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THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY  
IN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology.

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by

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May 1991

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### List of Abbreviations

- BAG A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. A translation and adaption of the fourth revised edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. Second Edition, revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- BDB Brown, Francis; Driver, Samuel R.; and Briggs, Charles A. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- BHS Elliger, K. and Rudolph, W., editors. Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1966/67.
- BKS Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986.
- KBL Koehler, Ludwig and Baumgartner, Walter. Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958.
- LXX Septuagint
- MT Masoretic Text
- SP Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch
- TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Edited by F. G. Kittel. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-1977.
- TDOT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringrenn. Translated by John T. Willis, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and David E. Green. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974-.
- TWOT Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. R. Laird Harris, editor. Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.

## Introduction

Contemporary theology has demonstrated a remarkable interest in the relationship between the doctrines of the Lord's Supper and Eschatology.<sup>1</sup> As evidence, consider this sampling of titles of monographs and journal articles, nearly all written within the last twenty-five years: "The Eucharist as Eschatological Presence;" "Time, Space and the Eucharist;" "The Eucharist, the Resurrection and the Future;" "Messe et eschatologie;" "La Eucaristia', sacramento de la gloria;" "The Eucharist as Witness to the Kingdom of God and Experience of God's Reign;" "The Eucharist and Time;" "The Holy Eucharist as Eschatological Meal;" "Signification eschatologique du repas eucharistique;" "Eucharistie en Eschatologie;" "Eschatological and Eucharistic Motifs in Luke 12;" "The Influence of the Holy Eucharist on Bodily Resurrection;" "History and Eschatology in the Primitive Pascha;" "Das Abendmahl eine Vergegenwärtigung des Todes Jesu oder ein eschatologisches Freudenmahl?". Nearly every major work of recent date on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper devotes some space

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<sup>1</sup>We use the term "eschatology" here and throughout the paper in its simplest and most literal sense, eschatos and logos, "doctrine of the last things." As will shortly and increasingly become clear, an in-depth discussion of the doctrine of eschatology and the various approaches to it ("inaugurated" or "realized" eschatology, "future" eschatology etc.) is outside the scope of this paper. For a good summary and discussion of the issues involved see Anthony A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979). Our concern here is primarily with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and how this doctrine is connected by Scripture to the "last things," e.g. the parousia of Christ, the general resurrection, the future kingdom of God, etc. The specific "last things" that call for discussion here (and the extent of such discussion) will be determined by our investigation of the Lord's Supper and the eschatological references which that investigation brings to light.



to the question of its eschatological significance. Among works available in English, G. Wainwright's Eucharist and Eschatology and W. B. McGrory's The Mass and the Resurrection are examples of studies which are entirely devoted to this theme. The scholarly attention given to the eschatological character of the Lord's Supper has also not been without influence on the liturgical and ecumenical endeavors of the church, as a survey of that evidence will show.

In the introduction to Eucharist and Eschatology, Geoffrey Wainwright argues that this growing interest stands in sharp contrast to the "eucharistic treatises of Western theologians of . . . preceding generations."<sup>2</sup> In former days, says Wainwright, discussions about the Lord's Supper were "conducted in terms that were ontological rather than eschatological."<sup>3</sup> Battles were fought over the mode of Christ's presence in the Sacrament, the "substance" of Christ's presence and the "substance" of bread and/or body, wine and/or blood. "And in all this," laments the author, "the notion of an advent of the Lord to His people in a visitation of judgment and salvation fared rather badly."<sup>4</sup> In addition, debates about the "sacrificial" character of the Lord's Supper caused theologians to look much more to the past than to the future. Finally, the fruits of communion, says Wainwright, were viewed with a reference to the individual communicant; and so the

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<sup>2</sup>G. Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 1. Emphasis Wainwright's.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

communio references of the Lord's Supper--which are rich in eschatological content--"found themselves severely curtailed."<sup>5</sup>

If we grant, for the moment, that there is some real validity to Wainwright's observations, how can we explain the recent upsurge of interest in the Lord's Supper's eschatology?

First, perhaps it is not too optimistic to say that a return to the Lord's Supper's eschatology has been initiated at least in part by a return to the Biblical texts. We seem to have passed through the radically critical era of Biblical theology, in which every text was "guilty" until proven "innocent" by exegetes who saw it as their primary task to determine which few words or events could be regarded as historically valid and trustworthy. More and more exegetes seem to be willing to give the data of Scripture a chance to stand on its own feet, and to take seriously what is said there. The material principle of historical criticism, "the Bible must be treated like any other book," still appears to be firmly established, but there is greater recognition that this involves treating the Bible as fairly as any other book, especially when it claims to be reporting facts of history. In the study of history, too, there are rules of methodology. If theologians are determined to play the role of historians, they must also play by these rules.

As exegetes have attended more to what the texts of Scripture say--and in this case to the accounts of the Lord's Supper's institution--they have found there eschatological emphases which are difficult to ignore or dispose of in the way of earlier methodologies.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

They have heard more clearly Paul's words, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). They have listened more carefully to the sayings of Jesus in the synoptics (Mark 14:15; Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:15-18) in which the Last Supper is connected with the feasting in the kingdom of God. They have found themes like passover, communio, and eternal life which have clear eschatological connections. As a result there has been a growing exegetical interest in the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

A second factor which has sparked interest in the Lord's Supper's eschatology is the renewal of the study of the church's liturgy, especially the liturgies of the early church. The works of Brightman,<sup>6</sup> Lietzmann,<sup>7</sup> Bouyer,<sup>8</sup> Martimort,<sup>9</sup> and others<sup>10</sup> have cultivated a fresh

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<sup>6</sup>Brightman, F. E., Liturgies Eastern and Western, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

<sup>7</sup>Hans Lietzmann, Mass and the Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy, translated by D. H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. xv. (German title: Messe und Herrenmahl [Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1926].)

<sup>8</sup>Bouyer, L., Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer, translated by C. U. Quinn (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) p. 106.

<sup>9</sup>A. G. Martimort, L'Eglise en Priere: Les Sacraments (Paris-Tournai: Desclee, 1984); recently translated into English in several volumes by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.

<sup>10</sup>A very recent example is R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed, Third Edition (New York: Pueblo, 1987). For a good summary of the liturgical renewal in both the Catholic and Protestant Church, see Samuel Salzmann, "Liturgical Renewal," pp. 1303-1308 in The Encyclopedia of The Lutheran Church, Vol. II, edited by Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965). For an informative commentary on the impact of Vatican II on the liturgy, see the essays contained in The Liturgy of Vatican II: A Symposium in Two Volumes, ed. by William Barauna (English edition by

appreciation for the treasures which enriched the worship of the ancient church. A return to those early liturgies is also a return to the Lord's Supper's eschatology, since the fathers and the early Christians had not yet learned to separate the two.

Third, this century has also witnessed the revival of the study of eschatology in general. "What will people say a hundred years from now about the chief theological trends of the twentieth century? One thing we may be rather sure they will say is that this century has witnessed a remarkable upsurge of interest in eschatology."<sup>11</sup> We have come a long way since the time when a contemporary of Albrecht Ritschl remarked, "In our day the eschatological drawer remains mostly shut."<sup>12</sup> Not long after Ritschl that drawer was opened wide by men like J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer, and twentieth-century theologians such as C. H. Dodd, Oscar Cullmann, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and Jürgen Moltmann have kept it open. Even if at times this "open drawer" has become more of a Pandora's box producing some rather radical eschatological theories, we can still be grateful for the engagement in eschatology which these discussions have provoked. Present-day concerns about "eucharist and eschatology" are certainly part of this inheritance.

A fourth influential factor (both effect and cause) has been the many ecumenical meetings and discussions of our era, several of which

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Jovian Lange) (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966).

<sup>11</sup>A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 288.

<sup>12</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre (München: Duncker and Humbtot, 1925), p. 36.

have specifically requested further study concerning the relationship between the Lord's Supper and eschatology.<sup>13</sup> The Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document produced by the 1982 (Lima) meeting of the World Council of Churches outlines the meaning of the Eucharist under five headings: Thanksgiving to the Father; Memorial of Christ; Invocation of the Spirit; Communion of the Faithful; and Meal of the Kingdom. Under this last heading the eschatological nature of the Sacrament is affirmed and emphasized.<sup>14</sup>

One final factor that has helped clear the way for study and discussion concerning the Lord's Supper's eschatology is the increasing lack of interest in what historically has been one of the main issues at stake: the nature or mode of Christ's presence in Holy Communion. If Wainwright is correct in his assessment that there was a day and age in which theology was obsessed with "ontological" questions about the "real presence" of Christ in the Sacrament, he may be comforted by the many indications that that age is coming to an end. Christ's "presence" in the Sacrament is rather freely acknowledged today, but discussions about the nature of that presence are becoming hard to find, and even then often harder to understand. Words like "event," "encounter," "proclamation," "re-presentation," "celebration," "manifestation," "effectual signification" and (if all

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<sup>13</sup>Wainwright identifies his Eucharist and Eschatology as "one man's answer to the call made at Aarhus in 1964 by the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order for a study of the Eucharist in the eschatological perspective" (preface). Gustaf Aulen, in Eucharist and Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), refers to a similar request made by the Lund conference in 1952.

<sup>14</sup>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 10-15.

others fail) "mystery" abound. It is open to question, however, whether these terms do more to clear the waters or to muddy them. The final answer for many seems to be that the New Testament itself has left us with muddied waters:

The question much disputed in the Reformation period, concerning the meaning of "is" in the words of institution, cannot be directly answered from the evidence offered in the New Testament. In the first place, this copula probably was not present in the Aramaic. Moreover, the Lutheran and Reformed discussions of that day presupposed a concept of substance which is completely foreign to the New Testament.<sup>15</sup>

"To oversimplify," continues Schweizer, "if the question had been posed concerning the nature of the elements (which it had not), then the Palestinian would have given a 'Reformed' answer, 'the bread signifies the body, and the Hellenist a 'Lutheran' answer, 'the bread is the body.'"<sup>16</sup> In other words, the differing views of the nature of Christ's presence in the Sacrament are merely differences in cultural background, language and worldview. To focus on these differences is to focus on the non-essential, the irrelevant, the unanswerable.

What, if anything, can be said about the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper? This answer by Schweizer might not satisfy everyone, but it is indicative of the mindset of much of twentieth-century theology:

The real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is exactly the same as his presence in the word--nothing more, nothing less. It is an event, not an object; an encounter, not a phenomenon of nature; it is Christ's encounter with his church, not the distribution of a substance. Christ gives himself to his church,

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<sup>15</sup>E. Schweizer, The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament, trans. James M. Davis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 33.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 34.

and yet he always remains Lord of the church, never<sup>17</sup> denigrating into an object which is at the disposal of the church.

