

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 84:3-4

July/October 2020

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The Cross, the Atonement, and the Eucharist in Luke

Arthur A. Just Jr.

At the dedication of a new building at the Lutheran mission in Seine Bight, Belize, missionary Herbert Burch asked me to dedicate the new altar in the church. Because of the ongoing possibility of hurricanes, this new mission church is built on stilts, but for the dedication the congregants moved the ecclesiastical furniture outside under the church building to accommodate the crowds. This building is set in the midst of the village, with people walking by on the street in front and a school on one side of the church. So during the service, a few of the more curious wandered over and joined the congregation. As I read the words of the dedication in our *LSB Agenda*, I thought they would serve as a perfect introduction to this paper:

At the altar, we receive the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the altar of the cross and offer to God our sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving as the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, “Everyone who loves the name of the Lord and holds fast My covenant, their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a place of prayer for all peoples.”

And then I prayed:

O God, You delighted in the praises of Your faithful servants Abel, Noah, and Abraham and accepted the sacrifices offered on their altars. Look upon us and graciously accept the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we offer at this altar. Grant that the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and given us on this altar to eat and drink, will nourish and strengthen us until at the last we gather at the heavenly banquet to feast with the Lamb and all His saints; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.¹

If theology is done through the pastoral acts, if the saying *lex orandi, lex credendi*² means that the liturgy, preaching, and hymns constitute the faith of people, this blessing of an altar and the accompanying prayer confess that we partake of the atonement of Christ at the Eucharist. This essay will demonstrate that the New

¹ *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 272–273.

² Aidan Kavanagh in *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 91ff., suggests the fuller patristic maxim *lex supplicandi legem statuat credendi*.

Testament teaches this by investigating the relationship between the cross, atonement, and the Eucharist in Luke.

The Biblical Story as a Story of Blood and Sacrifice in the Presence of God

It seems incredible that there are theological forces in our church that prompted an exegetical symposium at Fort Wayne in 2020 addressing *the Cross, the Atonement, and the Wrath of God*. As Lutherans, how could these things not be unquestioned among us as central to the heart of our theology, the essence of biblical theology? How can Lutherans tell the story of the Bible apart from the cross and the atonement?³

And why is this true? Because I believe that a theology of presence is the overarching theme of biblical theology. The theme of divine presence is central to the Old Testament, and this theme continues into the New Testament with the birth of Jesus. In his infancy narrative, Luke accents that God's presence is moving from the temple to the infant conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Old Testament prepares for this movement of God's presence. God's presence in fire and cloud led the people during the exodus (Exod 13:21) and took up residence in the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–38) and later the temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11). Shortly before the first temple was destroyed, God's presence left it (Ezek 10). God promised that there would be an incarnation that would supersede the second temple (Hag 2; Zech 8–9). The Jerusalem temple would be destroyed in AD 70. No longer would God be present in the temple. The new temple is Jesus (John 1:14; 2:19–22), and wherever Jesus is, there is God offering the eschatological gifts that Israel received through the sacrifices at the dwelling place of God. "One of the critical issues facing the church in Luke's day was the shift in God's presence from the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple to the baby in the womb of the Virgin Mary at Jesus' conception and continuing in the flesh of Jesus, who is both God and man."⁴

But the theme of presence does not apply only to Luke. The incarnational and sacramental presence of Christ is at the center of Paul's theology.⁵ If one were to tell the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it begins with our first parents

³ For a definition of atonement, see Simon Gathercole, *Defending Substitution: An Essay on Atonement in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 14–15, "Christ's death for our sins *in our place, instead of us*, is in fact a vital ingredient in the biblical (in the present discussion, Pauline) understanding of atonement. . . . I am defining *substitutionary* atonement for the present purposes as Christ's death in our place, instead of us."

⁴ Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 26, 32.

⁵ Arthur A. Just Jr., "'The Elusive Presence': Death of Christ, Gospel, Liberation, Apocalyptic, Justification, Incorporation into Christ, and New Creation in Paul's Homily to the Galatians," unpublished paper for the 21st Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology, January 17, 2006.

dwelling in God's presence without fear or shame, then their fear and shame in God's presence from their disobedience and fall into sin, their expulsion from the Garden and God's presence, and finally the restoration of that presence with the incarnation (thus the angel Gabriel's command to Mary at the annunciation, "Be not afraid" [Luke 1:30]),⁶ so that through Christ's atoning death we could have the same hope offered the thief on the cross that "today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). And then that final promise of Revelation: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev 21:3-4). If this is true, that the story of the Bible is the story of God's presence among his people, then this story is also about the concept of holiness and what it means to enter the holy presence of God. One of the core values of first-century Judaism was God's holiness. The presence of God's holiness in creation and the temple was central to how Israel mapped its world. As Jerome Neyrey puts it in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, "Jesus as the cornerstone of the true temple becomes the new center of the map and all holiness is measured by proximity to him."⁷ Where Jesus is, there is God's holiness. For the Jews, to enter or approach God's holiness is to enter eschatological space.

