Theological Studies
66 (2005)

EUCHARISTIC ORIGINS: FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE LITURGIES OF THE GOLDEN AGE

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[Reviewing 20th-century research into the origins of the Eucharist, the author observes that many of the Church's theologians have yet to appropriate the significance of what is commonly accepted as historical fact by exegetes and liturgical theologians, namely, that there is no clear line of development from the Last Supper of Jesus to the theologically rich Eucharistic Prayers of the patristic golden age. The implications of this for methodology, for systematic theology and ecclesiology, for liturgical and ecumenical theology, and for pastoral theology and homiletics are then briefly discussed.]

MANY A LITURGICAL THEOLOGIAN has inwardly groaned on Holy Thursday upon hearing the assembly sing "At that first Eucharist . . . " or upon hearing the homilist proclaim that we are "doing what the Lord did at the Last Supper." It is, of course, a theological commonplace that the Eucharist, in the full sense of the word, is the high point of both the expression of and the inchoative realization of the Church's marital covenant relationship with God. The center of this Eucharist is the Church's ritual action and prayer in which the assembly, led by its duly appointed minister, addresses God the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, praising and thanking God for the salvation-historical gifts of creation, covenant, and redemption, especially redemption in Jesus Christ, and asking God to send the Holy Spirit in order to continue, by means of the transformation of the eucharistic gifts, the transformation of the community and its individuals toward their eschatological destiny as the true Body of Christ. The ritual celebration culminates in the assembly coming forward to receive, as Augustine put it, "what you are," the Body of Christ. But this, of course, is still just the beginning. The full realization of the ritual celebration continues beyond what takes place in church. It continues as the assembly is sent forth to live out this eucharistic mystery in the world

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of everyday life. And it will finally be completed only at the *eschaton* when the universalistic hope expressed in the prophetic proclamation has been fulfilled: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

Is this what Christ did at the Last Supper? Was the Last Supper a Eucharist in this full sense of the word? Obviously not. This does not deny that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. What Jesus did at the Last Supper is obviously at least the generative moment of the institution of the Eucharist. But Eucharist in the full sense we have just described? No, that was still to come. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given to the Church, nor had the trinitarian theology yet been developed that is at the heart of the classical Eucharistic Prayers. Thus the Church, the assembly of those who address the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, was not yet constituted at the Last Supper. The Eucharist that Christians now celebrate is what the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of the risen Jesus, and over the course of generations and centuries, learned to do as it celebrated table fellowship with its risen Lord.

John Meier helps bring precision to this issue when he asks two questions: "Is it historically true that Jesus held a last Supper with his disciples?" "Is it historically true that, during that supper, Jesus did and said certain things regarding bread and wine that form the basis of the later Christian celebration of the eucharist?"[1] To both of these historical questions, Meier answers with an unequivocal "yes." But one needs to note that there is considerable nuance contained in the way he phrases these questions. For he adds something with which most students of eucharistic origins will agree: "We must appreciate that the Last Supper and eucharist are not the same thing pure and simple."[2]

If that is the case, how does one move from the dominical instituting moment with Jesus at the Last Supper to the full-fledged eucharistic celebration that one can find, for example, in the anaphoras associated with the names of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great that were developing by the end of the fourth century in the "golden age" of patristic theology? That story has not been fully told, nor is it within the purpose and competence of my article to try to tell it. Actually, unless a lot more data from the first Christian centuries can be recovered than is presently available, that full story may never be told.[3] The available evidence indi-

[1] John Meier, "The Eucharist and the Last Supper: Did it Happen?" *Theology Digest* 42 (Winter, 1995) 335–51, at 347.

[2] Ibid. 348.

[3] Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (2nd ed., New York: Oxford University,

cates that it is a misconception, although a common one, to assume that there is *one* story, one relatively unified line of development from the Last Supper to the fully developed Eucharist. "Eucharist" is, of course, not an equivocal concept. But neither is it unqualifiedly univocal. For as one looks back and looks around, one sees that there have been and still are many different ways of celebrating the Eucharist. The exegetical and historical data indicate that this seems to be true *right from the beginning*. The starting point of this article is the apparent fact that the New Testament gives witness to a number of different Eucharists, or, more precisely perhaps, different practices of religious table fellowship that can be called Eucharists.

The first main part of my article outlines some of the major developments over the last century in the history and theology of eucharistic origins. This is done primarily, but not exclusively, from a Roman Catholic or high-church sacramental point of view. In a second section, using as a foil the exegetical research and interpretations of Bruce Chilton, I sketch out what one can know and what one can surmise about the different "Eucharists" in the New Testament. The third and concluding section begins to explore the significance and consequences of this for theology, ecclesiology, liturgical theology, and ecumenical theology.

Before beginning, let me be open about the fact that one of the purposes of this article, as I have come to realize in the course of writing it, is apologetic. I mean apologetics not in the sense of defending Christianity against attacks from without, but defending Christianity from that internal undermining that takes place when Christian theologians do not deal adequately with facts that are generally accessible to serious scholars. For example, Elizabeth Johnson, reviewing John F. Haught's *Deeper Than Darwin* (Westview, 2003), a book that she describes as "an apologetics without rancor," writes: "One reason why scientifically educated people today have little interest in formal religion is the failure of theology to integrate the revelatory experience of a personal God into an expansive cosmological setting."[4] Analogously, one reason why people educated with a historical awareness have difficulty today taking the Church seriously is its failure, and the failure of pastoral liturgical theology, to integrate into its official forms of worship both the insights of modernity—let alone postmodernity—and the generally accessible facts of history and culture.