In his distaste for any sort of "materialistic" understanding of the Lord's Supper, Schweizer sounds a lot like Zwingli at Marburg. Generally speaking, however, both the "Zwinglis" and the "Luthers" of today (and even a growing number of Roman scholars) have decided that the Marburg issue is not really worth fighting about, if it can be called an "issue" at all. For better or for worse, this development has helped clear the way for "new directions" in the theology of the Lord's Supper, and a major one of these is the way of eschatology.

This paper grew out of an interest in this current state of the issue, and a desire to examine the Lord's Supper's eschatology from a Scriptural point of view. Is what is being said and written about the relationship between the Lord's Supper and eschatology consistent with the data of Scripture? Are the conclusions being drawn from these studies moving us in directions which are consistent with the Word of God and rooted in Gospel of Jesus Christ? What methodologies have been and are being employed for the study of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology, and how do they stand up to exegetical and theological examination? What new methodologies might be adopted which would deepen our understanding of the Lord's Supper's eschatology from a Scriptural point of view? These are the questions which prompted this study.

This paper is divided into three parts. Part One is a review of some of the recent or current approaches to the Lord's Supper and its

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 37-38.

eschatology, followed by an examination of the New Testament evidence. Part Two is an exegetical study of Exodus 24:1-11, a pericope which will be examined for what resources it may give for our study of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology. Part Three is a discussion of the conclusions which may be drawn from the data collected in Parts One and Two, in an attempt to show how the Lord's Supper and eschatology are vitally integrated.



**PART I**

**THE LORD'S SUPPER: PROPRIUM AND ESCHATOLOGY**

## Introduction

It is not enough, from a systematic point of view, simply to recognize that there is a connection between these two doctrines, the Lord's Supper and eschatology. Systematic theology wants to identify, as far as possible, the nature of that connection. How do we know there is this connection? What is our source of information concerning it? Based on the data, what can we say--and what can we not say--about how the two are connected? If they are connected, what is the connector, the vital link which holds them together? What unique contribution does this connection make to the theology of the Lord's Supper and the theology of eschatology? How might this connection affect our confession and practice of the Lord's Supper? These are the questions which here call for examination.

The first point for clarification is our precise topic of study. We are interested here in the Lord's Supper's Eschatology, not Eschatology's Lord's Supper. In other words, our starting point is not the doctrine of eschatology, but the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Either methodology, properly and Scripturally run, should lead to the same conclusions about the connection between the two. Our main interest here, however, is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and the eschatology which flows from it.

The thesis we will try to defend is that the theology of the Lord's Supper is the matrix of the theology of the Lord's Supper's

eschatology. What gives the Lord's Supper its unique character will also give the Lord's Supper's eschatology its unique character. One's view of what holds the Lord's Supper together will determine one's view of what holds the Lord's Supper together with its eschatology. What is seen as the proprium of the Lord's Supper will also be the center of the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

To test this thesis, the place to begin is with a careful study of the proprium of the Lord's Supper itself. What is it that makes the Lord's Supper the Lord's Supper--unique among "meals of fellowship," unique among gifts of God, unique among other sacred events and institutions of Scripture? Various methodologies have been adopted in an attempt to answer this question and to discover the key to the unique core of the Lord's Supper. Whatever is seen as that key will have a direct bearing not only on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper but also on the doctrine of its eschatology. We will begin, therefore, by surveying some of the major twentieth-century approaches to the Lord's Supper and the "keys" which these approaches have uncovered.

## CHAPTER 1

### VARIOUS METHODOLOGIES--A SURVEY

#### Jewish chaburah and the Lord's Supper

In his monumental work Mass and Lord's Supper (Messe und Herrenmahl), Hans Lietzmann tried to ascertain the unique character and significance of the Lord's Supper by tracing its true historical origin(s). He attempted this by starting not with the texts of the New Testament but with the liturgical forms of the early church, in the hope that

. . . if it should turn out---and this was within the realm of probability--that the numerous liturgical forms could be traced to certain primitive types, then it would be possible to work back to their roots and, by comparing these with the contemporary literary records, to penetrate to the liturgical practice of the Apostolic age and of the Jerusalem community of disciples. Perhaps, indeed, we might by this means succeed in casting new light upon the much disputed<sup>1</sup> problem of the origin and significance of the Last Supper.

Adopting this methodology, Lietzmann found as his "primitive types" the Hippolytus-Roman liturgy and the oldest form of the Egyptian liturgy. These, then, became the starting points for working back to the origin of the Last Supper.<sup>2</sup> Comparison of these two types with each other

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Lietzmann, Mass and Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy, translated by D. H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p. xxv. (German title: Messe und Herrenmahl [Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1926].)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 142.

and with other ancient sources led Lietzmann to the conclusion that the church's observance of the Last Supper could not be traced to a common source. Instead Lietzmann identified two distinct eucharistic traditions: a Pauline-type (record of which is also found in Mark) which focused on the death of Christ and the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood, and a Jerusalem-type, which was a continuation of table-fellowship with the risen Christ and was characterized by the "breaking of bread" in joyous celebration, as recorded in the book of Acts. Lietzmann's description of this Jerusalem-type, which was in essence a Jewish chaburah (fellowship-meal), is as follows:

The first disciples in Jerusalem formed themselves into a community when they learned that the Lord was indeed alive and had not been holden by death. And as it had been in the happy days of their journeys through Galilee, so it came to be again; as a Jewish chaburah they gathered together round the Master for the common meal. The old "table-fellowship" (*KOLVVVIA*) which had begun in the time of the historic Jesus was continued with the Risen Lord. One of the company at table pronounced the blessing over the bread in his stead; then, breaking it, he distributed it to the others and the meal began. The food was simple; they drank water, possibly very occasionally wine--for on those journeyings through the land they had learnt from the Master to be content with little. Not even a "cup of blessing" was passed round at the conclusion of the meal. Thus had it been formerly, when the Lord had presided at the table in the flesh. Now he was with his disciples "in the spirit", for where two or three were gathered together in his name there he was in the midst of them (Matt. 17:20). And soon, the community fervently believed, he would come again in the clouds of heaven, like Daniel's Son of man, and set up the Messianic Kingdom on earth. This belief made them joyful; the meal was celebrated "with gladness"; and in answer to the "Maranatha", the "Come, Lord Jesus", of their leader,<sup>3</sup> the company at table hailed the longed-for Lord with glad hosannas.

In time, however, it was Paul's type of eucharist that came to be dominant, due to his authority and influence as an apostle. This type Paul derived partly from the Hellenistic memorial meals of his day, but

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 204.

in the main it was something which he received uniquely "from the Lord," as he himself testifies in 1 Corinthians 11:23. Only in Egypt did the most primitive form of the Eucharist, the Jerusalem chaburah, survive to some degree.<sup>4</sup>

While the value of Lietzmann's research has been universally acknowledged, his specific conclusions have been rejected by most scholars as lacking exegetical and historical support. That Paul could have reshaped a firmly established Jerusalem tradition without coming under attack from his enemies is unthinkable. The proposed Hellenistic influences are little more than conjecture. The sharp contrast between "memorial-meal" and "resurrection-meal," as if they required two separate and disparate theologies, finds no support in the teaching of the New Testament.

Still, Lietzmann's pioneering work has greatly influenced twentieth-century study of the Lord's Supper, so much so that it has been suggested that since Messe und Herrenmahl nearly all scholars have worked "under the spell" of Lietzmann's theory, "whether succumbed to or struggled against."<sup>5</sup>

Oscar Cullmann is a leading representative of those who rejected Lietzmann's specific conclusions but retained his idea that the roots of the eucharist are to be found in the continuation of table-fellowship with the risen Christ (the Jewish chaburah).

The certainty of the Resurrection was the essential religious motive of the primitive Lord's Supper. The experience of the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid, pp. 207-212.

<sup>5</sup>Geoffrey Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology (New York: Oxford Press, 1981), p. 4.

presence of the Risen One was repeated...each time the community was united for the common meal. This experience was identical with that of Easter, and the first disciples must have considered these cultic meals as the direct continuation of those in which the disciples had participated immediately after the death of the Lord. When they assembled "to break bread," they knew that the Risen One would reveal His<sup>6</sup> presence in a manner less visible but no less real than previously.

On the basis of this assumption, Cullmann draws the following conclusion about the nature of Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper, which gave these meals their unique character:

The joy manifested by the early Christians during the "breaking of bread" has its source, not in the fact that the assembled disciples eat the body and drink the blood of their crucified Master, but in the consciousness they have of eating with the Risen Christ, really present in their midst, as He was on Easter day.

For the purposes of our study it is worth noting that since for both Cullmann and Lietzmann the proprium of the Lord's Supper is table-fellowship with the Risen Christ (its chaburah-ness), this is also what gives the Lord's Supper its eschatological character. We saw this in Lietzmann in his description of the Jerusalem celebration of the Lord's Supper (see page 5 above). Cullmann's analysis is strikingly similar:

The early Christians, when they prayed Maranatha, did not think at all of a coming of Christ in the species of bread and wine...Christ comes to eat with the community of believers, and His presence is understood to be as real as possible. He comes to participate in the meal and not to serve as food. ... The same interpretation of the eucharistic Maranatha is to be found in the well-known German grace before meals: "Komm, Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast!"<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Oscar Cullmann and F. J. Leenhardt, Essays on the Lord's Supper, translated by J. G. Davies (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 12. Emphasis Cullmann's.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 16. Emphasis Cullmann's.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 14,15,16. Emphasis Cullmann's. The eschatological implications of this view of the Lord's Supper are made even more explicit by A. B. Du Toit, whose understanding of the proprium of the Lord's Supper is very similar to Cullmann's. See "Das Abendmahl als

Unlike Lietzmann, Cullmann does not deny a historical link between these joyous meals of the early Christians and the Last Supper, at which Jesus spoke of his impending death. It was Paul, says Cullmann, who reminded the church of this link in order to restore the balance between the soberness and the gladness of the Lord's Supper. In time, however, the emphasis on death and sacrifice and body and blood obscured the true nature of the Lord's Supper as a celebrative meal shared in the presence of the Risen and Living One. When we restore this emphasis to our modern celebration (says Cullmann), we will have the Eucharist as it was originally given and as it was meant to be observed.