And how does one enter God's holiness and draw near to his presence? By sacrifice and through blood. It's all about the blood, which is why the Epistle of Hebrews is so important to understanding the cross, the sacrifice, and the Eucharist in biblical theology. John Kleinig affirms this again and again in his commentary on Hebrews. He has an excursus on sacrifice and one on blood.⁸ He notes that there is no one word for sacrifice in the Old Testament, but the closest is the word "offering" that is derived from the verb meaning "come near." "An 'offering' is something that is 'brought near' to God at the altar in the tabernacle or temple,"⁹ that is, brought near into the presence of God. To enter the presence of God, one needed to sacrifice and enter through the blood. Here is how Kleinig connects sacrifice, presence, and blood by showing how the sacrifice of Jesus surpasses the sacrifices in the Old Testament because Jesus' sacrifice encompasses all of his work of redemption:

In the NT the death of Jesus is much more significant than the death of any animal in the OT. Jesus does God's will by presenting his body as a vicarious offering to atone for sin (10:5-14) and to free sinners from slavery to the fear of death by his death on their behalf (2:14-15). He tastes death on behalf of everyone (2:9) to redeem them from sin (9:15). But his self-sacrifice (9:26) is

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are the author's own translation.

⁷ Jerome Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 293.

⁸ John Kleinig, *Hebrews* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 256-262 and 433-437, respectively.

⁹ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 256.

much broader than just his death. It also includes the whole of his bodily life on earth (10:10, 14), his willing passive and active obedience to God with his prayers for deliverance from death (5:7–8), his presentation of himself with his blood before God in the heavenly sanctuary at his exaltation (9:12, 24–25), and the sprinkling of the congregation with his blood to cleanse their hearts from sin (9:14; 10:22; 12:24). His work “to atone” for sin (*ἰλάσκεισθαι*, 2:17) includes his ongoing heavenly ministry. In keeping with the sacrificial significance of his death and its ongoing relevance, the main emphasis in Hebrews is on cleansing, remission, and sanctification through his sacrificial blood (9:14, 22; 10:18, 29; 13:12).¹⁰

As Lutherans, how can we tell the story of the Bible without blood? As Hebrews reminds us in the climactic ninth chapter, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (9:22).

But there are other ways of telling the story, as our colleague at our sister seminary reminds us in his article from the Summer 2019 edition of *Concordia Journal*, “The Word of the Cross and the Story of Everything.” Joel Okamoto’s retelling of the biblical story is to show how Jesus’ “death bears on everything; it bears on God and his creation.”¹¹ This is a noble claim. He wants to show that the cross comprehends the entire biblical story—as he repeats again: “this is about everything—God and his creation.”¹² But in making this point, he seems to cut out the heart of the story, for his story is bloodless. To be more specific, the story of the Bible, what he calls “the story of everything,” is not defined by Christ’s atonement. He says as much in his summary of the story of everything:

So “Christ crucified” and the “word of the cross” can and should stand for more than Christ and his atoning death on the cross.

At this point, someone will ask: “How does atonement arise at all from the story of everything? As I followed the story, Jesus’s death is not atoning.” The point is well taken. The account of God and creation outlined here does not exclude that belief in Jesus’s death atoned for sins, but atonement in this sense does not drive the story.¹³

To be fair, Okamoto does *finally* refer to the blood one paragraph after the previous citation, but it reads as a subplot of the biblical story, not its center:

¹⁰ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 258.

¹¹ Joel Okamoto, “The Word of the Cross and the Story of Everything,” *Concordia Journal* (Summer 2019): 63.

¹² Okamoto, “The Word of the Cross,” 64.

¹³ Okamoto, “The Word of the Cross,” 64 (emphasis mine).

This is not to deny nor to minimize Jesus's death as an atoning sacrifice. Once you see that Jesus came and fulfilled all God's promises, it is easy to see that his blood shed on the cross is like the blood of a lamb at Passover, except more. His blood is like the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon the people (Ex 24), except more. His blood is like the blood of bulls and goats shed for sins, except more.¹⁴

This grudging acknowledgment that the blood of Jesus matters minimizes Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice because, as he says, "atonement in this sense does not drive the story." To be charitable, a conversation about the meaning of "in this sense" would be clarifying, but it is difficult to get beyond what frames "in this sense," namely, "atonement . . . does not drive the story." I wonder what Abel, Noah, and Abraham would say to this, whose sacrifices offered on their altars were accepted by God, or Zechariah or any of the Levitical priests who offered the daily atonement sacrifices in the temple at the third and ninth hours? Or what would Jesus say, whose destiny was Jerusalem and a cross to atone for sins? So this essay will tell a different story of the Bible, that "the story of everything" is driven by the atonement, driven by blood and sacrifice, and finally by the Eucharist, which is where we partake of Jesus' blood and sacrifice.