2002) points out that the presently available historical information about liturgy in the first few centuries is but a fraction of what would be needed to sketch out a reliable history of it.

[4] Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., in: *America* 189 (November 17, 2003) 18.

MAJOR 20TH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS IN EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY

The 20th century saw several paradigm shifts in the interpretation of the eucharistic texts of the New Testament.[5] At the beginning of the century, Protestant-Catholic polemical positions dominated. Each side tended to read the texts as supporting its own particular position. Catholics saw them as supporting its understanding both of the transubstantiated real presence and of the eucharistic celebration itself as a sacrifice. Protestants generally claimed the opposite. However, even then, the development of liturgical studies and the inexorable advance of the historical-critical method indicated that the days of respectability for such polemically driven exegesis and interpretation were numbered. The work of Dom Gregory Dix in 1945 was a singular sign of this development away from the polemical. His particular findings, however adopted or modified by others, remain a striking example of liturgical research that is acclaimed for its value to a broad range of scholars and theologians across the ecumenical spectrum.[6]

But the first significant breakthrough might well have been what was taking place from the mid 1930s in the work of Joachim Jeremias on *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus.*[7] Jeremias drew expertly on the resources of modern philology in the effort to recover, at least conjecturally, the *ipsissima verba Iesu*. Even critics who questioned the validity of the venture had to respect the enormous scholarship at work.[8] On the other hand, more conservative scholars, among them Catholic exegetes still struggling under the restrictive instructions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, found the method and results congenial.[9] Jeremias argued that behind the four extant accounts of the institution of the Eucharist, Mark 14:22–25, Matthew 26:26–29, Luke 22:19–20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, as well as John 6:51b–57, there can be discerned a "primitive Semitic tradition . . . traceable back into

[5] Much of what follows in the next few pages is a summarizing update—and also correction—of what I wrote in "The Eucharist and Redemption: the Last Supper and Jesus' Understanding of His Death," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 (1981) 21–27.

[6] Dom Gregory Dix, O.S.B., *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945).

[7] Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960, first ed. 1935); ET: *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* [with author's revisions to 1964 ed.] (London: SCM, 1966; repr., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977)

[8] Critical scholarship recognizes that the New Testament eucharistic words of institution are already the result of community formation. Working back to their likely formulation in Aramaic does not necessarily bring us back to the *ipsissima verba Iesu.*

[9] In those early years, before the "Magna Charta" of Catholic biblical scholarship, the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1947), Catholic exegetes found it safer to focus more on philological exegesis than on the more "radical" aspects of the historical-critical method such as source criticism and form criticism.

the first decade after the death of Jesus with the assistance of exact philological observation."[10] However, the meaning of the reconstituted *verba* could still be debated. For, as Chilton put it: "the debate between those who see them [the Gospels] as literally true reports and those who see them as literary fictions remained unresolved."[11] Sometimes this debate circles around the category of "cult legend." In terms of literary genre, it is unproblematic to read such narratives in the Gospels as cult legends, as long as one understands cult legend in the neutral sense. But if one understands a cult legend as necessarily having no historical basis, the debate is on.[12] Jeremias provided strong support for those who favored the historical side of the debate. However, the available evidence, embedded as it is in faith-documents, does not allow, as exegetes now more readily admit, for definitive scientific conclusions. In addition, as indicated above and as the body of my article demonstrates, the idea that there is just one line of development in the early history of the Eucharist seems to be a misconception.

Another significant breakthrough in this trajectory of development took place in the 1950s in the work of exegetes such as Heinz Schürmann and theologians such as Johannes Betz.[13] These scholars and others like them brought to bear all the resources of the increasingly sophisticated methods of historical criticism and historical liturgical studies in order to work from the New Testament texts back toward the probable shape and meaning of the words of institution in a very early Christian Eucharist. However,

[10] Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1964) 196.

[11] Bruce Chilton, unpublished paper: "Eucharist: Surrogate, Metaphor, Sacrament of Sacrifice." This paper recounts many of the findings of Chilton's earlier works: *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992) and *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994).

[12] See Meier, "The Eucharist and the Last Supper" 336.

[13] Johannes Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter. I/1: Die Aktualpräsenz der Person und des Heilswerkes Jesu im Abendmahl nach der vorephesinischen griechischen Patristik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1955); II/1: *Die Realpräsenz des Leibes und Blutes Jesu im Abendmahl nach dem Neuen Testament* (1961, 2nd ed. 1964); "Eucharist (I. Theological)," *Sacramentum Mundi* 2 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 257–67. Heinz Schürmann, "Die Semitismen im Einsetzungsbericht bei Markus und bei Lukas (Mk 14, 22–24; Lk 22, 19b–20," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 73 (1951) 72–77; "Lk 22, 19b–20 als ursprüngliche Textüberlieferung," *Biblica* (1951) 364–92, 522–41; *Der Paschamahlbericht Lk 22, (7–14) 15–18,* Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 19/5 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1955); *Der Einsetzungsbericht Lk 22, 19–20,* Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 20/4 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1955); "Die Gestalt der urchristliche Eucharistiefeier" *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 6 (1959) 107–31; "Eucharistiefeier (urchristliche)," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (2nd ed., 1959) 1159–62.

rather than a major paradigm shift, this was more of a continuation of the attempt, à la Jeremias, to work back toward an (i.e., "the") original form of the Eucharist. The result was what Betz called the "Antioch-Palestinian Account," a reconstruction of the probable wording of the eucharistic celebration in Antioch within ten or fifteen years of the original Last Supper. This reconstruction reads (with the more conjectural elements in parentheses):

