Human Flourishing Through Imagining Communion In Revelation 19: Confronting Evil By Incorporating Christ's Victory

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INTRODUCTION

In James K. A. Smith's recent work, *Imagining the Kingdom*, he argues that we as human creatures operate with a level of knowledge that he calls the imagination.[1] This imaginative knowing is intuitive, functioning on a subconscious level, and is developed through ritual and habit. The church's liturgy,[2] therefore, ought to reflect carefully on their repeated worship practices, as it is through these that holistic discipleship and the development of a thoroughly Christian (as opposed to secular) imagination occurs. In the history of the church one of the most formative practices for Christian discipleship and the spiritual growth of the body is the Lord's Supper. This paper will argue that practicing communion in a way that explicitly ties it to the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 retrains our imagination, our perception of the world, to see spiritual warfare as part of a war that is already won. When Christians face the ongoing battles of temptation, trials, or systemic evil and sin, our imagi-

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1 James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Cultural Liturgies 2; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

2 By liturgy I simply mean 'formative practices'. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 24. In other words, a liturgy is a practice or more typically a set of practices that shapes and forms our character. As Smith points out, these can take place in the gathering of the church or in cultural practices like shopping or attending a football game (ibid., 25). Although I define liturgy broadly as Smith does, I will in this article focus particularly on the liturgy of Christian worship in the context of the gathered church. Here it is important to note that all churches have a liturgy, whether formally codified or not. Just try changing the order of worship at an established church to test that claim! See also n. 34, below.

nations have been trained by a martial view of the Supper to know that final victory is already won in Christ. The imagination needed for human flourishing, in this case by confronting systemic evil, is trained through tying our communion practice to Revelation 19.

FORMING THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

Building off of Volume 1 of his Cultural Liturgies project, *Desiring the Kingdom*, James Smith continues to argue in *Imagining the Kingdom* that repeated practice is what forms and shapes our identities as human beings. While in *Desiring the Kingdom* Smith presented a broad vision for understanding virtue formation as oriented primarily around action and then called for more consciously liturgical life in both the church and the university, in *Imagining the Kingdom* he digs deeper into the philosophical and anthropological roots of this understanding of character development. Sanctification, Smith argues, is a matter of forming the Christian imagination, a term he uses to describe our intuitive knowledge of and interaction with the world. Imagination gives us a 'feel for the game' type of knowledge, a knowledge that is not primarily conscious but rather rooted in our subconscious. Further, and most importantly for his project, this knowledge is formed, shaped, and trained through repeated practice, or liturgy. Liturgies are everywhere, according to Smith, and they are either secular or ecclesial. It is the responsibility of the church consciously to reflect on,[3] and perhaps re-order their liturgies and their form in order to shape and form more accurately the imaginations of the congregation.

Furthermore, this reshaping of the imagination provides tangible results for the mission of the church in real life. The church, after experiencing this reorienting of imagination through liturgy, is sent out as those who have been drawn up into the life of Christ in worship. In other words, liturgy impacts and empowers real life. We must ask, then, not only how liturgy shapes imagination but also how liturgy shapes imagination for human flourishing, for Christianity in the real world.

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[3] The word 'consciously' is important here, as Smith is not suggesting that either (a) liturgies function *ex opera operato* or that (b) the church should be uncritical in its acceptance or promotion of certain liturgical practices. Rather, liturgy cannot work without the congregation member having a conscious understanding of what is happening. Still, much of the formation happens on the subconscious level and impacts our daily lives at that level as well. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, pp. 187–90.

CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION AND COMMUNION

For Protestants, the two most imaginatively forming practices are what we call ordinances or sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both of these have the power to kinesthetically and poetically shape our intuition through our liturgical performance of them. For baptism, the vivid picture of going under the (cold) water and being brought up means on a subconscious level, in that it teaches the initiate through action that s/he is dead to sin and alive to God. This of course corresponds to Paul's explanation of baptism on an 'intellectual' level in Romans 6:1–4, but in baptism we do not simply read Romans 6:1–4 to the initiate. Instead we enact the truth of that text with them, performing the doctrinal truth described in Scripture. This is knowledge on a different level, a kinesthetic and poetic level.