Atonement in Luke among Twentieth-Century Scholars

But claiming that the atonement does not drive the biblical story is not new. In fact, it is a common theme in twentieth-century biblical scholarship. In a 1982 seminar on Luke's Gospel I attended as a graduate student, Professor Abraham Malherbe announced that most Lukan scholars believed that the evangelist had no atonement theology since he did not include in his Gospel what Matthew and Mark included in theirs, that is, the clearest statement on the atonement in the Synoptics: "Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*ὥσπερ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν* Matt 20:28; cf. Mark 10:45). Malherbe proceeded to deconstruct this erroneous claim, and as he did so, assigned me a paper on the passion statements in Luke 24, as I was the only Lutheran in the class and he was confident that I would read Luke through the atonement and the theology of the cross. Thus began my pilgrimage to Emmaus, and the rest of my story is an ongoing feast. So the beginning of my studies of Luke began with the atonement and the cross.

¹⁴ Okamoto, "The Word of the Cross," 64. Because Okamoto does not understand atonement and blood as driving the story, it is not surprising that he makes no reference to the Eucharist in connection with his understanding of "the story of everything."

In the introductory section on the theology of the cross in his commentary on Luke, Joseph Fitzmyer catalogs the scholarly opinion of the first half of the twentieth century on Luke's lack of an atonement theology.¹⁵ "Years ago," Fitzmyer writes, "when C. H. Dodd was discussing various manifestations of the early kerygma in the New Testament, he wrote: 'The Jerusalem *kerygma* does not assert that Christ died for our sins. The result of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the forgiveness of sins, but this forgiveness is not specifically connected with his death.'"¹⁶ In 1953, Hans Conzelmann carried this forward into Luke's Gospel in his *The Theology of St. Luke* when he wrote: "There is no trace of any Passion mysticism, nor is any direct soteriological significance drawn from Jesus' suffering or death. There is no suggestion of a connection with the forgiveness of sins."¹⁷ Earlier J. M. Creed in *The Gospel according to St. Luke* was even more explicit: "Most striking is the entire absence of a Pauline interpretation of the Cross. The Marcan saying concerning the death of the Son of Man as 'a ransom for many' (Mk. x. 45), and the declaration at the Last Supper that the cup is 'the blood of the Covenant poured out for many,' are absent. There is indeed no *theologia crucis* beyond the affirmation that the Christ must suffer, since so the prophetic scriptures had foretold."¹⁸ As late as 1975, W. G. Kümmel flatly stated, "In Luke the death of Jesus neither has the character of a sacrifice nor is it understood as an atoning work."¹⁹ Even the more conservative I. Howard Marshall affirms Luke's lack of atonement theology in his book *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, "Luke has incorporated traditions about the atoning work of the Servant; there is no evidence that he himself has positively evaluated the Servant concept in terms of redemptive suffering. . . . While Paul has used other ways of expressing the atoning significance of the death of Jesus, Luke has little to offer in this respect."²⁰

Luke Was Written from the Eucharist to a Church at the Eucharist

Both Professor Malherbe as well as Joseph Fitzmyer show evidence in Luke that the evangelist does indeed have an atonement theology, but they do not approach

¹⁵ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke 1-9* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 22-23.

¹⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 25.

¹⁷ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (New York: Harper, 1967), 201.

¹⁸ J. M. Creed, *The Gospel according to St Luke: The Greek Text, with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1930), lxxii.

¹⁹ W. G. Kümmel, "Current Theological Accusations against Luke," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 16 (1975), 138.

²⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 172-173.

this question as I will—through the institution narrative of Luke’s Gospel. For in their deconstruction of the atonement debate in Luke, they do not accent that Luke wrote his Gospel from the Eucharist to a church at the Eucharist. What I mean is this: Luke’s Gospel is a book of the church, written for the church, to be used by the church in its proclamation of the Gospel to the unbaptized and the baptized. The community that receives Luke’s Gospel is a catechetical and eucharistic body. Luke was pastor of a eucharistic community in Philippi for seven years, between the “we-sections” in Acts (Acts 16:10–17, AD 51 to Acts 20:5–21:18, AD 58). Presiding over the Eucharist and preaching from Matthew’s Gospel, Luke writes his Gospel after his pastorate in Philippi out of that ecclesiological setting (around AD 58), so that the context in which Scripture is written and received is *liturgical and eucharistic*, that is, a church that worships Christ, who is present in the reading and preaching of the Word and the receiving of the body and the blood.²¹

It is also true that from Luke’s prologue there are two audiences who receive Luke’s Gospel. The first audience is the eyewitnesses who walked and talked with Jesus and were generally clueless about the meaning of the events they were witnessing with their own eyes. The *second audience* is the community of believers who received Luke’s Gospel. These are liturgical Christians who are living in a eucharistic community. They receive and use Luke’s Gospel in the context of liturgy. The difference between the first and second audiences is that Luke’s eucharistic community knows the end of the story—they know that Christ has gone to the cross, risen, and ascended, and that after Pentecost he is continually present in the church through his Spirit *at the Eucharist*. Jesus’ presence in his human and divine natures is just as real in his church as it was in his earthly ministry, one of the major themes of Luke’s Gospel.²²

