

# An Assessment of 'The Table of the Lord' by Eric Svendsen

New Testament Restoration Foundation, Atlanta (1996)

I did not intend to write a critique of this book, being very busy at the time, but rather just make some simple notes upon my reading. However, the more I read the more I was discouraged, and even concerned, by what I saw. My notes developed into a more detailed critique out of necessity. This book is riddled with errors, misjudgements, misstatements and is committed to a prior agenda rather than letting scripture drive his study. A detailed assessment is required.

## General Points

### Excessively technical

Although the author warns you about this, any book which suggests you read it with a Greek lexicon in one hand and an interlinear in the other (p2) is going to be of little use to anyone outside academic circles. It was his master's thesis but is little changed. It is usual for such dissertations to be completely re-worked for common use; it is a failure that this has not. Thus, even if the book had good things to say, is of very little value to the church. Is this the best resource that NTRF can supply to defend their position that the Lord's Supper is a full meal? If so, and it seems that it is, they have a shaky foundation.

### Contradictions and technical errors

The work contains obvious contradictory statements, which I am surprised got through the academic process and were repeated in the paperback edition. For example:

- Page 6, par 1: 'whereas the Synoptic accounts purport to record the historical events ... Paul's account is just the opposite.' The footnote in this sentence (3) reads, 'the thrust of the Synoptic accounts (and of Paul's account in 1 Cor 11:23-25 for that matter) is, in the first instance, historical.' The contradiction is clear.
- Several of the footnotes contain minor errors, including some of the scripture references (e. p44, footnote 8 should be 1 Cor 11:20-21). But we will let these pass as typos rather than lack of academic rigour.
- 'Agape with which is associated the Lord's Supper' (p69); cf. 'the meal instituted by Jesus goes by a variety of titles ... including Lord's Supper and Agape' (p65; underline - PF). Within a few pages Svendsen makes opposing statements.
- Page 43, par 1: 'The only other place that kuriako.n occurs is Rev 1:10'. This is not true. Rev 1:10 has kuriakh/. I admit this is a minor technical point since they have the same root [*kuriakos*], but Svendsen majors on such technicalities in this book to make his point. This throws doubt on his accuracy.
- Page 43, par 1: 'Every other instance of [*deipnon*] in the NT refers to nothing less than a full meal, and in many (arguably, all) cases it refers to a banquet or feast.' Firstly, *deipnon* (supper) is distinguished from dinner (*ariston*) in Lk 14:12; though it can be argued that 'dinner' probably means brunch. Secondly, banquet is not implied in several of these cases (e.g. Jn 12:2). Svendsen is overstating his evidence. Again this is not a major issue, but a required criticism since Svendsen emphasises such minor technicalities.

- There are numerous typographical errors (such as 'On' instead of 'One', p94, par 1). However, I will not criticise this as it is excessively minor and a problem for all of us. However, it shows that there has been insufficient editorial control. Is that not a prerequisite for an admittedly technical book put into the public domain as a challenge to existing ideas?

With gaffes as obvious as this, how can we trust his conclusions on other matters?

### **Misrepresentation of sources**

For example, on page 147 Svendsen gives this quote from I Howard Marshall's, *Last Supper & Lord's Supper*, page 145:

The Lord's Supper in the New Testament is a meal. The appropriate setting for the sacrament is a table.

However, no such words are found on this page in this edition!

Indeed, Marshall adds, 'The precise relationship of the teaching, the church meal and the actual Breaking of bread is not clear and can well have varied. ... the church followed the pattern laid down in the formula of institution. Somebody appointed for the purpose took a loaf of bread, gave thanks to God for it, presumably in a free prayer .... then broke it in pieces and distributed it to the congregation with the words that Jesus had first used at the Last Supper. The same ritual was then followed with the common cup of wine.' Marshall nowhere teaches that the Supper is actually the communal meal and contends for the traditional practice of a separate ritual. However, like me, he believes that a communal meal is a separate part of the church meeting.

### **Pointless discursive material**

Much of the text is given over to long passages of discussion and comparison of different academic views on this or that peripheral mater (such as the divisions in Corinth). While this is necessary to impress university examiners that you have done enough research, it has limited or no value to establish the central argument or edify believers. Arguing back and forth about pointless topics for 20 pages relegates the book to uselessness. Even a major conference speaker for NTRF has told me that he finds the book too highbrow for him to understand. What hope for ordinary folk?