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed
took (taking?) bread, and, having said a prayer of thanks,
he broke [it] (and gave [it] to them) and said:
this is my body which is given for many;
(do this in memory of me.)
In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying:
this cup [is] the (new?) covenant in my blood;
(do this in memory of me.)[14]

This reconstruction, it was claimed, even with the removal of its more conjectural elements, contains, at least virtually, a remarkably well developed theology of the Eucharist. It also lies chronologically so close to the historical Jesus that it cannot easily be written off as due primarily to the process of community formation. Finally, it allows one to sketch out both a reliable picture of the at least implicit eucharistic theology of the first generation and some clear indications of what Jesus probably had in mind in instituting the Eucharist.[15] But all this still suffered under major limitations. Left unresolved was the debate between "literally true reports" and "literary fictions," as can be seen in Betz's debate with Willi Marxsen and with the more radical form critics.[16] It also continued to assume, what is now challenged by more recent liturgical scholars such as Paul Bradshaw [see n. 3 above], that there was a kind of linear development in the earliest

[14] Betz, *Die Eucharistie* II/1, 18. Meier, some 35 years later, makes basically the same move, a bit more reserved in his reconstruction of the *verba,* but also a bit more bold in his openness to see them as *ipsissima verba Iesu*: He writes: ""The closest we can get to the earliest form of the narrative is this: "[Jesus] took bread, and giving thanks [or: pronouncing a blessing], broke [it] and said: 'This is my body.' Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying: 'This cup is the covenant in my blood.' Obviously, the words spoken by Jesus would be older than the narrative surrounding them. At least the very "words of institution," as we call them, may well go back to Jesus himself"" (Meier, "The Eucharist and the Last Supper" 347).

[15] See Daly, "The Eucharist and Redemption" 22–23.

[16] See Johannes Betz, *Die Eucharistie,* II/1, 215–18. Betz is challenging Willi Marxsen, *Das Abendmahl als christologisches Problem* (Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1963); ET: *The Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

Eucharists. The work of Rudolf Pesch,[17] who took the Last Supper account in Mark as, in effect, a preferred historical source, has not been widely accepted, and in any case it fails to break out of the methodological history-vs.-fiction impasse.

THE SIX "EUCHARISTS" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this ongoing search for eucharistic origins, the work of Bruce Chilton suggests that we have come to a significant paradigmatic breakthrough.[18] This breakthrough has been prepared by a half-century of New Testament redaction criticism and the continual refinement of critical methods that have made scholars more sensitive to the sometimes irreducible particularities of the biblical texts. To be able to "find"[19] in the New Testament *six* different ways of celebrating what Christians came to call the Eucharist, and to locate each of these in its own specific socio-religio-political setting, each with its own theological implications and thus, cumulatively, with massive theological implications, brings one paradigmatically into an entirely new situation. If Chilton's exegetical findings are accurate, indeed even if they should be only approximately accurate, leaving details to be argued about, this would seem to make irrelevant, or at least to sublate, a number of time-honored scholarly approaches of the kind I have been describing. Fundamental to these traditional scholarly approaches (to which I myself have also adhered) was, first, the importance given to the already mentioned "literally true" vs. "literary fictions" debate, and, second, the assumption that there was a somewhat unified line of development that one could trace from the established Eucharist of later centuries back close to the time of the historical Jesus. History and exegesis now seriously question the hegemony of such assumptions.

Jesus' Practice of Table Fellowship

Jesus joined with his followers in Galilee and Judea, both disciples and sympathizers, in meals that were designed to anticipate the coming of

[17] Rudolf Pesch, *Das Abendmahl und Jesu Todesverständnis*, Quaestiones Disputatae 80 (Freiburg: Herder, 1978); "Die Abendmahlsüberlieferung," in *Das Markusevangelium. Zweiter Teil. Kommentar zu Kap. 8,27—16,20.* Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 2/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977).

[18] Regarding the scare quotes ("Eucharists") in the heading to this section: Although I am following Chilton as a convenient guide, I am aware that his exegetical findings, especially his interpretation of the data, may be out of step with that of other exegetes. Is it accurate, for example, to label as "Eucharist" all identifiable instances of New Testament table fellowship? I claim, nevertheless, that Chilton's findings are sufficiently close to what historians of the liturgy and other exegetes find in order to justify the kind of reflections I offer in the third part of this article.

[19] "See" or "read" would be more accurate words, for what Chilton "finds" has always been there in the texts for anyone to see—granted, of course, that Chilton sees there much more than many others see.

God's kingdom. The meals were characterized by a readiness to accept the hospitality and the produce of Israel at large. A willingness to provide for the meals, to join in the fellowship, to forgive and to be forgiven, was seen by Jesus as a sufficient condition for eating in his company and for entry into the kingdom.[20]

Jesus' view of purity was doubtlessly quite lax in the estimation of the rabbis of his time, for the carefully guarded purity rules defined who could share in meals, the primary marker of social grouping in first-century Palestine. Jesus' "rules" were distinctive in that they did not seem to restrict purity—access to meals with him, which seemed to imply anticipatory access to the kingdom he was proclaiming—to any already existing religious, family, or social group. It is not that he was unconcerned with purity, but his approach to it was distinctive in its inclusiveness. For Jesus, the primary markers of purity, the primary requirements for table fellowship in the kingdom were: Israel as forgiven and willing to provide of its own produce. Chilton sees this as the first type in the development of the Eucharist. Thus far, few, if any, would disagree with at least the major thrust of such findings.[21]