The same level of knowing is present in communion. By acting out the Lord's Table, the church performs and incorporates its message, instead of just mentally assenting to it.[4] In most celebrations of the Supper, the congregation is urged to interpret it in at least two ways: (a) memorializing Christ's atonement for sin and/or (b) communicating and invoking Christ's real presence. Many clergy additionally take the opportunity beforehand to urge believers to confess and repent of their sins and to warn unbelievers of the danger of taking the meal (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:27-33).[5]

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[4] See Anthony Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 515–24, for an explanation of how the actions of both baptism and communion visually and physically convey their meaning, as well as this claim's basis in speech-act theory. I should also note here that my emphasis on liturgy, and especially on the Lord's Supper, in this paper, should not be taken as a denial or denigration of the role of Scripture in the formation of the church. Indeed, 'Word and sacrament' (if a Baptist may use that phrase) are integrally tied together. As Thiselton notes, 'Both [the preaching of the Word and the sacraments] are complementary and simply enacted in different modes' (ibid., p. 517). While the preached Word is orally conveyed and aurally received by the congregation, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are corporally conveyed or enacted and visually received. The difference is in means of communication, not priority.

[5] For an overview of the different views on the Lord's Supper, see, for example, Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 4: *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation* , ed. by John Bolt; trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 550–80. Interestingly, although baptistic churches today mostly practice an exclusively memorial view of the Supper, this was not the case in some early Baptist thought. The Second London Confession of 1689, for instance, interprets the Supper '. . . in Calvinistic as well as Zwinglian terms inasmuch as the Supper is not only a memorial of the death of Christ but

Typically, texts from 1 Corinthians 11, the institution of the Supper in the Gospels, and perhaps a reading from the Passover in Exodus are used. The imagination formed by these practices is one that remembers Christ's sacrifice, hopes for his return, and recognizes his presence with the gathered corporate body.

These are all important for a holistic Christian imagination, but the argument of this paper is that Revelation 19, the marriage supper of the lamb, provides formation of the imagination through the Supper in one more area: spiritual warfare. The message of that text is that the supper is a celebration of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness, and especially over the harlot of Babylon in the previous two chapters, and the victory that is to come over the beast, false prophet, and dragon in the rest of Revelation 19 and 20. Because of its location at the end the book of Revelation, with its apocalyptic imagination, we can further say that the imaginative *telos* of the supper is martial, not just memorial or even just real presence. Paying close attention to this martial view of the Lord's Supper, perhaps through using readings from Revelation 19 along with the words of institution, incorporates and provides the *habitus* for spiritual warfare in the Christian life. Specifically, it can shape our perceptions to understand that Christ has already won victory over sin and the powers and principalities of this world and that our fight is a fight in which we stand in his victory. Human flourishing can happen because communion has trained the corporate body's imagination for confronting systemic evil in the power of Spirit, through the victory of Christ, and for the glory of the Father.

PRACTICING COMMUNION

Typically the Lord's Supper evokes one or more of the following messages: memory of Christ's sacrifice; Christ's presence with his body; and communion between members of the body. Each of these, among the different Christian traditions that support them, is argued to be biblically, theologically, and historically valid. Christ's instructions in the words of institution have a clear memorial bent: 'Do this in remembrance of me'

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also the locale of his spiritual presence and the occasion of spiritual nourishments'. James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), p. 79. This view in the Second London Confession is also noted by John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), p. 281. He goes on to note, though, that this view is '. . . somewhat unusual in Baptist life. The view found most often with reference to the Lord's Supper is memorial' (ibid.).

(Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–26). This memorial view has been the primary understanding for those with a Zwinglian heritage and the typical meaning presented by baptistic churches in North America. For most of the history of the Church this remembrance of Christ's sacrifice has been coupled with an understanding of the Supper as a sign, and in some cases means, of Christ's presence.[6] The Eucharist, as it is called in many traditions that recognize this function of the Table, is intended to incorporate participation or union with Christ through the taking of the meal (1 Cor. 10:16), and specifically through celebrating his resurrection and participating in the resurrected life.[7] Relatedly, the third meaning of the Supper taught by various churches is that it not only leads us to participate with the presence of Christ but that it also allows us to commune with one another (1 Cor. 10:17).[8] Other expositions of the Supper include its place in understanding and interpreting Scripture (Luke 24:30–31),[9] the danger of taking it inappropriately (1 Cor. 11:27–32), and most importantly for our purposes, its eschatological outlook.[10]

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6 There are of course three distinct views here: transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic Church, consubstantiation in Luther, and the spiritual view of Calvin.