## **Specific errors**

### **THE LOAF CREATES UNITY**

The statement that, 'This one loaf of bread ... somehow creates unity within the body' (p31 et. al.) is an error that verges on blasphemy. It certainly smacks of sacramentalism. Svendsen has allowed his microscopic (myopic?) focus upon Greek technicalities to obscure orthodox doctrine. He has failed to see the wood for the trees. Unity amongst Christians is only ever found in Christ and is maintained by the Spirit of Christ. It is organic and spiritual. Nothing we do ever creates unity because unity already exists if we are in Christ. We can do something to promote or encourage unity, or can even damage practical (visible) unity, but we cannot create it. What Svendsen says here is worse; an inorganic element is said to 'create unity'. This dishonours Christ and is poor logic and exegesis, failing to understand Biblical doctrine or interpret the verse in the light of the greater context of scripture.

The one loaf merely represents or symbolises unity. When his sources confirm this symbolism, Svendsen states that symbolism does not go far enough (p32) and favours 'a

metaphysical [i.e. spiritual] oneness' (p34). In his preface he states, 'Not only is it *symbolic* of the unity (singularity) of the gathered body of Christ, it is, in fact, a *cause* of unity. (p. iv; emphasis original).

In his assessments of early church writings he affirms that Hippolytus taught that although the Holy Spirit brought about unity, he did this through participation in the Eucharist (p39). Svendsen adds, 'For Hippolytus, unity is the *goal* of the Lord's Supper' (emph. original). He mentions Cyril of Alexandria as teaching a causal relationship between the bread and unity; and several other writers. If his interpretation of these writings is correct (which I dispute<sup>1</sup>) then this is all pure sacramentalism, which he endorses instead of condemning.<sup>2</sup>

The sharing of one loaf only creates a sense of visible unity, which is founded upon the spiritual unity in Christ; many commentators and theologians affirm this. However, Svendsen appears to be arguing for more than this and uses forceful statements, such as: 'When each local assembly gathers together to partake of the bread and the cup, the members are made one body' (p33 et. al.). Worse still, he parallels this supposed creation of unity with similar rituals in pagan groups (p34, par 1). However, the union of believers has nothing to do with earthly forms but is founded upon the baptism of the Spirit which united them with Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Earthly forms, even true sacraments, do not add or subtract from this organic and spiritual unity, but merely manifest the truth of it practically.

From this Svendsen goes even further, 'Anyone who thus joins himself with the participants of the feast becomes one with that religious body' (p34). Is he serious? Does a non-Christian who participates (wrongly) in the bread and wine become one with other believers and with Christ? How absurd! Svendsen appears to fall for the same kind of literalism of Dispensationalists, which is the cause of their many errors.

This is an extreme and sacramental idea, perhaps one could even say, a dangerous notion.

## Key Arguments

### The Lord Supper is a meal

He points out that *deipnon* (supper) always means a meal, thus the bread and wine, being merely two elements of any meal, cannot be the Lord's Supper on their own. The full communal meal (*agape*) is the *deipnon*.

But Svendsen misses the point, and clouds his reasoning (again) with concentration on technicalities. The Corinthian believers had a communal meal. Paul criticises the abuses of that meal where the rich ate their good food in advance or at the exclusion of the poor. This was the very opposite of the original purpose of the meal – for the rich to bless the poor. Paul commands corrections and brings the proper focus of the meal by explaining that the conclusion of the meal is the 'Lord's Supper'. This is called a feast, even though technically it is but two elements, because it is what the Lord: a) held up as the symbols of the New Covenant in his last supper (the meal is not this symbol); b) promised to partake it with the elect at the end of this world. Thus the bread and wine are special, distinguished from the

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<sup>1</sup> For instance his reference to Chrysostom does not support his thesis at all; neither does his reference to Cyril. His continual over-literal interpretation (to the point of being facile) makes the texts fit his thesis.