Can we in this matter return to the Apostolic Church? To achieve this the Churches must again lay great emphasis, in their liturgies, on the idea that the appearance of the Risen Christ, living and destined to come again at the end of the ages, is above all conditioned by the fellowship of the faithful and, further, that this appearance deepens that fellowship. Christians will not rediscover the spirit of the first believers except on condition of assembling for the Lord's Supper in the joyful expectation of eating with Christ while they eat with their brethren, and of recalling once more that the Lord's Supper in the early church was a feast of the Resurrection. The bold prayer: "Lord Come! Maranatha!" ought to assume again the eucharistic reference that it originally had, and it should express the double desire, which was realized for the early Christians, of seeing Christ descend into the midst of the faithful gathered in His name and of discovering for themselves, in that coming, an anticipation of His final Messianic return.

One has only to survey current literature on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper to see what widespread influence the work of Lietzmann has had. The most thorough examination of this question from a Roman

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eschatologische Freudenmahl," pp. 101-102 in Der Aspekt der Freude im urchristlichen Abendmahl (Winterthur: P. G. Keller, 1965).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 22-23.



Catholic perspective is McGrory's The Mass and the Resurrection. His dependence on Lietzmann is obvious and acknowledged. One quotation will suffice to summarize his conclusions:

That the Mass does indeed represent the Resurrection is not surprising. St. Thomas admits that the power of the Resurrection acts in all the sacraments . . . The Mass is the representation of the New Covenant, causing what it signifies, uniting us all together in Christ to our common heavenly Father. And because of this union the Eucharist will cause our General Resurrection. Because of these effects the Resurrection of Christ must operate in the Mass. And obedient to the general sacramental laws, the Resurrection must therefore be signified in the Mass. In answer to the question is Christ said to rise again in the Mass (symbolically) because it is a representative image of the Resurrection and because by this sacrament we are made participants in the fruits of our Lord's Resurrection, we have no choice but to answer in the affirmative.<sup>10</sup>

Here, as in all examinations of the Lord's Supper dominated by Lietzmann's theories, the proprium of the Lord's Supper is fellowship or unity with the Risen Christ, and flowing from that is the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

#### Passover and the Lord's Supper

The greatest challenge to the work of Lietzmann and those who followed him<sup>11</sup> came in Joachim Jeremias' The Eucharistic Words of

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<sup>10</sup>W. Barry McGrory, The Mass and the Resurrection (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1964), pp. 163-4. Emphasis McGrory's. Note the eschatological connections which McGrory makes on the basis of the relationship between the Lord's Supper and the Resurrection.

<sup>11</sup>Among those who followed the way of Lietzmann's theory, Jeremias mentions K. G. Goetz, Der Ursprung des kirchlichen Abendmahls blasse Mahlgemeinschaft von Jesus und seinen Jüngern oder eine besondere Handlung und Worte von Jesus? (Basel: H. Major 1929); R. Otto, Reich Gottes und Menschensohn (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1934) G. Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1947). For more information see: J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated by Norman Perrin from the German Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu, 3rd edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), with the author's revisions to July, 1964, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 29-30.

Jesus. Here Jeremias called into question the very idea that there was such a thing as a chaburah meal as postulated by Lietzmann.<sup>12</sup> Jeremias was determined instead to take seriously the synoptic witness that the Last Supper was, in fact, a Passover meal. Support for the reliability of this synoptic tradition, argued Jeremias, is that the early church did not celebrate the Lord's Supper according to the passover ritual. Yet the New Testament witness of the Lord's Supper as a passover meal was allowed to remain; therefore it must be a genuine piece of evidence.<sup>13</sup>

Jeremias deals convincingly with the objections raised against this view, and gathers an impressive amount of evidence in order to recreate the Passover-scene at the Last Supper. In Jeremias' view, it is the Passover ritual which holds the key for unlocking the true meaning of the Lord's Supper:

Jesus' avowal of abstinence, the words of interpretation and the command to repetition first become fully understandable when they are set within the context of the passover ritual.<sup>14</sup>

The logical converse is that without knowledge of this ritual it is impossible to fully understand what was said and done at the Last Supper. Everything hinges on the Passover ritual, and therein then also the eschatology.

In the light of this Passover ritual, Jeremias proceeds to give his explanation of what he calls "the words of interpretation," the words which Jesus had spoken in distributing the bread and wine to his

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<sup>12</sup>See Jeremias, pp. 29-31.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 88.

disciples. Having proposed a possible Aramaic rendering of these words, he then interprets their meaning:

With the words den bisri, 'this is my (sacrificial) flesh', and den idmi, 'this is my (sacrificial) blood', Jesus is therefore most probably speaking of himself as the paschal lamb. He is the eschatological paschal lamb, representing the fulfillment of all that of which the Egyptian paschal lamb and all subsequent sacrificial paschal lambs were the prototype. The tertium comparationis in the case of the bread<sup>15</sup> is that it was broken, and in the case of the wine the red colour.

To his assumptions about the Aramaic translation of the words of institution, the probable meaning of those words, and the red color of the wine, Jeremias adds an assumption about the presence of a passover lamb, and words which Jesus may have spoken about that lamb.

It can be assumed with a high degree of probability that Jesus had prepared the way for this comparison of himself with the sacrifice earlier, in the passover meditation. It is certain that the interpretation of the passover lamb belonged to the passover haggadah. How did Jesus interpret the passover lamb? Since he interpreted the bread and wine in terms of himself, as the words of interpretation show, it is a likely assumption that in the preceding passover devotions he had also interpreted the passover lamb in terms of himself.<sup>16</sup>

Where does this methodology leave Jeremias as far as the proprium of the Lord's Supper is concerned? Strictly speaking, it leaves him with no proprium, since in his view the Last Supper is just another of Jesus' many parables, which themselves have many analogies in the Old Testament and in the ancient world in general.

We have therefore a double simile of Jesus here, which has its formal analogy in the manner in which the prophets of the Old Covenant announce future events parabolically. Its meaning is quite simple. Each one of the disciples could understand it. Jesus made the broken bread a simile of the fate of his body, the blood of the grapes a simile of his outpoured blood. 'I go to

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 223.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 222; emphasis Jeremias'.

death as the true passover sacrifice', is the meaning of Jesus' last parable. The fact that Jesus expresses the same thought in a double simile is in accord with his predilection for pairing parables and especially similes: one recalls the twin parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (Luke 15:1-10), or of the tower-builder and the king (Luke 14:28-32), and the great number of paired similes.<sup>17</sup>

By participating in this parabolic ritual, asserts Jeremias, the disciples are allowed to share in what it signifies, and this is the significance of the Eucharist.

To share in the atoning death of Jesus and to become part of the redeemed community--that is, according to Paul, the gift of the Eucharist.<sup>18</sup>

Since for Jeremias the meaning of the Lord's Supper is found in its symbolic or parabolic character, so also its eschatology is given in the form of a parable. Since "the passover is a looking forward to the coming deliverance of which the deliverance from Egypt is the prototype,"<sup>19</sup> so also the Lord's Supper, as the antitype of the Passover, is itself a type of the final deliverance to come. Just as in the passovers of the past the gathered ones (probably) petitioned God to "remember the Messiah" (which means to bring about the parousia), so also in this new passover Jesus commands his disciples to continually implore God for the second coming of the Messiah and the consummation of the work of salvation.

By coming together daily for table fellowship in the short period of time before the parousia and by confessing in this way Jesus as

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 224.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 237.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 206; emphasis Jeremias'.

their Lord, the disciples represent the initiated salvation work before God and they pray for its consummation.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, just as the passovers of the past ended with the singing of the hallel, which--according to Jeremias--was rich with eschatological-Messianic overtones in late Judaism, so also Jesus ends this new passover with the singing of the hallel:

The establishment of this point, that he ended the last meal with his disciples by anticipating the jubilation of the antiphonal choir which would greet him at his return, opens the way to understanding the deepest meaning of this hour and with it of the Lord's Supper,<sup>21</sup> altogether: it is an anticipatory gift of the consummation.

For Jeremias, the passover is the key to it all. It explains the true parabolic meaning of the Lord's Supper, and it explains, by extension of this parable to the larger context of the Supper, the eschatological nature of the Lord's Supper, which is an integral part of the total eucharistic parable.

#### Sacrament and the Lord's Supper

This summary of Jeremias' approach provides us with a natural link to another more "traditional" methodology. The starting point for this methodology is not the liturgy of the early church nor the cultus of the Old Testament, but rather an imported category which has been handed down through the centuries by the theologians of the church, the category "sacrament." Like Jeremias' "parabolic" interpretation of the Lord's Supper, the sacramental approach tends to understand and explain

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 261; emphasis Jeremias'.

the Lord's Supper in terms of a "sign" or "symbol," under which is hid its "true meaning," essence or power.

The term "sacrament" is used and understood differently by different theological traditions. When most Protestants use the word "sacrament," they do so in order to discourage a "materialistic" view of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine are "signs" or "symbols" of a deeper, hidden reality, which is, perhaps, the presence of Christ's divine nature or the mystical fellowship of his body, the church. Roman Catholic scholars have traditionally found ways of defining and explaining the word "sacrament" which allow room for their view of the transubstantiation of the elements in Holy Communion. In both traditions, however--and at times in the Lutheran tradition--the term has been used to indicate a general category with its own definite laws, boundaries, and presuppositions, and individual "sacraments" are then viewed in light of the specific laws, boundaries, and definitions of the category.