Both Galatians and Hebrews were homilies preached in the context of the Eucharist.²³ Some commentators affirm this, that is, that the New Testament texts are liturgical and eucharistic. One of them is John Kleinig, whose hermeneutical principle for Hebrews offers this very important insight:

The liturgical setting of this sermon [Hebrews] colors how it is heard and understood both in its original context and in its present context. So, for example, if the congregation heard the words of Christ in the Lord’s Supper “this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you,” this would, no doubt, have influenced how they understood the mention of “the

²¹ Arthur A. Just Jr., “Luke’s Canonical Criterion,” *CTQ* 79 (2015): 245–250.

²² See Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 13–16.

²³ See Arthur A. Just Jr., “The Faith of Christ: A Lutheran Appropriation of Richard Hays’s Proposal,” *CTQ* 70 (2006): 3–15, and “Entering Holiness: Christology and Eucharist in Hebrews,” *CTQ* 69, (2005): 75–95.

new covenant” in 8:8; 9:15; 12:24; “the blood of the [new] covenant” in 10:29; “by/with the blood” in 10:19 and 13:20; and other references to the “blood” of Jesus, including “his own blood” in 9:12; “the blood of Christ” in 9:14; “the blood of sprinkling” of the “new covenant” in 12:24; and “through his blood” in 13:12.²⁴

The Institution Narrative as a Lens on Atonement in Luke

So we will use Luke’s institution narrative as a lens to see if Luke has an atonement theology. Almost everyone agrees that Luke is a later Gospel—after Matthew, for sure—written after Paul’s missionary journeys in AD 58–59. For this reason, the same critics who claim Luke has no atonement theology also accuse him of “early Catholicism.” Fitzmyer describes this designation:

It was used to describe those elements of the early Christian community which characterize it as an ordered institution of salvation, a church with sacraments, hierarchical offices, and a tradition involving a deposit of faith. It was used to characterize the picture of the church found in early patristic writers and in the Pastoral Epistles.²⁵

The accusation of “early Catholicism” is meant to be derogatory, but there is some truth that Luke writes about church matters to a church spreading throughout the world. I would like to use this claim against Luke of “early Catholicism” to turn the atonement debate on its head. As Luke is writing after Matthew and Mark to a more established church with her liturgical and eucharistic traditions more fully developed, he preserves that seminal text on the atonement in Matthew 20:28, “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” *in the context of his institution narrative*. Whereas Matthew and Mark refer to the atonement as the event that occurs at Calvary, Luke shows that this happens by the very body and blood of Christ given into death, which are present within Christian communities every time the Eucharist is celebrated.

Here is how he does it. First, a comparison of the institution narratives:

Matthew 26

26 Ἐσθιόντων δὲ αὐτῶν λαβὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἄρτον καὶ εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ δούς τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἶπεν· Λάβετε φάγετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. 27 καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Πίετε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες,

²⁴ Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 36.

²⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke 1–9*, 24.

28 τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν

Mark 14

22 Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν· Λάβετε, τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου. 23 καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἔπιον ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες. 24 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

Luke 22

19 καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων· Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 20 καὶ τὸ ποτήριον ὡσαύτως μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι, λέγων· Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινῆ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον.

1 Corinthians 11

23 Ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἣ παρεδίδοτο ἔλαβεν ἄρτον 24 καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν· Τοῦτό μου ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν. 25 ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι, λέγων· Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινῆ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε, ὡσαύτως ἐὰν πίνητε, εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν

Note the language after the cup in Matthew, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, the only place in the institution narratives in the New Testament where forgiveness is referenced, and the language of Luke after both the body and the cup:

τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον²⁶

Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινῆ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου, τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον²⁷

I. Howard Marshall notes that in Matthew “the word of interpretation over the cup states that the blood is poured out for many ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ (Matt. 26:28); this addition shows that Matthew understood the death of Jesus in terms of atonement for sin, but it is the only fresh indication of this fact in his Gospel”²⁸ (apart from the statement on atonement in Matthew 20:28).

²⁶ Paul is similar to Luke with his τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.

²⁷ Mark is similar to Luke with his τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

²⁸ Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 171.

Only Luke and Paul have the language of substitutionary atonement in the words over the bread: Jesus states that his body is given ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (“on behalf of you”). The language is reminiscent of the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus and the atonement offered by the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12.²⁹ But only in Luke does Jesus use the same language of vicarious atonement over the cup as he says his blood is shed ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν. But is this prepositional phrase, ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, substitutionary atonement language?

