

**The hidden God in the Eucharist. Tomas Ericsson's relationship with Communion,
based on Ingmar Bergman's film *Winter Light***

Abel Veres

Károli Gáspár Reformed University

Budapest

This study explores the theological and existential dimensions of the Eucharist through the lens of Ingmar Bergman's 1963 film *Winter Light* (*Nattvardsgästerna*), focusing on the character of Tomas Ericsson, a Swedish Lutheran pastor grappling with divine silence, despair, and alienation. The paper situates Bergman's film within broader theological discourse, particularly in relation to negative theology, Tillich's correlation method, and the Protestant understanding of the sacraments. It argues that the Eucharist, far from being a mere liturgical formality, becomes a locus of divine self-revelation precisely in God's hiddenness—a central motif drawn from Isaiah 45:15 and Luther's theology of the hidden God (*Deus absconditus*).

Tomas's existential crisis, shaped by trauma and disillusionment, mirrors the contemporary European experience of spiritual estrangement and theological ambiguity. His failed pastoral care, culminating in a congregant's suicide, reveals the inadequacy of an anthropocentric or sentimental conception of God. In contrast, the Eucharist is reinterpreted as a transformative encounter where the mystery of Christ's suffering and presence becomes manifest not through divine intervention but through divine concealment. The film's narrative arc leads Tomas from spiritual collapse to a silent yet profound rediscovery of grace, mediated through the sacramental symbolism of bread and wine.

The study further highlights the Eucharist as an eschatological, communal, and Trinitarian event that encapsulates past sacrifice, present communion, and future hope. It underscores the theological richness of the Eucharist, not only as *unio mystica cum Christo* but also as a symbolic reversal where God's strength is made perfect in weakness. In Bergman's cinematic theology, the Eucharist becomes a discipline of mystery (*disciplina arcani*), preserving its sacred depth against the backdrop of secular disillusionment. Ultimately, this theological engagement offers a critical yet hopeful vision for understanding divine silence as an invitation to deeper communion with the hidden yet present God.