It was Augustine who, under neo-Platonic influences, tried to establish "sacrament" as a category of "sacred signs" applicable to all religions.<sup>22</sup> For Augustine a sacrament was a visible sign of an inner, invisible res or virtus. Hermann Sasse says:

The distinction was easily applicable to Baptism, where the visible sign of water points to the invisible grace. But what about the other sacraments? What about the Sacrament of the Altar? If bread and wine, corresponding to the element of water in Baptism, are the signum, what then is the res, the aim of the Sacrament which God's

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<sup>22</sup>Primary resource for the following summary is Hermann Sasse's This is My Body: Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, (Adelaide, S. A.: Lutheran Publishing House, 1975), pp. 19-21.

grace is going to give us? It is the communion of the spiritual body of Christ, the bond of love existing in the true church.<sup>23</sup>

To avoid the tendency implicit in the Augustinian use of this term to undermine the significance of Christ's physical (body and blood) presence in the Lord's Supper, Roman Catholic theology gradually developed rather complex distinctions between the sacramentum tantum (the mere sign, the bread and wine), the res tantum (the effect, the bond of love in the mystical body of Christ) and the sacramentum et res (the body and blood of Christ), "which is res in relationship to the elements, but still sign in relationship to the real res."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. The application of this terminology is not always consistent and sometimes gets a bit confusing to the uninitiated, as the following discussion by Karl Rahner may illustrate:

We can and must say that participation in the physical Body of Christ by the reception of this sacrament imparts the grace of Christ to us in so far as this partaking of one bread (1 Cor. 10:14-8) is an efficacious sign of the renewed, deeper, and personally ratified participation and incorporation in that Body of Christ in which one can share in his Holy Spirit, that is to say, the Church. In other words res et sacramentum, first effect and intermediary cause of the other effects in this sacrament is the more profound incorporation into the unity of the Body of Christ. Indications are found in St. Thomas, who regards the eucharist as the sacrament of the Church's unity (III q. 82 a. 2 ad 2). If someone prefers to call the Body of Christ itself present under the species and becoming a sacramental sign for us through them the res et sacramentum and the unity of symbol formed by species and words as sacramentum tantum, with all the supernatural effects in grace thought of as the res, which is certainly the usual view (Denzinger 415), he will at least have to say that the Body of Christ is a sign of his grace, by its being in possession of the Church as a sign of her own unity, pledge of eternal life and as sacrificial offering to God. He would also have to arrange among themselves in intelligible order the various effects of the eucharist, which he comprises under the concept of res sacramenti. Then however, once again, union with the mystical Body of Christ whose life is the Spirit, by analogy with the other sacraments especially baptism from which the

According to Sasse, this "attempt on the part of medieval theology to overcome the weakness of Augustine's theory . . . is still taught today in Roman Catholic theology."<sup>25</sup> This is clear from the fact that several essays at the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue III ("The Eucharist as Sacrifice") were devoted to the theme of "sacrament," in an attempt to clarify its definition and application to the Lord's Supper. "'Sacramental Sign' in the Lutheran Confessions" was the essay delivered by Warren Quanbeck, and in Thomas Ambrogio's "Sacramental Reality, Sign and Presence" we confront the same distinctions and dualities with which the church has wrestled since Augustine.

To speak of Christ, the Church, Christianity itself as sacramental is to indicate a twofold reality: interpretation and being, sign and signified, expression and thing expressed.<sup>26</sup>

Citing Schillebeeckx for support, Ambrogio notes that

One of the major factors in the renewal of Catholic eucharistic theology has been the recovery and reappraisal of the scholastic notion that sacramentum est in genere signi--that sacraments are signs rather than physically present things. To speak of the Eucharist (or any sacrament) as a sign is to introduce a certain duality into our thinking--a distinction, which is precisely not a separation, between the reality of the sacrament and its visible form.<sup>27</sup>

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idea of sacramentum and res originally came, would still be the effect of the sacrament that is prior to all others.

Karl Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments, translated by W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), pp. 83-84.

<sup>25</sup>Sasse, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup>T. E. Ambrogio, "Sacramental Reality, Sign and Presence," in Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III: The Eucharist as Sacrifice (New York: Lutheran World Federation, 1967), p. 182.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p. 182.



Trying to express the relationship between sign and reality is still a difficult challenge, as becomes evident in this attempt to shed further light on Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology:

Perhaps the kiss of love is the nearest human analogy to the sacramental encounter. The kiss is first of all a sign. It is not simply the same as the love which it expresses. For the love may be present without finding this particular expression at a given moment, or the kiss may be there when the love is gone, as in Judas' kiss of Christ. Yet love depends on such expressions to actualize itself, and without them it would wither and die. In order to be, to make itself present and knowable, love must realize itself in signs which are "other" than love itself. At the moment when lovers kiss, however, no distinction between sign and signified is psychologically possible, much less desirable. The kiss simply is their love manifesting itself in action...The sacramental sign, like the kiss, is always both identical with and yet other than the reality it renders present.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, p. 184-185. See E. Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). Although the term "sacrament" with its real philological and philosophical implications has been used most enthusiastically by Roman Catholic theologians, it is not difficult (as noted earlier) to find examples of its use by Reformed/Protestant theologians who obviously hold to a different view of the Lord's Supper but like the term sacrament because of its "sign/symbol" connotations. Calvin, for example, cites Augustine's definition approvingly and defines a sacrament as "an outward sign by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promise of his good-will toward us" (John Calvin, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited by Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr. [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1939], page 185). Archibald Hodge, in his classic Reformed dogmatics, offers a very similar definition, and refutes the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood on the grounds that "it confounds the very idea of the sacrament, making the sign identical with the thing signified (emphasis Hodge's; Archibald Alexander Hodge, A Commentary on The Confession of Faith [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869], p. 483, 489). The definition of "Sacraments" in the Heidelberg Catechism is also worth noting in this connection: "They are visible, holy signs and seals instituted by God in order that by their use he may the more fully disclose and seal to us the promise of the Gospel" (The Heidelberg Catechism with Commentary [Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963], page 113). See Karl Barth's noteworthy comments on this definition in his book, Learning Jesus Christ Through The Heidelberg Catechism, translated by Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964].

To illustrate the eschatological ramifications of a "sacramental" approach to the Lord's Supper, we will follow Ambrogio's lead and pursue Schillebeeckx's line of thinking. It is clear that for Schillebeeckx the question of the eschatological significance of the Lord's Supper is wrapped up with two problems: visibility and temporality.

It is certainly true that because of his glorified corporeality the Christ of heaven can, full of grace, reach us and influence us whoever or wherever we may be. But we, earthly men, cannot encounter him in the living body (in propria carne) because his glorification has made him invisible to us. From this it follows that if Christ did not make his heavenly bodiliness visible in some way in our earthly sphere, his redemption would after all no longer be for us...the human mediation of Christ would be meaningless.<sup>29</sup>

This is where the sacraments come in. Christ, out of necessity, takes up "earthly non-glorified realities into his glorified saving activity . . . so that in them we are truly able to encounter the living Christ."<sup>30</sup> "The heavenly saving activity, invisible to us, becomes visible in the sacraments."<sup>31</sup>

Sacramentality thus bridges the gap and solves the disproportion between the Christ of heaven and unglorified humanity, and makes possible a reciprocal human encounter of Christ and men even after the ascension. The church's sacraments are not things but encounters of men on earth with the glorified man Jesus by way of a visible form. On the plane of history they are the visible and tangible embodiment of the heavenly saving action of Christ.<sup>32</sup>

Because of the distinctions and dualities inherent in the sacramental (Augustinian) approach to the Lord's Supper, one finds in

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<sup>29</sup>Schillebeeckx, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

Schillebeeckx a constant need to explain how this or that is possible or why it is necessary: how it is possible that heavenly (eschatological) realities can be made visible by means of earthly signs; why it is necessary that the sacraments "prolong" the incarnation of Christ; how it is possible that the glorified Christ can interact with unglorified people on earth.

We saw that without assuming earthly form, Christ's heavenly activity cannot become visibly present to us and for us, because of our unglorified state. The man Jesus is the presence of the redeeming God among us, though in the mode of a human presence bodying that presence forth to us. Precisely for that reason that plan of the incarnation requires, from the moment of Christ's ascension a prolongation of his bodily mediation in time. We already know that this sacramental body of the Lord is the Church. We called the sacraments the specific activity of this ecclesial reality and sign. Just as Christ through his risen body acts invisibly in the world, he acts visibly in and through his earthly body, the Church, in such a way that the sacraments are the personal saying acts of Christ realized as institutional acts of the Church.<sup>33</sup>

One sees the same need to explain the "hows" and "whys" of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in Schillebeeckx's discussion of the problem of temporality.

Time itself is irreversible. Whatever is historically past cannot now, in any way at all, be made once more actually present, not even by God himself, not even "in mystery." Whatever has already happened in history is irrevocably past and done. A fact historically<sup>34</sup> past cannot be actualized anew mystically or in the sacrament.

Rather what the sacrament gives us are acts of God which "transcend time," since God Himself transcends time.

Since the sacrifice of the cross and all the mysteries of the life of Christ are personal acts of God, they are eternally actual and

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Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 55.

enduring. God the Son is therefore present in these human acts in a manner that transcends time.<sup>35</sup>

In the sacraments, then (including the Lord's Supper), we encounter the reality of the "timeless" and "transcendent" Christ by way of "signs" that give this reality a historical reference.

And it is this immediate encounter with Christ that explains the threefold historical orientation of the sacraments. For they are first of all an anamnesis or a commemoration of the past sacrifice of the Cross (signum rememorativum) because of the relation of the eternally actual redemptive act, present in the sacrament, to the historical moment in which Christ shed his blood. Secondly, they are a visible affirmation and bestowal of the actual gift of grace (signum demonstrativum) inasmuch as the recipient becomes concerned in the enduring redemptive act by which the kyrios is reaching out to him here and now. In the third place, they are a pledge of eschatological salvation and a herald of the parousia (signum prognosticum), because the sacraments are the sacramental presence of Christ the Eschaton, either because of a real transubstantiation (as in the case of the Eucharist), or because of the sacramentalizing of his eternally redemptive act (as in the case of the remaining six sacraments). Hence a visible intervention in our time of the Eschaton himself takes place in the sacraments. Sacramental encounter with the living Christ in the Church is therefore, in virtue of the historical mysteries of Christ's<sup>36</sup> life, the actual beginning of eschatological salvation on earth.

It is clear that for Schillebeeckx the eschatology of the Lord's Supper is an important but very complex "problem," which he attempts to solve and to explain within the perimeters of the category "sacrament" (the definition of which must apply to all sacraments) and its distinction between "reality" and "sign." While Schillebeeckx offers many helpful (and Scriptural) insights into the eschatological character of the Lord's Supper,<sup>37</sup> one is left with the impression that

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>37</sup>See especially his concluding summary of the Lord's Supper's eschatology on page 222.

Christ and his gifts are being constantly subjected to human "laws," definitions and explanations which go beyond the testimony of Scripture, and that, at the same time, the Augustinian distinction between "sign" and "reality" prevents Schillebeeckx from confessing wholly and freely all that Scripture says about the Lord's Supper and its eschatology. We await the results of further study, however, before proper evaluation can be given.

### Mystery and the Lord's Supper

Another attempt to discover the key to unlocking the "true essence" of the Lord's Supper that bears at least brief consideration is that of Odo Casel, who devoted his life to an investigation of the term "mystery" and its potential for informing our understanding of the Christian "sacraments." Casel's approach might well have been included in the previous section, since he relies heavily on "sign/symbol" terminology and exhibits the same tendencies in his treatment of the Lord's Supper. (Indeed, Casel's "Mystery Theology" is listed as one of two major headings in Sacramentum Mundi's treatment of "Sacraments.")<sup>38</sup> Because of his great influence, however, it may be well to include a few summarizing paragraphs.