7 Note the combination of memory and celebration in the Book of Common Prayer: 'Father, we now celebrate the memorial of your Son. By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of his death, and proclaims his resurrection, until he comes again.' And again, 'Recalling now his suffering and death, and celebrating his resurrection and ascension, we await his coming in glory.' Notice also that the last line of each anticipates Christ's return, the *telos* of the Supper, which will be discussed further below.

8 For a combination of these three views in Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 10–11, see G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 592–3.

9 Stanley Hauerwas, 'The Interpretation of Scripture: Why Discipleship is Required (1993)', *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Duke: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 264.

10 I am not proposing anything new in saying the Supper has an eschatological element; indeed, that has aspect has been acknowledged since the Patristic period. As Christopher Hall states, 'The early church recognized this past-future element in the Eucharist, an awareness demonstrated by the appearance of the Aramaic word *maranatha*—"come, Lord"—in ancient Eucharistic prayers'. Christopher Hall, *Worshiping with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. 62–3.

THE *TELOS* OF COMMUNION

This eschatological outlook is seen both in Jesus' institution (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16) and Paul's exposition of the Supper, as they each clearly look forward to the *telos* of communion. For both Jesus and Paul, the Supper anticipates the second coming, at which Christ's work of atonement, restoration, and victory through his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost will be consummated.[11] For our purposes here, the victorious aspect of Christ's return is most important, because it is here where Christ will finally and fully put all things under his feet and destroy Satan and his followers in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:7–15). When we look at communion, it is interesting that in each of the Synoptics' account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus identifies Judas as his betrayer (Matt. 22:20–25; Mark 14:17–21; Luke 22:21–23), and in John this language is amplified militarily through the reference to Satan entering into Judas (John 13:27). Further, Luke later identifies Judas with 'the power of darkness' that is about to be defeated in his impending death and resurrection (Luke 22:47–53). There thus seems to be an element of spiritual warfare even here in the beginning of the practice. Paul also identifies opposition to demonic powers, idolatry, and divisiveness as a priority when taking communion (1 Cor. 10:14–22; 11:18–22, 27–32).

This martial aspect of the Supper is clarified and intensified when we remember the Old Testament background for its practice. The Passover meal that inaugurated the Exodus has clear martial overtones, as it is YHWH's redemption of his people Israel from the political and spiritual oppression of Pharaoh and Egypt. The celebration of the Passover evoked for Israel the remembrance of YHWH's deliverance of them from Egyptians, accomplished through his cosmic warfare with them in the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 12–15). Furthermore, in the later prophetic warnings of Israel's impending exile and then in other prophets' promise of return, YHWH's restoration of Israel from exile is deemed a New Exodus (see especially Isaiah 40–66). God will once again rescue Israel from the bonds of captivity, this time under Babylon, and restore them to their land through his Messianic king. These martial implications of the Passover meal would not have been lost on Jesus or his disci-

[11] The Anglican liturgy captures this. Note the following eschatological language in their Eucharistic liturgy (Eucharistic Prayer B): 'In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with [_____and] all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.'

ples at the institution of the Lord's Supper – the new Passover and inauguration of the new covenant – or on Paul and his readers.[12] In fact, we can say that Jesus intentionally invokes this martial, conquering, victorious element of the Passover meal in his actions in the Upper Room and in his other important action in Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple.[13] Thus, in the words of Anthony Thiselton, '. . . the narrative of the Passover constitutes the appropriate and indispensable horizon of understanding for interpreting the Lord's Supper and its words of institution',[14] and this narrative is one which has clear military and political overtones.

REVELATION 19 AND THE GOAL OF THE TABLE

This martial sense of the Supper[15] is again further and finally clarified in Revelation 19.[16] While this chapter of scripture is conspicuously absent from the liturgical traditions of the church, whether high or low,[17] it

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12 See e.g. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, pp. 526–31, for both broad parallels between the Passover and communion and also between Jesus' words of institution in the Lord's Supper and the Jewish Seder meal. See also, for example, G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), pp. 816–19.