<sup>2</sup> It is also odd that for support of his contentions Svendsen directs readers to many of the same church fathers that his colleagues refer to as destructive in their teachings on Biblical church, such as Cyprian, Cyril, Ignatius etc.

meal and the elements that are particularly of the Lord. Paul repeatedly draws particular attention to these elements as the Supper in clear terms.

It is also important to note that partaking of the bread and wine represents a true communion with the risen Lord; thus Calvin's view of the Supper is to be preferred over against Zwingli's. Calvin affirmed that there is grace communicated in obedience to the memorial feast (though the elements do no change) while Zwingli saw it to be a symbolic act and nothing else. 'To sit down at the table of the *kyrios* [Lord] is to receive food from him and through it enter into communion with him.' [*Dict. Of NT Theol.* Ed Colin Brown, Zondervan; vol 2; p518.] The opposite of this is the communion (*koinonos*) with demons through partaking of ritual meals, which Paul warned about in 1 Cor 10:20-21. This spiritual communion is not associated with a communal meal, but with the bread and wine alone.

To suggest that the meal is the Lord's Supper is to claim that the full meal is a symbol of the New Covenant. Such erroneous teaching is found nowhere in scripture, nor in the early fathers, neither does it make typological sense; however, it has surfaced in various historical cults.

Throughout literary history the word 'meal', or even 'a banquet', has been used to describe many different forms of feeding. To a starving man a crust of bread and a cup of dirty water are a feast. To a couple in love meeting together after a long absence a glass of wine and some chocolates are a feast. To be invited to supper by an aristocrat would involve several courses, but the supper of a coal-miner may be fish and chips, or in the past, bread and dripping.

It is true that *deipnon* can mean a dinner or main meal of the day, but the lexicons also state that it can mean a symbolic, sacred, ritual meal. [E.g. Friberg.] It can also mean a simple meal as well as a banquet. [E.g. Louw-Nida.]

*Deipnon* was used to cover many different forms of Greek religious ritual, some consisting of a few sacred elements, while others were a full banquet and led to excess. Thus *deipnon* is capable of wide interpretation and is not restricted to a 'full' meal. In any case, groups that emphasise *deipnon* as a full meal or a banquet (such as Svendsen's NTRF) are usually those whose practice of the Supper as a meal hardly ever involves a banquet or even a 'full' meal. Instead, their practice is merely what Americans call 'pot-luck' – a buffet of bits and pieces brought by the members and shared' more like a picnic than a proper meal. Are they not being hypocritical in their insistence that the Supper is a 'full' meal when they do not have one themselves?

Regarding 1 Cor 11:20-21,

Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

Svendsen (and a small minority of commentators) see this as referring to the communal meal as the 'Lord's Supper'. Commentators explain this in a variety of ways, but the chief point is that Paul simply states the opposite; their meal was *not* the Lord's Supper. The point of gathering is to break bread first and foremost. 'When you come together it is to eat the Lord's Supper' would be the normal plan. But these Corinthians were abusing the communal meal and thus the point of them gathering was ruined from the start. When they ate the bread and wine they were under judgment for abusing fellowship, they were not eating the Lord's Supper, they were not participating in church as believers, but were being judged.

It has to be said that if Svendsen is correct, then the vast majority of the best and most careful theologians, commentators, preachers and Greek scholars in evangelical churches (and most non-evangelicals) throughout history have got it wrong yet, Svendsen and his colleagues in NTRF have alone got it right. This is just ludicrous. It would mean that on the most important aspect of church life God was unable to guide the churches to get this right for 2,000 years until Svendsen came along. It would also mean that the heretical cults which also taught this (such as the Dunkers) were also right when orthodox believers were wrong.

#### **THE SEPARATION OF THE BREAD AND THE WINE**

This does not need to be developed here since Svendsen does not make a major separate point about this but mentions it in passing to establish that the church had a communal meal. I agree that the church should have a communal meal to support the poor and encourage *koinonia*, but not that this is the Supper, but the antecedent to it. For my refutation of the separation of the elements, see my paper, *The Lord Supper, Part of a meal or not?*

#### **THE SUPPER AS AGAPE AND THE MEAL AS THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Page 65, par 1: 'The meal instituted by Jesus for his church goes by a variety of titles in the New Testament, including *Lord's Supper* and *Agape*.'