The Greek mysterion, of course, stands behind the Latin sacramentum, and Casel proposed a real connection between the Hellenistic cultic "mysteries" and what he saw as their Christian counterparts.

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<sup>38</sup>Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, vol. 5, edited by Karl Rahner (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 378-387.

Mysterion, or more usually the plural mysteria, is the Greek designation for the ancient Hellenic and later Hellenistic secret cults which are unlike the cults of the Polis; they give to the worshippers of a god, who have been specially initiated and thereby joined to the god, a closer and more personal union with him; this union reaches beyond death and promises a happy existence in the next world.<sup>39</sup>

Through the ritual mysteria, the initiate is enabled to participate in the story and so in the life of the god(s):

The way of the mystery passes through initiations and the mysteries proper, in which the deeds and decrees of the gods in the first age are presented in ritual and thereby made present. In this way the initiate, by carrying out the rite under the direction of the priests, takes his own share in the god's deed and attains the god's life: in this he finds salvation.<sup>40</sup>

Parallels to the Christian "sacraments" are drawn, and Casel makes the most of them. Baptism is our rite of initiation: "as Christ died, so man dies too by being buried in the dark womb of the waters. As Christ rose again so man rises from the waters in the name of the Trinity, to a new life."<sup>41</sup>

Still more strongly do we perceive the power of the primaeval saving act made present, in the Eucharist: by the transformation and the consumption of the bread and wine man is filled with the power of Christ. He returns to that primaeval force with which God gave life to the world in the death and resurrection<sup>42</sup> of Christ. Man's action in the rite is made one with God's action.

Serious objections have been raised to Casel's methodology, particularly his contention that the roots of the term "mystery" (in the Christian liturgical sense) are to be found in Hellenistic rites.

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<sup>39</sup>Odo Casel, The Mystery of Christian Worship, edited by B. Neunheuser (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1962), p. 98.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, p. 125.

Despite such objections, however, Casel's emphasis on the liturgical acts of the church as communicating the divine life-power and presence of God met with an enthusiastic response among many theologians and liturgists, a number of whom used Casel's ideas as the basis for developing their own interpretations of the sacraments and the liturgy as "mysteries" of Christ and the church.

In terms of eschatology, we see in Casel the same tendency as in the "sacrament" approach to the Lord's Supper, except that the signum has now become the entire "cultic act" which points us and attempts to move us beyond itself to something greater and higher. Here Casel speaks of the future feasting in the kingdom of God, anticipated in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper:

This is the feast which we shall one day celebrate in heaven; in the liturgy we anticipate this feast. Yet for all of that we are not, as we celebrate the mystery, already at the moment of this heavenly reality. The Christian's life is a feast; he is always at divine service, because the Son is always before the Father. The outward feast passes, the inward one remains. Among the Jews and the pagans, in contrast, there were always special days on which the liturgy was to be performed, and certain days on which it was proper to sacrifice; worship was tied to place and time...In Christianity all that is changed. Christ our Lord entered eternity through death; he is no longer bound to the mesh of time. So, then, Christian worship is no longer bound to time but to eternity...We celebrate feasts in the Spirit which are connected with signs of nature; yet these are signs of things of heaven.<sup>43</sup> In the Spirit we are in heaven; in the body we are in time still.

"Time," "body," "place" are here things to be transcended, things to be left behind and risen above for something "higher," "greater," "freer." In the Lord's Supper we have "signs" of things of heaven, but only signs. We have not yet attained the reality. Through the signs and by our participation in the mystery of the cultic rite

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 143-4.

(the liturgy), we seek to rise above the limitations of earth and body, space and place, and to join ourselves to the reality of Christ, who "is no longer bound to time but to eternity."

### Sacrifice and the Lord's Supper

Although the work of Casel greatly influenced both Catholic and Protestant theology and liturgy,<sup>44</sup> it is clear that the more traditional Roman Catholic approach to the Lord's Supper is still firmly entrenched in its theology and liturgy. The starting point for this approach is the assumption that above all the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, and everything else that is said about the Lord's Supper can be said only subsequent to and in light of that fact. Casel, of course, does not deny the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist; "the whole church year is...a single mystery. Its high point is mystery in the highest sense, the sacramentum paschale, the sacrificial mystery which is brought to us again each Sunday."<sup>45</sup> In the same way Roman theologians who use "sacrament" as their starting point have no difficulty in switching to the category of "sacrifice" when discussing the "sacrament" of the Mass. Whether one begins with "sacrament" or "mystery" or "sacrifice" seems to be only a question of methodology and emphasis, since nearly every contemporary Roman Catholic theologian affirms the validity and usefulness of all three descriptions and categories.

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<sup>44</sup>For a good summary see pp. 104-124 in Ernest Koenker's The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966).

<sup>45</sup>Casel, p. 68.



Where do discussions of "Eucharist as Sacrifice" begin? Sometimes they begin with a study of sacrifice in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes they begin with a discussion of the term "sacrifice" in the New Testament or in the early church.<sup>47</sup> Sometimes they begin with a discussion of the term "Mass."<sup>48</sup> Sometimes they begin with the official pronouncements of the church, particularly those expressed at Trent:<sup>49</sup>

In the Mass there is offered to God a true and proper sacrifice. (DS 948)

The Mass is an unbloody immolation, a mystical sacrifice, in which the church through her priests immolates Christ through visible signs. (DS 938)

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<sup>46</sup>Examples of this approach are Pius Parsch's The Liturgy of the Mass (London: B. Herder, 1957) and A. Croegaert's The Mass: A Liturgical Commentary, v. II, The Mass of the Faithful (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1958).

<sup>47</sup>As examples of those who start with the New Testament, see Jerome Quinn's article, "Propitiation," pp. 37-44 in Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III: The Eucharist as Sacrifice; also, Colman O'Neill, Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments (Wilmington, Delaware: M. Glazier, Inc., 1983), pp. 83ff. As one who begins with New Testament and early church data, see Josef A. Jungmann, The Mass: An Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Survey translated by Julian Fernandes; edited by Mary Ellen Evans (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1976; and Jungmann, The Mass of The Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development, translated by Francis A. Brunner, revised by Charles K. Riepe (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, n.d.).

<sup>48</sup>Clarence McAuliffe, Sacramental Theology, rev. ed. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1961), pp. 186-191. Francois Charmot, The Mass, Source of Sanctity, translated by M. A. Bouchard (Notre Dame: Fides, 1964); also Karl Rahner and Angelus Häussling, The Celebration of the Eucharist (New York, Herder and Herder, 1968).

<sup>49</sup>This summary is taken from Thomas Ambrogio's article, "Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of the Eucharistic Sacrifice," in Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III, pp. 151-2. Ambrogio's citations of the Tridentine statements are taken from Denzinger-Schonmetzer, Enchiridion Symbolorum (Freiburg: Herber, 1965, ed. 33), 937a-956. Hereafter DS.

The Mass is not a mere commemoration, but in it Christ's body and blood are offered to the Father under the appearances of bread and wine. (DS 950, 938)

It is also offered for the faithful departed in Christ who are not yet fully cleansed. Therefore, this sacrifice is in truth a propitiary sacrifice. (DS 940)

The Tridentine position was reaffirmed by Pius XII in Mediator Dei (1947)<sup>50</sup> and by Pope Paul in Mysterium Fidei (1965):

The sacrifice of the altar is not the mere and simple commemoration of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, but the true and proper sacrifice, in which indeed the High Priest through a bloodless immolation does that which he once performed on the cross, offering himself to the eternal Father as the most acceptable victim. (DS 3847)

This view was also affirmed by Vatican II, which in the following statement distinguishes between the offering of the priest and that of the faithful:

The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist...Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it.<sup>51</sup>

The inevitable results of this approach to the Lord's Supper are a mixing of Christ's work and our work and an emphasis on our work as that which finally makes the sacrament.

Father Lepin:

The Church must offer up Christ, as Christ offered Himself at the Last Supper...The union between Christ and the Church extends to their union in the act of oblation, that is to say, to union in the

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<sup>50</sup>See Charmot's work (op. cit.), pp. 121-166, for an excellent collection of statements by Pius XIII on this subject.

<sup>51</sup>Lumen Gentium II, 10-11. This citation is taken from Alasdair Heron, Table and Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 172.

charity and in all the sentiments of Christ when he died on the cross...The oblation of Christ by the Church, as the complement of the oblation of Christ by Himself, is no less essential to the sacrifice <sup>52</sup>of the Mass, in order that it may truly be our sacrifice.

De Montcheuil:

The sacrifice of Christ is the sacrament of the sacrifice of humanity...the Mass produces the sacrifice of humanity...The sacrifice of humanity is the supreme sacrifice, and the one that gives meaning to the <sup>53</sup>others...even to the Mass, even to the sacrifice of Calvary.

Francois Charmot, affirming the words of Pius XII:

In order that the oblation by which the faithful offer the divine victim in this sacrifice to the heavenly Father may have its full effect, it is necessary that the people <sup>54</sup>add something else, namely, the offering of themselves as a victim.

"That is why," says Charmot, "at the moment of consecration we must strive to offer ourselves with the same love with which he offers us up with Himself at each Mass."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Lepin, L'idée du Sacrifice de la Messe, p. 753. Cited in Charmot, p. 151,150.

<sup>53</sup>De Montchueil, Mèlanges théologiques, p. 53-54. Cited in Charmot, p. 158-9.

<sup>54</sup>Charmot, p. 162.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, p. 166. It is outside the scope of this paper to enter into detailed discussion about the ecumenical dialogues on the subject of "eucharist and sacrifice," yet it is clear from those dialogues that many Protestant groups (Lutherans included) are becoming more and more comfortable with describing the Lord's Supper in sacrificial terms. The 1971 Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue reached "substantial agreement" on the question of the eucharist as sacrifice. The 1966-67 Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue reached the conclusion that "despite all the remaining differences in the ways we speak and think of the eucharistic sacrifice and our Lord's presence in His Supper, we are no longer able to regard ourselves as divided in the only holy catholic and apostolic faith on these two points." (Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III, p. 198).