13 N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 437–8, 615.

14 Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine*, p. 514.

15 For the idea that Revelation is broadly liturgical, see e.g. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, p. 797, n. 52; and G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 184. Indeed, for Caird, 'The Revelation of John begins on the Lord's Day and ends in Eucharist' (ibid.).

16 '[The Lord's Supper] both brings believers into closer fellowship with God in this world, and anticipates a greater sacred meal, the marriage supper of the Lamb.' L. McFall, 'Sacred Meals', in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000), p. 753.

17 Note, for instance, that Revelation 19:1–10 is neither quoted nor alluded to in the Book of Common Prayer's Eucharist Rites, nor is it used in the lectionary. For the latter, see the comprehensive list of liturgical texts at <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/citationindex.php>. For an Orthodox perspective on Revelation's absence from their liturgy, see Petros Vassiliadis, 'Apocalypse and Liturgy', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 41.2 (1997), 95–112; for a Roman Catholic perspective on this lacunae, see Albert Hammenstede, 'The Apocalypse and the Mystery of the Eucharist', *Orate Fratres* 20.3 (1946), 104–110.

certainly pictures a meal that celebrates the Exodus-like18 military and political victory won by Christ '. . . at the consummation of history . . .',[19] which is shared and celebrated by his followers.[20] Believers in Revelation 19:1–10 'praise God for the 'salvation' that he has brought (19:1)', which in this text refers specifically '. . . to deliverance from the oppressive power of the harlot, whose smoke goes up forever and ever as a sign that her demise is permanent (19:3)'.[21] The harlot that is destroyed here is Babylon, the representation in Revelation of political, sexual, and economic depravity and oppression,[22] and thus the Supper of Revelation 19 is a celebration not simply of 'salvation' in a generically spiritual sense but in a full-orbed political, spiritual, physical, and cosmic sense. Thus the celebration that ensues is a celebration of Christ the King, the dominator of sin, death, and earthly powers, and the liberator of his people.

This Supper in Revelation 19, along with the new creation in Revelation 21–22, is also clearly linked to the Lord's Supper instituted in the Gospels and practiced by the early church. It appears to be the final, consummate, and eternal Supper, the one towards which the eschatological language of Jesus and Paul point in the Synoptics and in 1 Corinthians 10–11.[23] It accomplishes both historic interpretations of the Supper, as this is the final realization of the memorial of Christ's death, since that memorial points us towards his future victory, and it is also the final eschatological realization of Christ's presence with his Church since he is seated with them. There are no more warnings here for who should partake, as it is only those who are given clean garments by the Lord that can participate (Rev. 19:8). This Supper is also the fulfilment of all of the marriage language throughout the Old and New Testaments, including the messianic

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18 Caird, *New Testament Theology*, p. 184. Caird specifically compares the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 to the song of saints in Revelation 19:2.

19 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 926.

20 One should especially note the divine warrior and Davidic King language in both Revelation 19:1–10 and also the following section of 19:11–21. See, for example, Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 425–8.

21 Craig Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 168.

22 Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (London T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 338–83.

23 Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, p. 283; and Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 148–9.

banquet in the last days in the OT prophets,[24] the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1–14,[25] and Paul's teaching on marriage as a reflection of Christ and his Bride in Ephesians 5:22–32.[26] Additionally, many have recognized the liturgical shape of the entire book, as it begins 'on the Lord's Day' (Rev. 1:10), includes the elements of Christian worship, such as prayers and hymns, and seems to picture the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.[27]

Strangely, though, Revelation 19 is not used in any liturgical tradition of which I am aware. The closest allusion to any part of it I have found is in the Anglican Proper Preface for marriage, which reads: 'Because in the love of wife and husband, thou hast given us an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, adorned as a bride for her bridegroom, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who loveth her and gave himself for her, that he might make the whole creation new.' Even here, though, the reference is more to Revelation 21 than it is to Revelation 19:1–10. While the biblical warrant for referring to Revelation 19:1–10 is clear above, I want to suggest here that Jamie Smith's argument for imagination formation in liturgy ought also to urge churches to incorporate this text in their communion practice. Specifically, the argument here is that explicitly including references to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will shape the Christian imagination to better participate in the spiritual warfare that rages in the Christian life, and especially to confront systemic evil.