The "Last" Supper

Despite the controversy involved with these lapses in ritual purity, Jesus could have continued this practice indefinitely. But, in the incident referred to as the Cleansing of the Temple, he also sought to influence or reform purity practices associated with the Temple. Given the importance of the Temple, this attempt to "occupy" it—i.e., to change its purity rules—might have been enough to bring about his execution. But the authorities did not act immediately, and Jesus, apparently realizing that he had not succeeded, took a significant further step. In his meals, as he shared wine, he started referring to it as the equivalent of the blood of an animal shed in sacrifice, and in sharing bread, claiming that its value was that of sacrificial flesh. "Here was a sacrifice of sharings which the authorities could not control, and which the nature of Jesus' movement made it impossible for them to ignore. Jesus' meals after his failed occupation of the Temple became a surrogate of sacrifice, the second type of Eucharist."[22]

[20] Chilton, "Eucharist: Surrogate ..." For the exegetical details see *A Feast of Meanings*, esp. chap 1, "The Purity of the Kingdom" 13–45.

[21] Few will dispute that Jesus' "rules" for table fellowship seemed to be distinctive in their inclusiveness. But to specify these "rules" as, simply, "Israel as forgiven and willing to provide of its own produce" can be seen as interpreting beyond the evidence.

[22] Chilton, "Eucharist: Surrogate ... " For the exegetical details, see *A Feast of Meanings*, esp. chap. 2: "The Surrogate of Sacrifice" 46–74.

Against the many voices that will protest that this massively over-interprets the exegetical and historical evidence—and I do agree that there is over-interpretation here—let me make two immediate observations and a request. First, I will come back later to some of the exegetical data and arguments that can support Chilton's position on this point. Second, the theological implications of there being a number of different "Eucharists" in the New Testament (i.e., at least types of religious table fellowship) which constitute the main purpose of this article, do not stand or fall with one's agreement or non-agreement with any particular detail, or with this particular interpretation of Jesus' Last Supper. Thus, I ask readers to suspend temporarily their possible skepticism on this point while I work out the rest of the exposition.

Petrine Christianity: The Blessing/Breaking of Bread at Home

In this stage of Eucharistic development, the *berakhah* prayer of Judaism seems to have become a principal model of Eucharist. Bread took precedence over wine, and, as Acts 1:12–26, 2:46, and 3:1–4:37 clearly describe, a double domestication took place. Instead of seeking the hospitality of others, as the itinerant Jesus seemed to do, adherents of the movement, under the leadership of Peter and/or the Twelve, gathered in the homes of colleagues where they "broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people" (Acts 2:46–47). In addition, apparently they also acknowledged the validity of sacrifice in the Temple. In doing this they seemed—if the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper and this account of very early Christian worship have significant historical content—to be changing the nature of the meal and the memory of what Jesus had said at that meal. For example, there is no mention of wine, nor does there, in this account of the earliest Christian gatherings, seem to have been any sense of being in tension with the officials of Judaism or its religious practices.[23]

These facts and inconsistencies cry out for an explanation. Chilton's hypothesis, actually supported by what meager historical evidence is available, offers such an explanation, namely, that in the years immediately following Jesus' death, the cultic regulations of the Temple had temporarily shifted to something much closer to what Jesus had been agitating for. At the very least, whatever hypothesis is followed, this Eucharist (or pre-Eucharist) of the primitive Church described in Acts seems to have been quite different from the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper, and the reflection of those found in John 6. However, in terms of eucharistic origins, this was anything but a phase to be passed through and then forgotten.

[23] Ibid. esp. chap. 3: "The Covenantal Sacrifice of Sharings" 75–92.

For, from this phase of the development came two additional constitutive features of the Christian Eucharist: the construal of the supper as a sacrifice of sharings with specifically covenantal meaning, and the repetitive, ritual character of the Christian meal.[24]

The Passover, the Circle of James

The tendency to domestication is here pursued further, for the Eucharist is now seen as a Seder meal, open only to Jews in a state of purity, and to be celebrated only once a year, at Passover, in Jerusalem, as prescribed in Exodus 12:48. The effect of this Jacobean program—a possible antecedent to the later Quartodeciman practice?—"was to integrate Jesus' movement fully within the liturgical institutions of Judaism, to insist upon the Judaic identity of the movement and upon Jerusalem as its governing center," but without actually replacing Israel's Seder.[25]

Paul and the Synoptic Gospels

Paul, locating the Last Supper on the night on which Jesus was betrayed (1 Corinthians 11:23), vehemently resisted Jacobean claims. He also emphasized the link between Jesus' death and the Eucharist, and he accepts what Chilton calls the Hellenistic refinement of the Petrine type that presented the Eucharist as a sacrifice for sin.[26] This is also what we find in the Synoptic Gospels which use words to suggest that Jesus' blood is shed in the interests of the communities for which those Gospels were composed: for the "many" (in Damascus?) Matthew 26:28 and (in Rome?) Mark 14:24; on behalf of "you" (in Antioch?) Luke 22:20. The Synoptic Gospels also emphasize the heroism of Jesus such as to make the meal an occasion to join in the solidarity of martyrdom. In addition the Synoptics have two miraculous feeding stories which symbolize the inclusion even of non-Jews within the Eucharist understood as a sort of philosophical symposium (see Mark 6:32–44; 8:1–10 and parallels).[27]

[24] Ibid. 88–89.

[25] Ibid. esp. chap. 4: "The Passover" 92–108.

[26] To call this a "Hellenistic refinement" is a bit puzzling, since there would seem to be at least as much evidence to suggest calling it a specifically Jewish refinement. See the section "Sin Offering and Atonement" in Robert J. Daly, S.J., *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 25–35; and the multiple references to sin offering in the index of Robert Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 18 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1978).