Since in this view the proprium of the Lord's Supper, that without which it would lose all meaning and effectiveness, is the offering up of Christ and ourselves with him, this is then also the proprium of the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

By means of our offerings, united to the sacred host, we constantly bring to the heavenly Jerusalem added beauty, an increase in splendor, and powerful new harmonies. The Apocalypse tells us that the only wall that surrounds the city is constructed with "jaspar-stone," and that the city is of pure gold "clear as crystal." This signifies that men are its artisans and lay its foundation stones...During our earthly life, we have a magnificent task to do. For we contribute to the building of this heavenly Jerusalem by the daily oblation of our works...It would be cowardice and desertion to abandon this world, since it is with it that we make not only the bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice, but also furnish Jesus Christ with the matter for His Incarnation and His oblation.<sup>56</sup>

The final bridge from eucharist to eschatology is death, which is our last and greatest sacrifice and our last and greatest Mass:

To die is to give God all these gifts as well as our entire being. Death, therefore, is a Eucharistic sacrifice.... We can truly say that death is our last Mass and our last Communion: the one in which we make our supreme effort to be united to Christ.<sup>57</sup>

And if even this last effort should somehow fall short, Karl Rahner would suggest, it is up to those who remain to supply what is lacking in order that Eucharistic Mass may eventually bear full eschatological fruit for the one who was unable to attain the goal himself.

The faithful who have died in sanctifying grace but have not yet attained the vision of God and who therefore in an intermediate state after death are still moving towards their final perfection, cannot join in offering Mass. It is only possible for sacrifice to be offered for the souls in purgatory. Mass celebrated for the dead is intercession, and it depends on God's mercy alone to what degree he permits the fruits of the Mass to benefit them. If the

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid, pp. 144-5.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 329, 333.

question of the quantity of these fruits presents any further interest, it may be said that it is not the disposition which the faithful departed had at Mass during life which limits the measure of the effects of the Mass, but the disposition of the living who are offering Mass. It is on their account that the effect of the Mass is limited of the Mass is limited and can therefore be less than would be required to satisfy the whole needs of the dead. . . . At all events these considerations also lead to the view of the efficacy of the Mass as limited solely by the subjective disposition of those offering the sacrifice. Participation in God's life in Christ is determined by<sup>58</sup> the measure of its acceptance by those to whom God offers his life.

### Eucharist and the Lord's Supper

We turn now to that approach to the Lord's Supper which finds the key to its meaning in the prayers of blessing or thanksgiving that Jesus spoke over the bread and wine at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22,23; Matt. 26:26,27; Luke 22:17, 19; 1 Cor. 11:24). The most thorough running of this methodology is done by Louis Bouyer in Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer. As for Lietzmann and Jeremias, so also for Bouyer it is the context in which the Lord's Supper originated that is all-important for understanding its meaning:

We must place what we call today the 'words of institution' of the eucharist back into their own context which is that of the ritual berakoth of the Jewish meal, so that we may perceive the sense and whole import of their discussion. The words announcing everything that was to follow in the Last Supper, as preserved for us by St. Luke, are connected with the preparatory berakah over the first cup. The blessing over the body (or flesh) of Christ is connected with the initial berakah of the breaking of bread, and that over the blood of the new covenant with the second and third final berakoth.

These words of Christ which were to give rise to the Christian eucharist arise from a whole structure underlying the Gospels, the

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<sup>58</sup>Karl Rahner and Angelus Häussling, The Celebration of the Eucharist (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 81-82, 83.

Jewish liturgy in which they were inserted. If we separate them<sup>59</sup> from it, we misunderstand the whole movement which inspired them.

Even though Bouyer begins with information provided by the Gospels, he finds the key to understanding the Lord's Supper not in those Gospels but in "a whole structure underlying the Gospels," the Jewish liturgy, the ritual berakoth. We cannot unlock the meaning of the eucharist apart from those berakoth. The extent to which the church, through its liturgy, has preserved the berakoth, is the extent to which it has passed on and preserved the true meaning and unique character of the Lord's Supper.

By taking these eucharistic prayers as the proprium of the Lord's Supper, Bouyer is led to the same theological conclusions as we witnessed above in the "sacrifice" category:

Just as this prayer on Christ's lips became an act in the effective acceptance of the Cross, so it becomes an act in our communion in the broken body and the shed blood...To repeat this eucharistic prayer without communicating the sacrifice it expresses and consecrates would make no more sense than communicating without making our own, by means of the same prayer, the sentiments that were in Christ when he handed himself over to the cross.<sup>60</sup>

The eucharistic prayer, then, is that which makes the Sacrament effective, the means by which "we become one sole offering with Christ."<sup>61</sup> One sees a similarity here between Bouyer's view and the idea of the Eastern church that it is the epiclesis, the prayer of

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<sup>59</sup>Louis Bouyer, Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer, translated by C. U. Quinn (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 106.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid, p. 466.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

invocation to the Holy Spirit, which makes the Sacrament what it is and renders it efficacious. Bouyer acknowledges this connection:

East and West have long been on opposite sides of the question as to whether the eucharist was consecrated by the recitation of the words of institution over the bread and the cup or by the invocation, the epiclesis, calling down upon these elements the descent of the Spirit. Surely the answer must be that the whole reality of the eucharist proceeds from the one divine Word, uttered in the Son, who gives us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. But this reality is given to the Church as the reality promised to her "eucharist,"<sup>62</sup> in the prayer whereby she adheres in faith to the salvific Word.

Here, too, the thesis holds that the proprium of the Lord's Supper is also the proprium of the Lord's Supper's eschatology. As in the berakah of old the president of the assembly invoked the imminent coming of the Messiah, so also by our berakah we invoke and even inaugurate the parousia:

In giving thanks with him and through him for his body broken and his blood shed which are given to us as the substance of the Kingdom, we represent to God this mystery which has now been accomplished in our Head, so that it may have its ultimate accomplishment in his whole body. That is to say we give our consent to the completion in our flesh of the sufferings of Jesus for his body which is the Church, in the steadfast hope of his Parousia in which we shall all participate together in his resurrection. Thus we inaugurate the eternal glorification of God the creator and savior who on the last day will make the Church the panegyria, the festal assembly, in which all of mankind will join in the heavenly worship and be brought before the Throne following the Lamb which was slain, but which now lives and reigns forever.<sup>63</sup>

What holds everything together, explains everything and makes everything work are the berakoth, the prayers and thanksgivings and invocations of the Church. Only as we pray, invoke, give thanks and supplicate as Jesus did that night and as He commanded us to do will we

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid, p. 466-7.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p. 465.

have the Lord's Supper--and with it, its eschatology (participation in Christ's resurrection and parousia, heavenly worship before the throne of the Lamb)--as the efficacious Sacrament that Jesus intended it to be.

### Anamnesis and the Lord's Supper

Another approach to the Lord's Supper is well represented by Max Thurian, who takes as his starting point the words of Christ given us by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:24-25, "This do in remembrance of me." While Thurian's starting point is different than Bouyer's, his ultimate destination is much the same. Thurian's thesis is that

In order to understand this action of Christ in the Eucharist, which involves his real presence, we must understand afresh His intention in instituting the sacrament, and in particular what He meant by His command to repeat the celebration until His coming again: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24,25).<sup>64</sup>

For Thurian, the "words of explanation" are the words, "Do this in remembrance of me." These are the words which hold the key to the meaning of the Sacrament.

What, then, did Christ mean by these words? First of all, "this memorial is not a simple subjective act of recollection, it is a liturgical action."<sup>65</sup> Anamnesis involves more than "remembering," it involves doing, in a cultic setting, what Jesus did and told us to do.

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<sup>64</sup>Max Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial, Part I--The Old Testament, translated by J. G. Davies (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 15.

<sup>65</sup>Max Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial, Part II--The New Testament, translated by J. G. Davies (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 35.



When it celebrates the Eucharist, the Church places on the altar the signs of the sacrifice of Christ, the bread and the wine, His body and His blood, as Israel placed the shew-bread on the golden table as a memorial before Yahweh. The Church, when it proclaims Christ's sacrifice, accomplishes on the altar the shewing-forth of the sacrifice of the Son before the Father, by thanksgiving and intercession, by praising Him and praying to Him. Thus the Church takes part in this action of shewing-forth on the cross; it shares in the shewing-forth of the Lamb as it had been slain upon the heavenly altar and in that shewing-forth of His sacrifice which the Son performs before the Father, in thanksgiving and intercession.

When it performs this "shewing-forth" of the sacrifice of the cross, in union with the shewing-forth by the Son before the Father, the Church makes the memorial of the entire redemptive work of Christ; it gives thanks for all He has done for us and it intercedes with the Father that He may bestow upon mankind the blessings that have been obtained by the Son through all He has accomplished. This thanksgiving and intercession in terms of the memorial are constituted by the very act of celebration and not merely by the prayers that define its meaning. By reproducing the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, the Church accomplishes the memorial of thanksgiving and intercession.<sup>66</sup>

Thurian sounds very much like Bouyer here, and both are faithful to the Tridentine view that we, the church, by our acts and prayers, "make," "accomplish" and "constitute" the Lord's Supper in union with Jesus Christ.

In Thurian's view, the Lord's Supper is, in fact, a prayer of the Church. This prayer-nature of the Supper is also, therefore, what gives the Lord's Supper its eschatological character:

The Church's Eucharist is now, like the Last Supper, an earnest prayer that the Kingdom of God may be manifested and that the Lord may return. In the eucharistic prayer and in this eschatological entreaty, the Church has its unshakable assurance of Christ's return, because He Himself offered the same prayer<sup>67</sup> for the Kingdom at the Last Supper and reinforced it with a vow.

The Eucharist is the Church's most earnest entreaty for the return of Christ and for the coming of the Kingdom. In this earnest

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, p. 71.

prayer all acts of intercession are gathered together, for the return of Christ is the summing up of all prayers.<sup>68</sup>

Since the Church's liturgy is stretched out towards this coming fulfillment, it finds its greatest joy in the Eucharist, by means of which it attains its Lord and the Kingdom, in the mystery of the signs, by praying the Father earnestly for the return of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom in a glory that will be visible.<sup>69</sup>

In this last sentence Thurian has pulled together "mystery," "sign" (sacrament) and "prayer" into one, but it is clear that for him the prayers of the church, in obedience to the anamnesis-command of Christ, are the essential thing about the Sacrament. The Church's liturgical anamnesis is the heart which beats life into the Lord's Supper and its eschatology.

Thurian was concerned to make the point that anamnesis is not a subjective but a liturgical act. It might be worth mentioning that there is a Protestant view of the Lord's Supper which maintains that the opposite is true, and finds the key to the Lord's Supper in the recollective activity of the individual believer. In an article entitled "Remembering," J. R. Wilkes says:

It is through remembering that we can stand beside our brother Abraham and sacrifice what is precious to us; it is through remembering that we can stand beside our brother Noah and let our ideas fly like the dove, not being embittered or alarmed if they return without apparent response. Through remembering we are able to bring that timeless story into the present and make it ours. It is through remembering that, though torn with indecision and uncertainty, we can stand in the Garden of Gethsemane and place our dying illusions and pretence alongside the Cross. Through remembering we can be confident of the resurrection and so put hope in the future as we turn to confront the past.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid, p. 73-4.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, p. 75.