SYSTEMIC EVIL AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10–20 that we as Christians are fighting a war, waged not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. This conflict is fought through wrestling, hand to hand combat, combat in which we stand in Christ and take up his gospelling acts as armour. While there is much that can be said about this passage, the important point here is that Paul urges Christians to stand firm against principalities and powers. Further, he urges them to do so together. This is not an

[24] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 938–43; Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, p. 267; and Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 532.

[25] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 945.

[26] Ibid., p. 942.

[27] See, for instance, David L. Barr, 'The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis', *Interpretation* 38.1 (1984), 39–50, esp. 45–7; idem., 'The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment', *Interpretation* 40.3 (1986), 243–56, esp. 252–6; Charles A. Gieschen, 'Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation', *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74.1 (2010), 139–43; and Petros Vassiliadis, 'Apocalypse and Liturgy'.

individualized battle in which Christians each stand against their own temptations by themselves, but one a battle in which the church collectively stands against the evil forces of the world for the love of their neighbours who share in the *imago dei*.[28] Evil is not something that Christians only experience through individual temptation or persecution (although it is certainly manifested in these ways); spiritual warfare here, rather, is spoken of mostly as something Christians engage collectively and on a global and holistic level. Principalities, rulers, authorities, and powers in the New Testament are originally created by God in Christ (Col. 1:16) but can now be referred to as the 'powers of darkness' that crucify Jesus (Luke 22:53) and as in opposition to Christ's rule and reign (Col. 2:15; Eph. 6:10–13). They are also used in a more generic sense to simply refer to the structures of our world, especially political ones (1 Tim. 2:2; possibly also Eph. 1:21), and are ordained by God for a positive purpose (Rom. 13:1–7). The issue appears to be not simply battling anything inherently (but temporally) political, but instead those structures, rulers, and powers that are under the rule of the 'prince of the power of the air' (Eph. 2:2). The confrontation thus appears to be with what we might call 'systemic evil'; not simply individual temptations to sin or individual persecution but evil that exists in the very fabric of society and culture.

The exact temporal nature of this confrontation, especially in the political/legal realm is much debated today,[29] but Paul's message is clear: there is inevitably a confrontation, and the church is called to fight. The weapons of warfare are clear: we are to stand in Christ and with his gospel

[28] J. Todd Billings, *Union With Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 111.

[29] Much of the context of the contemporary debate happens within the Reformed community and is a conversation about the so-called 'two kingdoms' approach to Christianity and culture. In this approach, mission and kingdom do not refer to activities of the 'common kingdom', but only the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the gathering of the church. For an introduction to such thought, see David Van Drunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). In contrast, there are those who argue that mission and kingdom work include vocation and activities outside of the gathered church as they visibly point to the rule and reign of Christ over his church even as they are scattered. For this view, see, e.g., Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). For our purposes, the exact nature of political and legal action against systemic evil and the language used to describe those tactics is at issue between the two camps. Of particular contention is the use of terms like 'transform' or 'redeem' to describe our activities in culture and especially in politics.

armour (Eph. 6:14–17), praying in the Spirit for our own opportunities to proclaim the gospel (Eph. 6:18–20), and resisting or fleeing from evil (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:22). Further, Paul tells us here that we sit where he sits, namely 'in the heavenly places' (Eph. 1:20–21; 2:6), the place that denotes his authority and victory over the powers and principalities of this world. Christians share in the rule and reign of Christ here, just as they share it in Rev. 19:1–10 as they sit with him at his Table.[30]

IMAGINATION, THE SUPPER, AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Weaving these threads together, the argument here is that spiritual warfare is bolstered by formation of the Christian imagination, and specifically through practicing communion in a way that explicitly invokes Revelation 19:1–10. There is a clear eschatological goal of the Supper, rooted in the Passover and fulfilled in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which is martial.[31] Christ has already defeated the principalities and powers of the world through his death and resurrection (Eph. 1:20–21; Col. 2:15), the events of which are remembered and celebrated at the current practice of communion. The practice of communion also, though, points forward to the eschatological celebration of Christ's consummation of his victory won at Golgotha and in the empty tomb. The knowledge of this victory and our sharing in it, our love for our neighbour, and the weapons Christ gives us all motivate us in spiritual warfare and in confronting systemic evil.