[27] Ibid. esp. chap. 5: "The Heroic Hata'at: Pauline and Synoptic Symposia" 109–30. But I also ask here the same question (as in n. 26 above): Do not the Jewish traditions regarding the messianic/eschatological banquet provide as much, if not more, background than Hellenistic ideas of a philosophical symposium?

The Gospel of John

Jesus identifies himself in John 6 as the manna, a motif already found in Paul (1 Corinthians 10:1–4), but now developed to construe the Eucharist as a mystery in which Jesus, not literally but sacramentally, offers/gives his own personal body and blood in Eucharist. This would probably not be a totally new idea to Hellenistic Christians who followed synoptic practice. But Johannine practice now makes this meaning explicit. It was, as is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel, an unambiguous, clear break with Judaism. For with this development, Eucharist has become a "sacrament" understandable only in Hellenistic terms, and involving "a knowing conflict with the ordinary understanding of what Judaism might and might not include."[28]

To sum up. Chilton's purpose in laying out the evidence for these different Eucharists in the New Testament is to free us from such "ideological regimens which will have the Gospels be either only historical or only fictive, [and thus] starve the reader of the meanings that generated the texts at hand." The generative exegesis of eucharistic texts that he proposes does not allow one to conclude to "a single meaning that is alleged to have occasioned all the others," nor, in this approach, does the initial meaning determine the final meaning.[29]

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As I noted earlier, the theological implications or consequences of these findings do not depend on full agreement on all the exegetical details and interpretive reconstructions that Chilton lays out. There is significant de-

[28] Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings*, esp. chap. 6: "The Miraculous Food of Paul and John" 131–45.

[29] Chilton, "Eucharist: Surrogate . . ." (see n. 11 above). Chilton goes on: "The meanings conveyed by words must be the point of departure for a generative exegesis, because those meanings are our only access to what produced the texts to hand. But having that access, it becomes evident that Eucharist is not a matter of the development of a single, basic meaning within several different environments [as I myself have previously assumed—RJD]. Those environments have themselves produced various meanings under the influence of definable practices. Eucharist was not simply handed on as a tradition. Eucharistic traditions were rather the catalyst that permitted communities to crystallize their own practice in oral or textual form. What they crystallized was a function of the practice that had been learned, palpable gestures with specified objects and previous meanings, along with the meaning and the emotional response that the community discovered in Eucharist. There is no history of the tradition apart from a history of meaning, a history of emotional response, a history of practice: the practical result of a generative exegesis of Eucharistic texts is that practice itself is an appropriate focus in understanding the New Testament."

bate, and in some cases significant disagreement, about certain details of Chilton's interpretations. Despite this, it is my assumption that there is a consensus among critical exegetes and liturgical historians that what Chilton attempts to do is what they attempt to do. I argue that his findings, even if reduced by many grains of salt, are sufficiently similar to findings common among exegetes and historians so as to require serious attention. There is enough there to oblige theologians across a wide spectrum of sub disciplines—theology, ecclesiology, liturgy, ecumenism, and pastoral theology—to sit up and take notice. But allow me now to formulate some further remarks about Chilton's methodology.

Methodology

When one stands back and looks at the large picture, one can see that over the past century there has been a series of ever more sophisticated refinements in the historical-critical method. For the purposes of this article, one of the most significant of these developments has been the general acceptance of *Redaktionsgeschichte* and the now broadly recognized need to attend to the specific context and purposes of each biblical author. These refinements are now increasingly being applied to the study of patristics, church history, liturgical history, and as here, the history of eucharistic origins. Fifty or sixty years ago, Chilton's whole approach could easily have been dismissed as reductionism by mainstream theologians. Now, only a fundamentalist or biblical literalist could so dismiss them. However, though not rejected, findings such as those of Chilton have not yet been appropriated and seriously dealt with by the common body of main stream Christian theologians (as distinct from exegetes and historians). It is by theologians, especially by ecclesiologists, that they are likely to be seen as new and upsetting. I single out two points where Chilton's findings and exegetical reconstructions are especially likely, for theological reasons, to encounter strong resistance.

The first of these is his reconstruction of what Jesus did at the Last Supper.[30] First, few exegetes would contest the general thrust of Chilton's characterization of Jesus' practice of inclusive table fellowship. Nor would they seriously contest that at the meal of Jesus commonly called "last,"—or, by extension, in his final few meals with his disciples—something special, something new took place, after which he was immediately arrested and executed.[31] What one can obviously contest are the details of Chilton's interpretive reconstruction to the effect that Jesus was probably saying something like: "this bread [that is available to any and all] is what serves

[30] See above, my section on: The "Last" Supper.
[31] *Post hoc*, however, does not necessarily mean *propter hoc*.

for me—for you, for us—as the flesh of sacrifice"; and "this wine [that is available to any and all] is what serves for me—for you, for all—as the blood of sacrifice." Many will obviously find this to be an overly conjectural and minimalist reconstruction. For those committed to viewing the Eucharist that is now celebrated as "doing what the Lord did the night before he died," it is an unacceptably minimalist reconstruction.

But in defense of such a reconstruction one can point out that it has notable explanatory power. It, or something like this, helps to explain why the authorities, who apparently did not act immediately after Jesus' action in the Temple,[32] now act quickly. It also helps set up the context of the Eucharist in the circle of Peter (see Acts 2:43–47) that apparently, at least as Chilton interprets it, "changed the nature of the meal and the memory of what Jesus had said at the 'last supper.'"[33] Breaking bread "in their homes" and going "to the Temple area together every day" (Acts 2:46) is not the kind of challenging, or revolutionary activity that even our minimalist reconstruction suggests, let alone a maximalist reconstruction. If the community of Acts 2:43–47, even according to a minimalist reconstruction, was doing what Jesus did the night before he died, it would hardly have been "having the good will of all the people" (Acts 2:47).