This is a bold statement since he has proved no such thing at all. He tries to argue that the meal is the Supper but comes to no certain conclusions (in fact the section has no conclusion) and only has a very few sources to support him in part. He even mentions several esteemed authorities that disagree with him, including scholars on 1 Corinthians (such as GD Fee, Frank C. Senn, FW Grosheide). The idea that the Supper is called an *Agape* in the NT would be dismissed by the vast majority of Bible scholars throughout history.

Neither do his references to the early fathers support his claim that the Supper became called the *agape*. Indeed many of the fathers made it plain that the *agape* was a separate but associated event. The Didache, Clement of Alexandria and Pliny's letter actually work against his argument by implying a separation of the *Agape* from the Supper or ignoring it altogether. Svendsen's case is speculative at best.

Svendsen also claims that Clement of Alexandria writes extensively about the *Agape* (p59). What he does not tell you is that most of these references to the word 'agape' actually refer to matters other than the love-feast. *Agape* appears in Clement in *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, AGES CD Rom, on the following pages:

1. 462 – 'some, speaking with unbridled tongue, dare to apply the name *agape*, to pitiful supper.' No reference to a love-feast here.
2. 462 – 'Dishonouring the good and saving work of the Word, the consecrated *agape*.' No reference to a love-feast here.
3. 462 – 'Gatherings for the sake of mirth, and such entertainments as are called by ourselves, we name rightly suppers, dinners, and banquets, after the example of the Lord. But such entertainments the Lord has not called *agape*.' There is an oblique reference to a love-feast here, but it also distinguishes it from suppers, dinners and banquets; this is the opposite of what Svendsen wants to see. However, we will allow him this reference.
4. 462 – 'But love (*agape*) is in truth celestial food, the banquet of reason. "It beareth all things, endureth all things, hopeth all things. Love never faileth."' No reference to a love-feast here.
5. 463 – 'For the supper is made for love, but the supper is not love (*agape*); only a proof of mutual and reciprocal kindly feeling.' No reference to a love-feast here.

6. 463 – ‘Love (*agape*), then, is not a supper.’ No reference to a love-feast here but another reference to the virtue. If it were it would deny Svendsen’s point.
7. 463 – ‘the Holy Spirit, by Isaiah, denounces as wretched, depriving them tacitly of the name of love (*agape*).’ No reference to a love-feast here.
8. 465 – ‘to raise our eyes aloft to what is true, to depend on that divine food above ... For such is the *agape*, which, the food that comes from Christ shows that we ought to partake of.’ No reference to a love-feast here.
9. 1123 – ‘they eagerly embrace that convivial couch of honour in the Agape, falsely so called.’ This has reference to a love-feast but denies that it is called *Agape*, thus working against Svendsen’s argument.

Of nine references only two actually refer to the love-feast and neither really fit in with Svendsen’s case. His claim about Clement is thus shown to be fallacious.

Svendsen does not mention other available authorities, such as:

Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. ... It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptise or to celebrate a love-feast.

*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*, chap. 8.

Ignatius was an Apostolic Father who died between 98-117; thus this is very early evidence and more important than later writers whose testimony is distant from the apostles and suspect (indeed some theologians have commented that Chrysostom was mistaken in what he says about the *Agape*). Here Ignatius makes a distinct separation between the Supper, now called the Eucharist (‘thanksgiving’), and the love-feast (*agape*). This alone overturns Svendsen’s support from the fathers.

#### **THE TERM ‘BREAKING BREAD’ = A MEAL, NOT JUST THE LORD’S SUPPER**

Svendsen offers flimsy argumentation for this claim and though he supplies some support from writers, he also shows the opposing view from others. Historically, few commentators would agree with him. Greek scholar AT Robertson sums it up well:

To break bread (klasai arton). First aorist active infinitive of purpose of klaw. The language naturally bears the same meaning as in 2:42, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper which usually followed the Agaph. See 1Co 10:16. The time came, when the Agape was no longer observed, perhaps because of the abuses noted in 1Co 11:20ff. [*Robertson’s Word Pictures* on Acts 20:7; underline emph. PF]