The idea that participation in the Lord's Supper can shape our political imaginations is not new. Both J. Todd Billings and Craig Bartholomew have recently shown the importance of the Table in confronting, respectively, apartheid in South Africa and the wanton destruction of God's creation.[32] The idea is familiar to Catholic thought as well, as William Cavanaugh has suggested the Table argues against using torture in any setting.[33] I am not suggesting that these articulations of the Supper's

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30 Cf. also Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:4, and other such texts that seem to clearly indicate that Christ shares his victorious reign with his followers.

31 As I hope has been evident throughout, this is not the only goal of the Supper. Communion with God, dwelling in his presence, and final sanctification (the 'white garments' of Revelation 19:7–8) are all also goals of the Supper.

32 See, respectively, J. Todd Billings, *Union With Christ*, pp. 95–118; and Craig Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), p. 246.

33 William T. Cavanaugh, 'The Body of Christ: The Eucharist and Politics', *Word & World* 22.2 (2002), 170–7. See also his monograph on the impact of the liturgy on the Christian and politics, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discover-*

imaginative shaping are legitimate; instead, I am simply offering examples of what others have said about how the Table shapes our thinking about various areas of engagement with culture and, in some cases, with systemic sin. While the question of exactly how one is to confront systemic evil or engage in spiritual warfare is up for debate, especially in regards to political machinations, the point here is that the Lord's Supper can shape our imaginations in ways that help us prepare for and be willing to enter into that battle.

Thus my main suggestion here is that the lacuna in our liturgies, whether informal or formal,[34] concerning Revelation 19:1–10 should be addressed. Our ritual behaviour in our church gatherings, whether in a non-denominational, low church setting or in a high Anglican, explicitly liturgical setting, shapes and moulds us. Indeed, '. . . the church is the place where, in a variety of forms, the biblical story with its centre in Jesus is enacted and re-enacted so that amidst the challenges of life it increasingly becomes for us, in practice and not just theory, the true story of the world which we indwell'.[35] In order to shape and mould our fellow believers into the image of Christ and specifically to prepare them for the opposition they will face in the form of systemic evil, Revelation 19:1–10 ought to be incorporated into our practice of the Lord's Supper as a reminder that Christ has already defeated the principalities and powers and will consummate that victory at his return. This of course will look different for different liturgical traditions and practitioners. For the Anglican, the Eucharistic Rites might be modified to include a phrase in the prayers of remembrance that alludes to Revelation 19, such as, 'we believe that we will sit with you at the final Table of the Lamb'. Additionally, although it has less explicitly to do with communion, perhaps more of Revelation could be included in the lectionary. For less strictly liturgical traditions, something as simple as reading Rev. 19:1–10 before taking the Lord's Supper may suffice. In my own Baptist tradition, the memorial view of the Supper ought not only focus on remembering what Christ already did but, as Jesus and Paul say, remind of us of what he will do when he returns.

In any case, my contention here has been that Revelation 19:1–10 has a powerful ability to shape the Christian imagination regarding confront-

ing the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism (London: T&T Clark, 2002).

[34] Every church has a liturgy, no matter how much they might deny it. Indeed, cultures are immersed in liturgies. The question is whether our liturgies reflect and transform its participants into the image of God. This is James Smith's point in both *Imagining the Kingdom* and in the first volume of the Cultural Liturgies project, *Desiring the Kingdom*.

[35] Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*, p. 294.

ing systemic evil if it is included in our communion practice. Explicitly invoking this martial message of the Supper in a variety of ways, whether through reading the passage or alluding to it in some way, will form and shape the Christian imagination to engage in spiritual warfare. The subconscious realm of understanding, the *habitus* of life, will be moulded in such a way that the response of the Christian is not fear or doubt but confidence in Christ's victory. This will promote human flourishing as communion trains the collective church's imagination to confront systemic evil in the power of Spirit, through the victory of Christ, and for the glory of the Father.