Notice the methodological shift that is taking place here. In contrast to traditional theologies of eucharistic origins, this approach is not an attempt to find in the various words of the New Testament a line of development (at times awkwardly harmonized) that would enable one to explain the more developed theology and praxis of the Church's Eucharist. Instead of that, this approach tries to identify/reconstruct the praxis that explains the words that have come down to us in the New Testament. There is, of course, some circularity here, as there necessarily is in any such interpretation of limited data. For one first has to use the words that have been handed down to us in order to reconstruct the praxis that explains the words. The result is that reconstructing in this way, a way that makes better use of modern historical-critical tools, reveals a pluriform eucharistic practice in the New Testament Church and, in our case, the six types of "Eu-

[32] Chilton reads this action in the Jerusalem Temple not as a direct attack against the Temple cult, but as an attempt (not without precedent in the action of other rabbis) to change its purity regulations in order to make the sacrificial cult more easily accessible to ordinary Israelites. This made Jesus all the more a powerful nuisance whom the authorities would like to be rid of, but not yet the kind of direct threat that required immediate "neutralizing" action. This is, of course, a hypothetical reconstruction. Its main merit is not that it fills in the blanks and tells us with certainty what actually happened, but that it lays out a possible scenario. *Something* like this must have happened. Paradoxically, or ironically, this imaginative reconstruction—which sails closer to the line of "literary fiction" than "literal history," relies on the historicity of the chronology implied in these "fictions."

[33] Chilton, "Eucharist: Surrogate. . ." (see n. 11 above).

charist" (or the practice of table fellowship that might be called "Eucharist") that Chilton finds there.

A second (but related) point where Chilton's findings and reconstructions are likely to meet theological resistance is the place where he locates what theologians, especially in the Western Church, tend to see as the heart of eucharistic theology: the autobiographical identification of the meal elements of bread and wine with the body and blood of Jesus. Chilton locates this explicitly only in the sixth (Johannine) type of the Eucharist, and only implicitly or inchoatively in the fifth (Pauline and Synoptic) type. Historical criticism does not allow one to trace this all the way back to the historical Last Supper. But traditional theological approaches still use that criticism in an attempt—à la Jeremias, Schürmann, Betz, and more recently, Meier—to trace it back as far as possible. But careful attention to the exegetical evidence *in its own right and in its own context*, suggests that this approach, especially the use to which it is put by much traditional theology and preaching, may owe more to Procrustes than to the Holy Spirit.

Theology

The Eucharist, the central sacrament of the Church, was instituted by Jesus Christ. It is not the "that" but the "how" of this affirmation that is in question here. For it is clear that the Eucharist was not instituted by Jesus in the historicizing manner that has been taken for granted as the basic position of Christian orthodoxy. We do not know and cannot reconstruct in precise detail what Jesus did at his "Last Supper." The New Testament itself remembered and interpreted what Jesus did in quite different ways. Attending to these differences undermines the assumption that there is a single line of development that runs from Jesus to the later Eucharist of the Church, and that can be traced back by us toward Jesus. And indeed, if by Eucharist is meant what is now done in the Church, the farther back one goes, for example, to the "Eucharists" of James, Peter, and Jesus, the farther one gets from the Eucharist of the present. Indeed, if an exact reconstruction of what Jesus did at the Last Supper were possible, it would probably look quite different from what Christians now celebrate.

Where then, does that leave us? How should one react to this loss of what was formerly thought to be the sure foundation of eucharistic theology? One way would be to succumb to the temptation to react the way so many did over Galileo's hypotheses, thinking that the Bible really does teach us how the heavens go instead of how to go to heaven. That is why so many want to read the New Testament as teaching them how to celebrate the Eucharist, instead of reading it as revealing something about the

different ways in which Jesus and some of his earliest followers celebrated table fellowship, ways that have grown (with the Holy Spirit guiding) into the somewhat different ways in which today's Christian churches celebrate the Eucharist. But if these are the alternatives, the Christian theologian is left with the unsettling question: Is there any anchor, any port of refuge from the Scylla of an uncritical dogmatic fideism and the Charybdis of a reductionist relativism? Let me suggest two.

First, theologians must renew their faith in Jesus' promise to be with his Church, and their faith in the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church and world. The Eucharists that we now celebrate are what the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, learned to do over the course of the first few centuries as it celebrated table fellowship in memory of Jesus. I have consciously used the plural, Eucharists, not to undercut the affirmation of the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity (at least in hope), but simply to point out that Christians have significantly different ways of celebrating Eucharist, as the recent Roman Catholic recognition of the Chaldean Anaphora of Addai and Mari reminds us.[34] In other words, one does not need to be able to trace eucharistic praxis back to the historical Jesus or even to the New Testament in order to legitimate it.