There is almost universal agreement that it speaks of Jesus’ death in substitution for us.³⁰ Luke T. Johnson puts it plainly in connection with the blood poured out: “For you: The sacrifice is vicarious. The phrase ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (‘for you’) is found in verse 19 and is repeated here; it means both ‘in place of you’ and even more ‘in your behalf.’”³¹ As you may recall, there has been much written about the shortened text of Luke’s institution narrative as one of Luke’s so-called “Western non-interpolations.” Those who hold that Luke has no atonement theology³² take the

²⁹ See Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 822.

³⁰ William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 846, classify it under “after expressions of suffering, dying, devoting oneself, etc. . . . So especially the death of Christ . . . for, in behalf of mankind, the world, etc.: Mk 14:24; Lk 22:19f.” They also refer to the preposition’s use in Galatians 1:4 in reference to the atonement, in other words, “w. gen. of the thing, in which case it must be variously translated ὑπὲρ (τῶν) ἁμαρτιῶν in order to atone for (the) sins or to remove them.” H. Riesenfeld in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 508–511, places Luke 22:19–20 in the section entitled: “After terms of sacrifice or dedication ὑπὲρ has the literal or transferred sense of ‘for’. . . . In christological sayings ὑπὲρ is used to show the thrust of the work of salvation. . . . The death and passion of Christ are for men and accrue to their favour. . . . Gal. 3:13 and 2 Cor. 5:21 are passages in which Paul develops the atoning significance of the death and passion of Jesus with the help of typological trains of thought.” In connection with the use of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in the institution narratives of Mark and Luke, Riesenfeld notes, “The allusion to Is. 53 must have been there before the translation of the eucharistic sayings into Greek, for ὑπὲρ does not occur in Is. 53:11f. in the LXX, though πολλοί does. Together with the complex symbolism of the eucharistic action the sense ‘for all’ interprets the death of Jesus as the saving act which is to the benefit of the people of God. . . . No matter how one may assess the direct influence of Is. 53:11f. on the self-awareness of Jesus and primitive Christian christology, the beneficial quality (ὑπὲρ) of the death of someone, even in the categories of Jewish martyr theology, can be understood only against the background of the sacrificial concepts of the Old Testament. Exclusively an act of self-sacrifice, the negative fact of death can become a positive event which may produce fruitful results for others.”

³¹ Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 339.

³² For example, I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord’s Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 37–38, notes: “Since, it is argued, he [Luke] had an aversion to an ‘atonement’ theology (as, it is suggested, may be seen by comparing his version of the saying of Jesus in Mk. 10:45 in Lk. 22:27 and by noting the omission of any theology of atonement in Acts, except for the vestige in Acts 20:28), he could have deliberately omitted a reference here to Jesus’ death for others.” He does counter this by saying: “The argument that he wanted to avoid any reference to the atoning death of Jesus is quite unconvincing since Luke has left other references to the death of Jesus for the disciples untouched.”

shorter *Verba* of Luke 22:19a: “And having taken bread, after giving thanks, he broke and gave to them, saying, ‘This is my body.’” For it is in the longer text that we have both substitution phrases, ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, “on behalf of you.”

And having taken bread, after giving thanks, he broke and gave to them, saying, “This is my body. [Luke 22:19a]

which is being given on behalf of you (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν); this do in my remembrance.”

And the cup, likewise, after the eating of the meal, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out on behalf of you (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν).” [Luke 19:b–20]

But Xavier Léon-Dufour counters those who take the shortened text by offering the following summary of the atoning significance of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in Luke 22, for he assumes the longer text is original:

In the Antiochene tradition [Paul and Luke] the body is immediately described as being “for you.” The critics are almost unanimous in understanding the words “for you” in light of the cultic model of expiation. That is: in speaking as he does, Jesus is presenting himself as the one who in dying offers God the true expiatory sacrifice by which human beings are really reconciled with God.³³

Luke’s References to the Death of Jesus in His Institution Narrative

What is also overlooked is that the theological meaning of the entire passion account is announced by the simple words, “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which it was necessary that the Passover lamb be sacrificed” (Luke 22:7) (Ἦλθεν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα τῶν ἀζύμων, ἣ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα). The narrative concerns two distinct yet related parallel events taking place simultaneously: a celebration of the Passover according to the old covenant (Exodus 12) and the institution of a new covenant to be commemorated by a new Meal, as Jesus will say: “This cup [is] the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). The hearer must keep both in mind as the narrative progresses. On the one hand, the evangelist is introducing the day on which the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the temple, reporting those things that would happen on an ordinary Passover. The feast has arrived (22:1), the Passover

³³ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. M. J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 120–121. However, Léon-Dufour, 123, shows that he does not agree with this. His disagreement is not that he does not think it is expiatory, but rather, that the accent is on Jesus “becoming their food and giving them life through himself. . . . The words are doubtless spoken with death on the horizon, but the death is a saving death. It is life, therefore, that provides the controlling perspective.”

lamb must be slain (22:7), and the Passover meal must be prepared and eaten (22:8–13) by God’s faithful people. By hearing the narrative with this in mind, the hearer approaches the three days—the Triduum—from the perspective of the disciples, who probably expected another Passover like those they had celebrated in previous years.