Svendsen misses a crucial piece of evidence. The term ‘breaking of bread’ arose as a synonym for the Lord’s Supper from the practice of Jesus, both at the Last Supper and on the Emmaus Road (Lk 24). After the Last Supper Jesus broke from the tradition of the Passover meal and broke bread then shared the cup in order to appoint a new ritual to celebrate the New Covenant. Paul repeats this in the formula given in 1 Cor 11. However, the story of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to two disciples highlights the significance of Jesus being made known only when he broke bread (‘Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him’; v30-31). It is Luke himself who emphasises this, the same author who mostly uses the phrase, ‘breaking bread’. It is in the blessing and breaking of the bread, before any other food was eaten, that Jesus was made known. It should come as no surprise, then, that the term is often used to refer to the Supper, and not just to any main meal.

In the same way Luke’s colleague and teacher, Paul, uses the term only in connection with teaching on the Supper (1 Cor 10:16).

### **DENIAL OF PAUL'S REVELATION OF CHRIST**

This is a serious matter since it devalues Paul's apostolic ministry and denies clear statements in scripture. Svendsen argues that this is merely an aphorism meaning that Paul adopted existing Christian tradition (p76).

Gal 1:11-12 clearly states:

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul expressly affirms that he did not receive his Gospel theology (which included the doctrine of the Supper, as stated in 1 Cor 11:23) from men. It was received (the word can mean learned from others or received in the mind directly) through the revelation (*apokalupsis*) of Christ to him. The whole point of genuine apostolic ministry was that men were gifted and sent out by the Lord to preach the Gospel, train saints, teach men and write scripture. They were personally chosen from birth, commissioned and then inspired as prophets. This is further affirmed in Gal 1:15-16,

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.

It was God that revealed Christ in him, directly, because he was called.

To negate this and relegate it to mean merely adopting accepted traditions is a serious error. Paul even stresses that he did not discuss this with other apostles until much later (Gal 1:16-17).

### **DISCOURAGEMENT TO VIEW THE SUPPER AS LOOKING BACK TO THE CROSS, BUT RATHER A LOOKING FORWARD TO THE MESSIANIC BANQUET.**

A full discussion of this could occupy many pages, and I refer the reader to my aforementioned paper. Here it will simply state some concise points.

Paul makes a clear statement that the purpose of the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of Jesus' death, 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes' (1 Cor 11:26). This is as clear as it gets; the Supper is about the cross – first and foremost. 'Proclaim' = *katagge,llw (kataggello)*, means to declare, preach, announce, promulgate, make known, proclaim, publish, portray. The Supper announces and makes known the value of the atonement of Christ. The focus of the Supper is not our enjoyment of a future feast but the cross of Christ.

Paul states that we are to remember that Christ was given (we cannot argue about the word 'broken' here) for us in death, 'and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."' (1 Cor 11:24). The symbolism of the bread is the body of Christ given up in death for us – not initially a pre-figurement of a future banquet. Paul then tells us to remember Christ's death in our participation of the bread.

He also plainly says that we are to remember, in the Supper, that Jesus shed his blood for us, 'In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."' (1 Cor 11:25). The symbolism of the wine (cup) is the blood of Christ shed for sinners, not a festal banquet. Paul then says that Jesus himself commanded that we remember this as being the establishment of the New Covenant.

Without any shadow of doubt, the Supper is pre-eminently a remembrance or memorial of the cross of Christ and not an anticipation of the Messianic Feast (though this may have a subsidiary value). Arguments based upon speculation of what passages in the synoptics may or may not mean do not override plain apostolic teaching given didactically. We start with what is clear and then work back to what is unclear. Svendsen makes a basic mistake in interpretative method. Paul's teaching is the earliest writing on the subject, thus making it of even more importance; it is also unlikely that his beloved colleague, Luke, would alter that meaning in his later Gospel.

The Lord's Supper is the central ritual celebrating the New Covenant, and the focus of the New Covenant is the act that established it – the cross. Without Christ's atonement there would be no New Covenant. The completion of the church is at the end of the age when the last elect person has been converted, then all believers are changed at the return of Christ. After this, the Messianic Banquet occurs. Is this the central focus of the church or of the New Covenant? No it isn't. It isn't even the central matter of the events occurring at the end, which include the Lord's return, the final judgment, the restoration of the earth, the establishment of heaven upon the earth, the coronation of Christ's *existing kingship* and the sentencing of the wicked and demons to hell. To centre upon the feast instead of Christ's atonement, resurrection, ascension and present kingship (the latter are included in the ramifications of the atonement) is utterly foolish.