A second suggestion is to rephrase or relocate the question that is being asked. Instead of asking only how the earliest Eucharists can teach us anything at all—if we have so little data with which to reconstruct them, and if the reconstructions are so different and at times so contradictory to each other—perhaps it is a very different question that needs to be asked: Where, for example, do Christians now meet God? Where and how do Christians, as living stones in God's Temple (see 1 Peter 2:5–10) offer sacrifice? How do they enter into, become ritually, sacramentally, and really present to the Christ-event? They do this both by celebrating Eucharist together and, in an extension of that liturgical act, make that Eucharist real by living it out in their daily lives. In the eucharistic celebration, a Christian assembly with its duly appointed presider prays to the Father through the Son, asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit to transform the eucharistic gifts and, through that transformation, to continue to transform the eucharistic assembly into the Body of Christ. This is a marital covenant event in which is actualized the closest relation possible between the

[34] What is, for a traditional point of view, particularly startling about this is the official Roman Catholic affirmation of the validity of a Eucharistic Prayer that does not contain the words of institution. For an introductory account, see Robert F. Taft, "Mass without the Consecration?" *America* 188 (May 12, 2003) 7 ff. For a more detailed and scholarly account, see Taft's "Mass without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001," *Worship* 77 (2003) 482–509.

Church and the Church's divine partner.[35] On the part of the members of the eucharistic assembly, their participation in the offering of Christian sacrifice is a dynamic, interpersonal reality that begins with the self-offering of the Father in the gift of the Son, continues with the totally free and loving self-offering response of the Son in his humanity to the Father and for us, and then, finally, becomes "Christian sacrifice" when the Christians themselves, in the power of the same Spirit that was in Jesus, are transformatively (at least inchoatively) taken up into that trinitarian reality.[36]

This, in the full theological sense, is what is happening when one celebrates Eucharist. If it is not happening, both liturgically and in one's everyday life, one must challenge, as Paul did in his context (1 Corinthians 11:17–30, esp. v. 20) whether it is indeed the Lord's Supper that is being celebrated. It is critically important to realize that the theological developments that make possible this sketch of the Eucharist were spread out over the first four Christian centuries. This was the time that it took for the theology of the Trinity to reach some maturity, and for that theology to become embedded in the classical Eucharistic Prayers that are associated with the names of Chrysostom and Basil. In other words, for a true understanding of the Eucharist, one must look primarily to what has developed in the Church rather than to fragile reconstructions of the earliest Christian Eucharists.

Ecclesiology

My exposition has already located the Eucharist as a church event, indeed the Church event par excellence. So, what does ecclesiology have to say? There is a curious irony here. Many of the implications and consequences of what I have been developing challenge the adequacy of a number of aspects, even recently emphasized aspects, of official Roman Catholic magisterial teaching. But, on the other hand, this same development powerfully elevates the centrality and role of the Church, in the develop-

[35] See Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998) 346.

[36] See Robert J. Daly, "Marriage, Eucharist, and Christian Sacrifice," *INTAMS Review* 9 (Spring 2003) 56–75, esp. 56–60; "Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 24–42; "Sacrifice: The Way to Enter the Paschal Mystery," *America* 188 (May 14, 2003) 14 ff. Those familiar with recent developments in liturgical theology will recognize both in this article and in my recent work on Eucharist and sacrifice the towering influence of Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. See especially his "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994) 405–57, and, especially for this trinitarian understanding of sacrifice, *The Eucharist in the West* 381–82.

ment of eucharistic praxis and theology. This tension is palpable in the very title of the Holy Thursday encyclical of John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (April 17, 2003). The dynamic line of development that the pope presumably has in mind is the traditional Catholic way of conceiving that Christ/God ordains the priest to act *in persona Christi* in confecting the Eucharist, and from that comes the Church: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia.* However, the dynamic line of development that lies behind this article, and that corresponds to the conceptions of most contemporary liturgical theologians is that Christ and the Church are in a dynamic (covenantal/marital) relationship out of which comes the Eucharist. In this conception, the priest is perceived as being more *in persona Christi capitis ecclesiae* (in the person of Christ, head of the Church), and indeed not as a kind of mediator between Christ and the Church, but as embedded in the Christ–Church relationship.[37]

There are significant differences between these two conceptions and their various theoretical and practical consequences. If these are to be worked out peacefully, the official magisterium and the theologians of the Church will have to call much more earnestly upon the Holy Spirit of wisdom, understanding, forbearance, and charity, than perhaps they have in the past. In that Spirit, I suggest that the approach of this article with its powerful emphasis on the role of the Church in the patristic development of the classical Eucharistic Prayers should find some positive resonance with the official magisterium. It should enable the magisterium to think complementarily not only in terms of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* but also in terms of *Eucharistia de Ecclesia.*

Liturgical and Ecumenical Theology

"Liturgical" and "ecumenical" are consciously placed together in this section, reflecting the reality that the academic study of liturgy has long since become ecumenical, and that this ecumenical richness is already having its effect on the liturgical worship and practices of the different Christian churches.[38] But the main focus of my article has been, first, on the fact

[37] See Robert J. Daly, "Robert Bellarmine and Post-Tridentine Eucharistic Theology," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 239–60.

[38] Obvious instances of this are, to list a few: (1) what the Roman Catholic liturgical reform has learned from the Orthodox and Eastern churches about the epiclesis, and from Protestants about the centrality of the Word in worship; (2) and from the other side, what the mainline Protestant churches have been learning from the Episcopalian, Catholic, and Eastern churches about the broad richness of the liturgy; (3) the ecumenical membership, including their working groups and seminars, of the Societas Liturgica and the North American Academy of Liturgy; (4) the ecumenical structure and content of practically all recent hymnals; (5) the obvious (and acknowledged) ecumenical influence on the content and structure of the

that variety and even divergence have been characteristics of the Eucharist right from the beginning, and, second, on the implication that such variety has apparently always been integral to the Spirit-guided history of Christian liturgy, and therefore should be integral to efforts to reform the liturgy.