On the other hand, Luke points to Jesus’ death as the sacrificial Passover lamb who fulfills and renders obsolete the sacrifices of the Old Testament. This is the deeper and more important message of the narrative. *This Feast of Unleavened Bread* will be like no other. It falls on the day of Jesus’ passion. The Passover lamb whose blood atones for all is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The disciples prepared for this meal with expectations of celebrating another Passover with its fixed ritual of remembering God’s gracious deliverance from Egypt. But what the disciples experienced on this night in which Jesus was betrayed was not another Jewish Passover, but *Jesus’ Passover*, in which he took the fixed ritual of the Passover Seder and gave everything in this meal new meaning. He gave it *christological* meaning, as he interpreted the food at the meal, the story of the exodus, the broken bread, and the cup of blessing *in terms of himself*. He took the old Passover meaning, and he made it *his* meal by instituting a new meal that supersedes all previous meals of God’s table fellowship. Jesus is the Passover Lamb the people will now eat in, with, and under bread and wine!

This is *Jesus’ Passover* because on this night, the Lamb who must be sacrificed stands on the threshold of the new era of salvation. The old has passed away and the new has come. After this Passover, *Jesus’ Passover*, there will be no more need for the Jews to celebrate the Passover because as Paul says, “Christ, *our* Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός—1 Cor 5:7). In Christ, the world has passed over from death to life, and his life-giving flesh is now offered to Christians continually in this new Meal of his body and blood. This is the Passover for which all the previous Passovers were preparation and anticipation and the Passover whose sacrifice will be remembered and sung for all eternity: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain” (Rev 5:12).³⁴

Luke also uniquely frames the Last Supper with two references to the death of Jesus: in 22:15, where Jesus says he desired to eat the Passover with the disciples “before I suffer” (καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· Ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ’ ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν), and in 22:37, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12 to refer to his impending death: “And with transgressors he was reckoned” (Καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη). All of these are predictions of Jesus’ death. Jesus begins the meal

³⁴ See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 817–818.

by expressing his knowledge that he must die soon and ends the meal by pointing to the necessity of that death as fulfillment of the Scripture.³⁵

So at Luke's Last Supper, Jesus is teaching about himself as the sacrificial Passover Lamb in fulfillment of the Old Testament—the final fulfillment of the exodus deliverance (cf. “exodus” in Luke 9:31). Jesus' impending death signals the beginning of the new, eschatological era of salvation. By stating that the bread is his body “which is being *given on behalf of you*” (22:19) and the cup is the new testament in his blood, *poured out on behalf of you*, Jesus is interpreting the Passover meal as a prophecy of what he will do on the cross, which will then be applied to believers in the church's celebration of his Supper. Those Israelites who ate the first Passover, with the blood of the lamb smeared on their doorways, were in fact spared from God's judgment and his wrath; they then shared in the exodus deliverance from bondage. Those who now feast at the Table of the Lord receive the benefits earned by his crucified body and shed blood: with his body and blood they also receive deliverance from divine wrath, freedom from bondage to evil, and safe passage to the new promised land (cf. Hebrews 4).³⁶ What they do is participate in the benefits of the atonement in “the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and [now] given us on this altar to eat and drink.”³⁷

The Pastoral Character of “Given for You” and “Poured out for You”

Returning to the four institution narratives above, in connection with the cup Matthew and Mark use the word πολλῶν instead of Luke's ὑμῶν (Matt 26:28, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον; Mark 14:24, τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν).³⁸ Whereas Matthew and Mark accent the universal atonement, consistent with their atonement saying that “the Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom *for many*” (ἀντὶ πολλῶν), Luke makes it personal—“for you” (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν), for the disciples and transforms it into a liturgical statement that brings the universal atonement into the mouths of the disciples and us. Joachim Jeremias affirms this, “The ὑμῶν acts so that

³⁵ Luke is the only evangelist who frames the Triduum with meals, beginning the three days with Jesus' Passover, the final meal of the old era of salvation and the institution of a new meal, and the Emmaus meal, where Jesus now eats and drinks this new meal with his disciples in the kingdom of God.

³⁶ See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 832.

³⁷ *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272–273.

³⁸ On the atonement character of this phrase, περὶ πολλῶν, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966), 226–231. See also David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004).

each of the worshippers knows himself personally addressed by the Lord. The word of interpretation becomes a formula of distribution.”³⁹

And is this not the Lutheran way? Do we not say, “The body of Christ, given for you . . . The blood of Christ, shed for you”? For me, this is one of the most pastoral moments in the liturgy, in the ministry, where I am placing the body and blood of Christ into the mouths of the saints, and *they are at that moment participating in the benefits of the atonement of Christ.*⁴⁰

So this exegesis of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν in Luke’s institution narrative was intended to show that he does have an atonement theology but in a different way than Matthew and Mark’s statement that “the Son of Man came . . . to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt 20:28—δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν). Luke has taken the objective, historical event of atonement and placed that atonement in the mouths of his communicants.