Virtually the whole evangelical church throughout history, and even many non-evangelical groups that call themselves Christian, have insisted that the Supper, while having some element of being forward-looking, is essentially backward-looking; a remembrance of Christ's death. Svendsen's position is not only unproven from scripture, but is also novel and without foundation.

The idea that *anamnesis* ('remembrance') means that we are to remind the Lord in the Supper that he has not yet fulfilled his promise to bring about the Messianic Banquet is also novel and without foundation. In establishing his argument for this meaning Svendsen has to resort to obscure technicalities that are themselves arguable. He also leans on rabbinic meanings that are opposed to clear scriptural meanings (e.g. regarding the Passover, which is a looking back not forward, as emphasised in many Psalms and prophetic writings as well as Moses' works). I will not waste time refuting all these; needless to say that no evangelical theologian of repute in history has agreed with him [a few modern more liberal scholars offer some support]. Apart from 'remembrance' being the clear meaning of reading the text without an agenda, Greek scholars state that 1 Cor 11:24-25 means, memorial, remembrance, means of remembrance, recollection or reminder in terms of reminding us [e.g. Bauer, Friberg, UBS Greek Dict., Thayer, Louw-Nida etc.]. Finally, if Paul states that the Supper teaches and preaches the death of Christ, how can that fit in with reminding God that he has not yet established the Messianic Banquet? Svendsen is hopelessly confused here and fails to prove his isolated view. If he were right, the entire historical church has misunderstood the central theological import of the Supper and reason for gathering – until he came along that is.

Some of his statements verge on blasphemy again. When he says, 'By repeatedly partaking of the Supper ... we are 'reminding' Christ of our plight that we are still without a host at our banquet' (p121), he misses the whole point of the Supper and denies his own argument earlier in his book. The Supper is a celebration of our union with Christ together and he is really present in the meal, but by his Spirit. We are not without a host at all, the Lord is with us: 'For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them' (Matt 18:20).



**IN GENERAL**

One continual fault in Svendsen's work is that he posits an argument, gives support and critiques of this argument from various sources, fails to make a thorough case, then concludes with a superficial statement that the argument is made, despite its apparent weaknesses. From that point these weak statements are subsequently mentioned as established facts. This is like building a house with bricks balanced precariously rather than using mortar and well-designed structures. To change the metaphor, his work is a house of cards.

## Conclusion

This work is a classic case of starting with an agenda and then struggling to support this by various technical means: splitting hairs about Greek words, misrepresenting early history and historical writers, wrong exegesis and ignoring the context of Biblical theology. It ignores the real reasons for the demise of the love-feast, which was the many abuses that followed from the time of Corinthians onwards until various councils prohibited it. It ignores the fact that the only groups that re-established the love-feast as central in church services were heretical cults. This book itself now becomes the chief foundation of a church movement whose central distinctive is the claim that the communal feast is the Lord's Supper, a claim that decentralises Christ from church meetings; a teaching that will only do harm.

The church is called to glory in Christ Jesus! In all that she does the church is centred upon Christ and seeks to worship him. Thus the features of church life all serve to glorify Christ in this way and that. Any teaching or practice that directly or indirectly turns the attention away from Christ must be rejected.

The chief concentration of the local church is not just the Lord, but Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2); the atonement must ever be our central consideration, just as it is of heaven. Thus the centre of the church meeting is the Lord's Supper, which pre-eminently focuses upon Christ and upon his death for us. Other aspects of the Supper (celebrating our unity, pointing toward the wedding banquet, the manifestation of grace) are all secondary to the primary point of remembering and proclaiming Christ's death – just as Paul commanded (1 Cor 11:26).

What Svendsen does in this book is take away the focus on Christ, placing it on the membership. The communal meal celebrates community and is a symbol and a means of practically edifying one another. All his arguments tend to move our thoughts away from Christ, away from worship, away from the cross, and place it somewhere else. It must be rejected as false. The fact that the work contains so many errors and misrepresentations gives us cause for concern.

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