This is by no means a plea for liturgical anarchy. We may at times chafe under it, but we cannot get along without church order. Paul's various practical instructions about who should speak, and in what tongues, etc., show that the concern for liturgical order goes back to the very first few decades of Christian table fellowship. And in the early third century, Origen's charming *Dialogue with Heraclides* suggested that the need for "conventions" in the celebration of the liturgy, in the public prayer of the Church, has been a constant.[39] But the incontestable evidence of great variety and diversity suggests that the greater tolerance of liturgical diversity in the Protestant churches, in contrast to the Catholic Church, is more in line with the overall Christian tradition, including, as I indicated earlier, what one can reconstruct of Jesus' practice of table fellowship.

Here, however, as in most human situations, there are few absolutes. There is, on the one hand, the general right and need of Christian assemblies to have "conventions" of public praying and worship with which they can become reasonably comfortable and within which they can grow spiritually. A primary purpose of liturgical rules and regulations is to take care of this. But overemphasis on rules can lead to atrophy. Christian assemblies need not only to be made "comfortable," they also need to be challenged. How can the right balance, the right tension, between these two needs be achieved? One way, while meeting the need for liturgical communities to have conventions with which they can be comfortable, might be to put much more emphasis on ecumenical and interreligious relationships in worship. Another way, increasingly available to people living in the global village, is to become familiar with the way different cultures worship differently, even within the same communion. Observe, for example, how an appropriate veneration of ancestors is becoming a natural part of Christian worship, often in advance of official approval, in many Asian and African

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North American Presbyterian and Methodist worship books that also make them, in some respects, seem more "Catholic" than the Roman Catholic Sacramentary. For more on this, see Robert J. Daly, S.J., "Ecumenical Convergence in Christian Worship" in *Jesuits in Dialogue: "Ecumenism: Hopes and Challenges for the New Century," Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue* (Conference at Alexandria, Egypt, 4–12 July 2001); papers available from Curia S.J., C.P. 6139, 00195 Rome Prati, Italy.

[39] See *Dialogue of Origen with Heraclides and His Fellow Bishops on the Father, the Son, and the Soul*, Ancient Christian Writers 54 (New York: Paulist, 1992) 57–61.

cultures. In other words, there is need to recognize and validate the experience of the Sacred, the Holy, the Transcendent that can take place when Christians share in—or even merely come close to—the worship of people who "do it differently." [40]

Pastoral and Homiletic Implications

This may be the most delicate and, in practical terms, most important part of my study. Most of what has gone before could be categorized as theory and thus left for a relatively few theologians to argue about. Guardians of magisterial orthodoxy, if they become aware of it, might see it as the kind of annoying thing that theological journals sometimes publish, but not something to get deeply concerned about, since so few people read such journals. Still, if it is improper to sing "At that first Eucharist . . ." and misleading to preach simplistically about "doing what Jesus did the night before he died," one needs then to teach and communicate responsibly the more complex development of the Eucharist to the Christian faithful.

First, and my enumeration is not intended to suggest priority, one must be sensitively aware that this new paradigm for studying eucharistic origins and their implications will seem, to some, to be directly threatening the basis of their belief in the Eucharist. Therefore, in homiletic and catechetical situations one should first of all avoid anything that seems to be a frontal attack on traditional theological and religious assumptions. Rather than trying to pull people through one's own door, i.e. by explaining more or less directly, as my article tries to do, what a more adequate theory of eucharistic origins might be, one should explore the possibilities of "entering through their door." For example, analogous to what I have suggested as pastoral strategy for "unveiling" Christian sacrifice,[41] i.e., by not using the easily misunderstood terminology of "sacrifice" until people have been alerted to the authentic experience of Christian sacrificial living in their own lives, one should attempt, *mutatis mutandis*, to do the same here.

Second, teachers and preachers should work to reconceive and rephrase their teaching and preaching about the eucharistic mystery in order to avoid doing and saying those things that seem to support—or worse, seem to absolutize—the old paradigm. For example, while not challenging traditional belief in the transformation of the eucharistic gifts, one can find ways to emphasize that the most important transformation is the one that is taking place in the Christian faithful as they celebrate and go forth to live the Eucharist. In other words, one needs to find helpful ways to stress that

[40] This is one of the major points of the impressive body of literature in "comparative theology" being produced by researchers such as Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

[41] See the articles listed above in n. 36.

the most important transformation is not the one that takes place "without," on the altar, in the physical realm, however important that really is, but the one that takes place "within," in the spiritual realm of grace.

Third, teachers and preachers must constantly be attentive to how people react to new emphases, and be ready to comfort them in their disorientation. It can help to point out that Peter, James, and Paul had quite different ideas about Eucharist, not all of which could be harmonized. There are things that they did that have not become part of our eucharistic praxis, and there are things in our eucharistic praxis that were not part of theirs. One needs to remind people that it took the Holy Spirit about three centuries to bring the Church—or, more accurately, perhaps, some of the Christian churches—to an understanding of the Eucharist that approximates our understanding of the Eucharist. And also one needs to remind the faithful that, as the whole Christian tradition teaches and as Vatican II showed and taught, Jesus is still present to the Church, and the Holy Spirit is still at work in the Church.

Finally, while the Church has and must have a major concern for order, and in this case for appropriate liturgical "conventions," this Church is also, and apparently going right back to Jesus himself, the Body in which developments, and sometimes conflicting and apparently irreconcilable developments, have taken place. Some of these conflicts are abuses and scandals which one must, in charity, learn to move beyond, as is now finally being done with many of our traditional Protestant–Catholic conflicts. Other conflicts are more internal. We must deal with the conflicts in fidelity, wisdom, patience, and—above all—charity, so that they may also be a source of learning as well.