Διακονία in the Lukan Dialogues following His Institution Narrative

So returning to the atonement statement in Matthew and Mark, where in Luke is the language of service? Only Luke preserves five dialogues of pastoral theology between Jesus and his disciples immediately following his institution narrative. It is the second dialogue in Luke 22:24–27 where an argument breaks out among the disciples over who is greatest and Jesus then calls them to humble service.

24 Ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ φιλονεικία ἐν αὐτοῖς, τὸ τίς αὐτῶν δοκεῖ εἶναι μείζων.

25 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς. Οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἐξουσιάζοντες αὐτῶν εὐεργέται καλοῦνται.

26 ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλ’ ὁ μείζων ἐν ὑμῖν γινέσθω ὡς ὁ νεώτερος, καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος ὡς ὁ διακονῶν.

27 τίς γὰρ μείζων, ὁ ἀνακείμενος ἢ ὁ διακονῶν; οὐχὶ ὁ ἀνακείμενος; ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν εἶμι ὡς ὁ διακονῶν.

24 And an argument also happened among them—the issue of who of them seems to be greatest.

25 But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those exercising authority over them are called benefactors.

26 You are not thus. But let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves.

³⁹ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 172–173.

⁴⁰ See LC V 33–35.

27 For who is greater, the one who reclines [at table] or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines? *But I am in the midst of you as the one who serves.*

“Service,” *διακονία*, in imitation of Christ who served humanity to the point of death, will be a mark of the ministry of the apostles. Here is the parallel to the language of *διακονία* in Matthew and Mark where Jesus says that “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Matt 20:28—ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι). Incredibly, immediately following Jesus’ giving of himself to his disciples in body broken and blood poured out, the disciples are arguing among themselves about who is greatest. They have not grasped what Jesus has said and what he is about to do.

Even at this critical moment of Jesus’ final teaching before his betrayal, the disciples misunderstand the nature of Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem and their calling as heirs of his ministry. Jesus responds to their dispute by speaking of greatness in the kingdom of God in terms of service—*table* service: “For who is greater, the one who reclines [at table] or the one who serves?” (Luke 22:27: τίς γὰρ μείζων, ὁ ἀνακείμενος ἢ ὁ διακονῶν;). Jesus ties this teaching to his presence and ministry in their midst as the great “I AM” of the Old Testament: “I am in the midst of you [ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν εἰμι] as the one who serves” (22:27). The one who gives his body in bread and his blood in the cup of the new testament *for you* (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) reiterates that his atoning presence as servant will be always in their midst. Jesus’ language here and in the rest of the passion is part of Luke’s vocabulary for the real presence of Jesus. Jesus will continue to be present in the midst of his church through the Eucharist, serving his disciples as they dine at their Lord’s Supper.⁴¹

Luke, then, takes the atonement saying in Matthew and Mark and makes it eucharistic. He goes from the universal to the particular, from the many to the one, showing that what happened on Good Friday is applied to the believer at every eucharistic repast.⁴²

“The New Testament in My Blood”

In Luke, Jesus calls the cup “the new testament in my blood” (ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι), whereas in Matthew and Mark, Jesus’ words are phrased so that the cup “is my blood of the covenant/testament” (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης). Both wordings reflect Exodus 24:8, with Matthew and Mark closest to the language of the LXX: τὸ αἷμά τῆς διαθήκης, “the blood of the covenant.”

⁴¹ See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 844–847.

⁴² Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 10.

Exodus 24 narrates the ratification of the old/first covenant. In an unusual rite, Moses sprinkled half the blood of the sacrificed offerings on the people. The application of blood formally brought them into the covenant and made them beneficiaries of God's covenant promises. The covenant was then sealed when Moses and the elders ascended Sinai and "ate and drank" a sacred meal in the presence of God (Exod 24:11). The parallels to the Last Supper are clear. The blood of the new covenant is applied to those who drink it in the cup. They are brought into the covenant and receive all its benefits made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus. The new sacred meal, too, is in the presence of God, since God incarnate is the host and he gives his body and blood with the bread and wine.

