in particular pp. 133–134); T. Dieter, *Le dialogue luthéro-catholique sur l'eucharistie et la question de la communion eucharistique*, “Recherches de Science Religieuse” 107 (2019), no. 1, pp. 97–102.

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