<sup>70</sup>J. R. Wilkes, "Remembering," Theology 84 (January, 1981), p. 94.

But the ultimate act of remembering, says Wilkes, is the remembering we do in connection with the Lord's Supper:

For the Christian, the most purposeful and creative act he can undertake is to share in the Eucharist, the hallmark action of history, the one action in which all our actions can be founded...Anamnesis speaks more of transforming than it does of recalling; it speaks of bringing the past into the present...In the Eucharist, when we repeat 'Do this in remembrance of Me', we are saying that the power of the Risen Lord is actually made present now. It is the spiritual power being utilized in our present lives that anamnesis brings.<sup>71</sup>

Though Wilkes' definition of anamnesis differs significantly from Thurian's, the emphasis is really the same: man's acting, man's doing, man's making the Lord's Supper into something real and powerful by his obedient remembering.

Another Protestant adherent of the view that memory is the heart of the Sacrament is William Barclay. Although he describes the Lord's Supper from a number of different angles, he finally comes to the following conclusion:

This sacrament is a sacrament of memory. It is a simple fact that in the New Testament the only definite instruction regarding the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is: "Do this in remembrance of me." Here is the centre of the whole matter. First and foremost, we do this in order that we may remember Jesus...To remember, to realize, to appropriate, to encounter--this is what the sacrament of the Lord's Supper means to me.<sup>72</sup>

The eschatological ramifications of this type of "remembering" are hinted at by Wilkes when he says: "Through remembering we can be confident of the resurrection and so put hope in the future as we turn to confront the past." It is by our remembering that we bring the

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>72</sup>William Barclay, The Lord's Supper (London: SCM, 1967), p. 110,112.

"timeless story" of salvation into the present, which enables us to be confident of the future. By recalling our Lord's resurrection, and by utilizing the power of the Risen Lord through such remembering, we cultivate hope in our own resurrection. The converse of "remembering" is "anticipating," and it is the combination of these acts, for those who would follow in the way of Wilkes and Barclay, which gives the Lord's Supper its eschatological character.

#### Proclamation and the Lord's Supper

Yet another approach to the Lord's Supper takes as its starting point not the anamnesis-command but the words which in Paul follow that command and speak of the Lord's Supper as a proclamation of Christ's death. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). According to this view, the word "proclaim" is the key to the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Above all, the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Word, a proclamation of the Gospel. This is well put by I. H. Marshall:

If we are to speak at all of the sacrifice of Jesus being present in the Supper, we must say that it is present in the same way, no more and no less, than it is in the preaching of the Word. For the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of the Word, a visible and tangible proclamation of the good news that Jesus died for our sins.<sup>73</sup>

Eduard Schweizer strongly affirms this view:

There is a partaking of the body and blood of Christ, that is, of Christ crucified for our sake, only in the sense of a partaking of Christ in the word...The real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is exactly the same as his presence in the word--nothing more, nothing less. It is an event, not an object, an encounter,

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<sup>73</sup>I. H. Marshall, Last Supper and Lord's Supper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 149.

not a phenomenon of nature; it is Christ's<sup>74</sup> encounter with his church, not the distribution of a substance.

The final word for Schweizer is from Augustine: "The Lord's Supper is visibile verbum."<sup>75</sup> So also, only as visibile verbum does the Lord's Supper have eschatological import: "The Lord's Supper, like the proclamation of the word, is something of an anticipation of the last judgment, which judgment turns into a blessing only for the one who accepts it as a judgment of God upon himself."<sup>76</sup> For Schweizer, there is nothing really unique about the Lord's Supper, no proprium that distinguishes it from all else that Jesus said and did. It is, as it was in Jeremias' view, simply a "parable," an object lesson of the Gospel, another way of communicating the message about Jesus' sacrificial death and our redemption.

#### Communio and the Lord's Supper

Still others find the sedes doctrinae for the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 10:17, where Paul writes: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." The real meaning of the Lord's Supper then is that it is communio, not by the common thing (τὸ κοινόν) given into each (corpus verum, sanguis verus) but by participation in the mystical body of Christ, the Church. Every other question about the Lord's Supper must be subordinated to the fact that it is a fellowship of believers; indeed,

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<sup>74</sup>Eduard Schweizer, The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament, translated by J. M. Davies (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 37-8.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, p. 37.

only when the Lord's Supper is allowed to be fully communio will we be in a position to address other questions about the Sacrament. It is not surprising, then, that those who hold to this view see as the most grievous abuse of the Lord's Supper any type of closed communion, and urge full intercommunion as the only correct (Biblical) use of the Sacrament.

In The Open Table, Anglican J.P. Hickinbotham argues as follows:

The Good News is that in the Church we are made one with each other through Christ as well as one with God through Christ. Church divisions therefore are a denial of the Gospel and a falling short of God's reconciling purpose.

Divisions at holy communion are particularly grievous, because Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as the pledge of his new covenant in which he reconciles men to God and to one another in the one family and people, the Israel of God...All church divisions pervert the nature of the Church which God made to be one, and thus distort the gospel. Divisions at the Lord's table do this, but they also pervert the sacrament itself, and turn what Christ gave as an effectual sign of our reconciliation to one another in Him,<sup>77</sup> into a declaration of our failure to accept this reconciliation.

Therefore, "it would be wrong to wait" until we are agreed in doctrine before we join together in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper.

Just as the eucharist is the instrument by which God deepens and enlarges our unity in Christ, so it is the instrument by which He deepens and enlarges our unity with each other. We cannot grow up into Christ without the communion of His Body and Blood; neither can we grow up into each other without<sup>78</sup> the communion of (the joint participation in) His Body and Blood.

Arthur Vogel would agree, and seems to suggest that the first step towards correcting the problem is to stop calling the Supper the Lord's Supper:

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<sup>77</sup>J. P. Hickinbotham, The Open Table: Christian Hospitality at the Lord's Supper (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p. 20.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, p. 64.

The Lord's Supper is the most universal service in Christendom. Almost every Christian church has some form of it; but, because of the way it is often referred to as the Lord's Supper, it is prevented from truly belonging to the people for whom it is intended. It.<sup>79</sup> seems to be so completely the Lord's that it is not ours...

Like Hickinbotham, Vogel advocates using the Lord's Supper in order to bring about the unity which it represents:

If the nature of the Eucharist, the fact of Christ's presence in it, and the means of effecting that presence can be essentially agreed upon by members of the mystical body, might not their common reception at the Table of the Lord--with the selflessness such participation involves--be the primary means by which God wills to bring about ever-increasing unity among his people? St. Paul said that we are one body because we partake of one loaf (1 Cor. 10:17). Is it possible to eat together at God's table and not grow together in unity?<sup>80</sup>

It is noteworthy that those who see communio and unity as the sine qua non of the Lord's Supper, and who for that reason urge the Church on towards full intercommunion, seem to speak little of the eschatological character of the Sacrament. Perhaps bringing eschatology into the picture would weaken the force of such argumentation: if full and perfect communio (in the sense of complete oneness in our confession of Christ and his Word) is promised finally only as an eschatological, heavenly reality, then how is it possible that we should achieve this on earth? And if we do achieve this on earth, what then becomes of the eschatological hope? In any event, through consistent application of the communio approach eschatology seems to become detached from the Lord's Supper, suggesting that

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<sup>79</sup> Arthur Vogel, Is the Last Supper Finished?: Secular Light on a Sacred Meal (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 175-6. Emphasis is Vogel's.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 184.

whatever actually holds them together may have been lost or taken away and replaced with something else.

The Holy Spirit and the Lord's Supper

The role of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's Supper has always been recognized and emphasized by the Eastern Church. In the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which became and has remained the principal and normal rite of the Orthodox Church, the epiclesis--the invocation of the Holy Spirit--is theologically one of the most essential parts of the eucharistic liturgy, since this is the moment (Orthodox theologians believe) when the elements are changed and become the true body and blood of Christ. This portion of the liturgy reads:

We offer you also this reasonable and bloodless service, and we pray and beseech and entreat you, send down your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts set forth; and make this bread the precious body of Christ, [changing it by your Holy Spirit], Amen; and that which is in this cup the precious blood of your Christ, changing it by your Holy Spirit, Amen; so that they may become to those who partake for vigilance of soul, for fellowship with the Holy Spirit, for fullness of the kingdom of heaven<sup>81</sup>

In the twentieth century Western theology has shown an increased interest in the role of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Lord's Supper. John Oulton, author of Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit, attempts to defend the thesis that the Lord's Supper must be viewed above all in the context of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Only when the Sacrament is viewed in this light, argues Oulton, will its true meaning be revealed.

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<sup>81</sup>Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed, edited by R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, 3rd. edition (New York: Pueblo, 1987), p. 90. The portion in square brackets is included in the (8th century) Barberini mss., but omitted from the contemporary editions of the liturgy.



Oulton's starting point is the Gospel of John, "which speaks with a definiteness not to be found in the Synoptists, of the gift and function of the Holy Spirit, who was to be to the disciples 'another comforter'--that is, to be to them all that Jesus himself had been."<sup>82</sup> In the Upper Room, on the night of the Last Supper, Jesus spoke to his disciples of this coming Holy Spirit. "It was the message of the Lord to assure his sorrowful children that in the Holy Spirit he would be with them as in the days of yore."<sup>83</sup> Oulton moves quickly from the Upper Room of Maundy Thursday to the gathering together of Pentecost: "The Fellowship of the Upper Room became from the Day of Pentecost onwards the Fellowship of the whole Church, and the bond of union was the Holy Spirit, who was to be to the Church what Jesus himself had been to the twelve in the days of his visible presence."<sup>84</sup>

It is the Holy Spirit who forms the fellowship, the corporateness of the Church, as it is conceived in Acts; and within its Spirit-filled life, and in relation to it, is placed the eucharist.<sup>85</sup>

For Oulton, then, the key to understanding the Lord's Supper is the fellowship of the first Christians, and most especially the Holy Spirit who formed that fellowship and held it together. The words of institution are not significant in themselves:

The thing that is really significant is that the words, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood', as used by our Lord, brought the

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<sup>82</sup>J. E. L. Oulton, Holy Communion and Holy Spirit: A Study in Doctrinal Relationship (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), p. 18.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, p. 48.

sacramental gifts into relation with persons...persons who already stood in a relation of peculiar intimacy with him.<sup>86</sup>

The logical conclusion of this view becomes clear when Oulton approvingly quotes the words of R. Hooker:

The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not to be sought ~~for~~<sup>87</sup> in the Sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament.