Luke stresses the "new" testament. "New" is unique to Luke among the Synoptics (and 1 Cor 11:25) and alludes to the promise of a new covenant in passages such as Isaiah 42:9–10; 43:18–21; 55:3; 61:8; and Jeremiah 31:31–34, which Jesus fulfills by the shedding of his blood so that sins may be remembered no more. The theme of forgiveness, which recurs throughout these prophetic passages (notably Jer 31:34), is made explicit in Matthew 26:28, where Jesus says his blood in the cup is shed "for the forgiveness of sins." The phrasing in Luke accents the cup⁴³—literally, "this the *cup*"—whereas Matthew and Mark have only "this," whose antecedent is the cup, but the accent falls on the *blood* of Jesus shed to create the covenant: "this is *my blood* of the covenant/testament" (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). The Lukan accent on the cup may stress the unity of those who partake of the (one) cup, as St. Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 with regard to the *one loaf*.⁴⁴ In Luke, Jesus' words over the cup include the same prepositional phrase he used over the bread as he repeats the substitutionary language of vicarious atonement: "on behalf of you" (ὐπὲρ ὑμῶν). "Being poured out" (ἐκχυνόμενον; *present* participle) suggests both the pouring from a cup and the blood that pours from the body of Jesus on the cross (cf. Ps 22:14–15 [MT 22:15–16]).

Considered as a whole, Luke 22:20 emphasizes the connection between the death of Christ and the meal. The whole meal is concluded with these words: "This

⁴³ On the differences regarding the cup between Matthew and Mark on one hand and Luke on the other, see Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 137–156, and James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), 166–167.

⁴⁴ The single cup emphasized by Luke should be reflected in church practice. Bread is the food that comes by the sweat of people's brow after the fall into sin (Gen 3:19). The broken bread in the Lord's Supper bears Christ's body, "broken" in the sense of "pierced" and "crushed," with his bones "separated" but not "broken" in death (Isa 53:5, 10; Zech 12:10; Ps 22:14–17 [MT 22:15–18]; John 19:36). Wine is the eschatological drink of heaven that gladdens the heart and declares the presence of the bridegroom at the feast (Luke 5:33–39; cf. John 2:1–11). The shed blood of Jesus drunk from the cup proclaims that the community is now restored and united from its brokenness through Christ's blood.

cup is the new testament in my blood, which is being poured out on behalf of you.”⁴⁵ God’s plan demanded that God’s righteous Messiah shed his innocent blood. Jesus fulfills all the many bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament, including “the blood of the [first] covenant,” which was poured out or sprinkled on the people (Exod 24:6–8; cf. Isa 52:15, which says the Suffering Servant “will sprinkle many nations”). Jesus completes the long line of suffering prophets who shed their blood in Jerusalem. Yet his suffering and death begin the martyrdom of New Testament apostles.⁴⁶

Jesus says that his disciples are partakers of and beneficiaries of the new testament in his blood as they partake of the cup and thereby drink his blood. The drinking of blood was an extreme offense to the Jews, but through it Christ’s death becomes the disciples’ life.⁴⁷ To accept the cup and drink it is to accept Jesus’ suffering and death as the atoning sacrifice for one’s sins. To refuse to recognize Christ’s body and blood in the Supper is to court condemnation (1 Cor 11:27–30). Christ’s suffering and death is the only means to glory—in accord with the interpretation that Jesus gives of his death and resurrection in Luke 24:26: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” As the church now partakes of Christ in the Sacrament of his body and blood, it is bound together as the new creation, the body of Christ. The words over the cup bring the action at the meal to a close by focusing on the death of Jesus—the very topic of the following five dialogues of Jesus with his disciples at the table (22:21–38).⁴⁸

In a longer essay, we could now trace the atonement theme from the beginning of Luke’s Gospel when Zechariah is offering the atonement sacrifice in the Holy Place (1:5–25); the atonement language in the Benedictus (1:68—*ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ*); the shedding of Jesus’ blood in his circumcision (2:21); the sacrificial language of the fattened calf in the parable of the prodigal son (θύω—15:23, 27, 30); the atonement language in the parable of the Pharisee and publican (*ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ*—18:13); and the language of atonement in the Emmaus story (*λυτρωσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ*—24:21).

The evangelist Luke shows how Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, looks forward to the moment of his atonement for sins on the cross *on our behalf* and already here in this meal gives his body *for you* and pours out his blood *for you*.

⁴⁵ For a full interpretation of these words, see Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 218–237, and Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 137–156.

⁴⁶ Cf. Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 143, 151, 153–154.

⁴⁷ Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord’s Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 145–146, relates the drinking of the cup to the kinship laws: “By drinking the wine that is the blood, the participant ‘cuts himself off from his kin’ exactly as the law requires (Leviticus 7:27, 17:10–14). But by drinking ‘the life of the flesh’ (Leviticus 17:11), he acquires that life. The separation from kin that is synonymous with death is only the prelude to eternal life in Jesus Christ.”

⁴⁸ See Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 835–837.

Luke not only has an atonement theology, but his appropriation of the great atonement passage in Matthew and Mark affirms that at our altars “we receive the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the altar of the cross,”⁴⁹ so that “the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once offered on the altar of the cross as the full and only atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and given us on this altar to eat and drink, will nourish and strengthen us until at the last we gather at the heavenly banquet to feast with the Lamb and all his saints.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272.

⁵⁰ *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 272–273.