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit qualifies us to receive the gift of the Sacrament, and the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit makes the reality of the gift present in us, not in the elements of the Sacramental Meal. Abuse of the Sacrament, then, is connected not with the elements, but with abuse of the Holy Spirit:

Though 1 Cor. 11:17-34 contains no direct reference to the Holy Spirit, St. Paul's censure of the lack of fellowship and the lack of self-discernment is a sufficient indication...that neglect to use the gift of the Holy Spirit, both corporately and individually, was at the root<sup>88</sup> of the abuses which had arisen in connection with the Sacrament.

Consistent with our thesis, since for Oulton it is the Holy Spirit who makes the Lord's Supper happen, it is also the Holy Spirit who makes the Lord's Supper's eschatology happen: "The presence of the Spirit and the eschatological hope are not simply placed side by side; there is a connection, even a casual connection between them."<sup>89</sup> It is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit has been given an increasingly central role in relation to the Lord's Supper in the ecumenical

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid, p. 192; emphasis Oulton's

<sup>87</sup>R. Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V, Ch 67.6 (Oxford: University Press, 1836), as quoted by Oulton on p. 182.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 173.

conversations of our day.<sup>90</sup> The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement of 1971, for example, brings the three themes together: the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Supper and eschatology:

The Lord who thus comes to his people in the power of the Holy Spirit is the Lord of Glory. In the eucharistic celebration we anticipate the joy of the age to come. By the transforming action of the Spirit of God, earthly bread and wine become the heavenly manna and the new wine, the eschatological banquet for the new man: elements of the first creation become pledges and first-fruits of the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>91</sup>

Could there be a more perfect solution to our inquiry? All the evidence, however, is not yet in (vide infra).

#### Meal and the Lord's Supper

As we have seen, very often a person's understanding of the proprium of the Lord's Supper is indicated by the name the person gives it. Such is also the case with John Reumann's recent work The Supper of the Lord. Although Reumann clearly recognizes and appreciates the many "key themes" in the Lord's Supper (and devotes a whole section to them), it is also clear that for Reumann the main thing about the Lord's Supper is--or ought to be--its character as a meal: above all not the Lord's Supper, but the Supper of the Lord.

Reumann begins by reminding the reader that on the basis of contemporary scholarship it is impossible to know for sure exactly what Jesus said or did at the Last Supper. The only thing we can know with

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<sup>90</sup>See H. P. Hamann's summary, "The Lord's Supper and the Holy Spirit" (Lutheran Theological Journal 16: August, 1982), p. 150-1.

<sup>91</sup>The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist (Notts: Grove Books, 1971), p. 12.

certainly, says Reumann, is that whatever happened happened at supper-time--around a meal.

If all the historical-Jesus study of recent years has not made us certain about details in the Upper Room, it has nonetheless decisively underscored Jesus' wider practice of table-fellowship with disciples and others. We now recognize in this practice a root for the meal-fellowship of early Christianity, which we have come to know as the Lord's Supper.<sup>92</sup>

Therefore, the key to a correct understanding of the meaning of the Last Supper is to place it "within a sequence of fellowship-meal experiences during Jesus' ministry (and after the resurrection, according to Luke-Acts), as background for the Lord's Supper of the early church."<sup>93</sup>

It is in this light that Reumann goes on to consider the Scriptural accounts of the Last Supper, with a view toward reconstructing "the history of this supper in the earliest church." Reumann's focus here is on the "significant consequences" that resulted from the separation of "the sacrament" from "the meal," such as a decline in the social and communal ramifications of the Lord's Supper, an increasing emphasis on the elements of the Lord's Supper, and the shift in timing from evening to morning. Commenting (in that context) on criticisms that worship services without Holy Communion are like a body without a head, Reumann takes the argument a step further:

In light of recent New Testament analysis, one must . . . observe that what emerges in Hippolytus and the patristic-medieval [sic!] church, with its concentration on the bread-and-wine sacrament, can be called a "torso" in terms of what had preceded it, namely, a

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<sup>92</sup>John Reumann, The Supper of the Lord: The New Testament, Ecumenical Dialogues, and Faith and Order on Eucharist (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 4.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

meal during which or at the end of which the bread and cup were singled out to bear special meaning. Since the sixth decade of the 1st century or so Christians have been having a "head without the body," that is, elements but not a meal.<sup>94</sup>

It may be an overstatement to say that for Reumann the meal is actually the proprium of the Lord's Supper, since he seems willing to concede that one can have the Lord's Supper without the "supper" (or to use Reumann's analogy, one can have the head without the body). A head without a body is hardly satisfactory, however, and Reumann's concern for this disjointedness in the Lord's Supper is the overriding theme of the first and foundational part of his book. This concern also penetrates his discussion of other aspects of the Lord's Supper, including that of eschatology.

Reumann observes, for example, that "Jesus' feeding miracles, told as they are with eucharistic terminology intertwined, point toward the great 'eschatological banquet' envisioned in the Old Testament, when the kingdom is fulfilled."<sup>95</sup> If the Lord's Supper is separated from these miracles of feeding, he implies, it loses much of its eschatological force and character. In his comments on the final (eschatological) section of the discussion of "Eucharist" in the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document, Reumann praises the title "The Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom," noting the meal-centered connections with the final "Messianic banquet."<sup>96</sup> If the key to understanding and fully appreciating the Lord's Supper is recognizing

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid, pp. 165-166.

its meal-ness (as Reumann appears to argue), then this is also the key to a real understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper's eschatology. The one meal looks forward to and anticipates the next, and what connects them is the fact that they are "suppers of the Lord." Certainly Reumann has alerted us to a major theme of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, but we have more to consider before we determine if there is more to be said than Reumann says about the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

Incidentally, while Reumann stops short of suggesting that the meal-aspect of the Lord's Supper be re-introduced in order to restore it to its original and intended condition, he notes that others, such as Arthur Cochrane, do call for that kind of "radical re-formation" of the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper, based on the conviction that its proprium is its meal-ness.<sup>97</sup> In Eating and Drinking with Jesus, Cochrane develops in considerable detail a meal-theology and a meal-eschatology of the Lord's Supper, acknowledging his indebtedness to Markus Barth, who has since published his own meal-interpretation of the Lord's Supper, Das Mahl des Herrn.<sup>98</sup> In each of these works, "eating and drinking with Jesus" is seen as the key to the core of the Lord's Supper, providing an easy link to the eschatological "eating and drinking" so vividly portrayed in both Old and New Testament.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid, p. 14; see Arthur C. Cochrane, Eating and Drinking with Jesus: An Ethical and Biblical Inquiry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974).

<sup>98</sup>See Cochrane, p. 10, and especially pp. 59-118; see also Markus Barth, Das Mahl des Herrn: Gemeinschaft mit Israel, mit Christus und unter den Gästen (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987).

Eschatology and the Lord's Supper

It is only fitting that in this survey of prevailing approaches to the Lord's Supper and its eschatology we also consider that approach which sees eschatology itself as the central and governing aspect of the Lord's Supper. This thesis is argued most thoroughly by Geoffrey Wainwright in Eucharist and Eschatology. As mentioned earlier, Wainwright makes a distinction between the ontology of the Eucharist and its eschatology. Although he claims that "it is none of my purpose to denigrate ontology," it is clear from his approach that neither is it any of his purpose to discuss ontological questions, nor even to raise questions about the possible connection between ontology and eschatology.<sup>99</sup>

Wainwright begins his book not with the texts of Scripture nor even with the eucharistic theology and liturgy of the early church, but rather with a discussion of eschatology in general. On the basis of this discussion, he develops eschatological categories which serve to guide his examination of the Lord's Supper.<sup>100</sup> On the basis of these categories he proceeds to a study of the Lord's Supper under three eschatological images: the messianic feast, the advent of Christ, and the firstfruits of the kingdom. In each case Wainwright produces abundant evidence--from the Old and New Testaments, inter-testamental literature, the writings of the fathers, the liturgies of the church--in order to demonstrate how the Lord's Supper has been and

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<sup>99</sup>Wainwright (op. cit.), p. 2. This is one of Michael Moreton's major criticisms of Wainwright's work; see Theology 15 (1972), p. 432-3.

<sup>100</sup>Wainwright, p. 17.

may be enriched by its eschatological connections. Wainwright's book stands, at least in terms of quantity, as by far the largest contribution to the study of the Lord's Supper's eschatology. It abounds with example after example from Scripture, the fathers, and the liturgies of the church in its attempt to show the close connection between the Lord's Supper and eschatology. In fact--as Michael Moreton also comments (see fn. 99)--the abundance of Wainwright's evidence almost seems to contradict his original claim that Western theology has largely ignored this aspect of the Lord's Supper's theology.

What are the consequences of making eschatology the heart and center of the Lord's Supper? Wainwright devotes a full chapter to this question. His conclusions may be summed up in a single word, as the following statements show:

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between the Lord's Supper and the church's supper, eschatology then impels us to choose the Lord's Supper, and that means intercommunion.

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between the eucharist's value as expressive of existing unity and its value as creative of deeper unity, eschatology impels us to choose the eucharist's creative value, and that means intercommunion.

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between truth as we may at present apprehend it and love as we are commanded to practice it, eschatology then impels us to choose love, and that means intercommunion.

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between a particular pattern of internal order and the missionary witness to the kingdom to be made before the world, eschatology then impels us to choose missionary witness, and that means intercommunion.

When a state of Christian disunity obliges us to choose between the church as institution and the church as event, eschatology then impels us to choose event, and that means intercommunion.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid, pp. 141, 143, 144, 145, 146. All emphases are Wainwright's.



Indeed, Wainwright's zeal for intercommunion may be more "radical" than any of the theologians we have named thus far (with the possible exception of Cochrane), since Wainwright advocates communing even the unbaptized, and seems to suggest the use of Holy Communion as a converting means of grace.<sup>102</sup> Since, for Wainwright, the Lord's Supper is above all a signum of the perfect heavenly unity which we will someday enjoy, the great heavenly Messianic feast, and since the Lord's Supper is also a signum efficax for accomplishing that unity, its earthly use must be governed by its heavenly res, "and that means intercommunion."<sup>103</sup>

#### A "Patchwork" Lord's Supper

There is another approach to the Lord's Supper which has been influenced by nearly all the approaches discussed above and which is too significant not to be treated in connection with them. This approach is best represented by recent ecumenical efforts to reach consensus on the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper. The tendency in such efforts clearly has been to seek to develop a pluralistic doctrine of the Lord's Supper which affirms and embraces as many as possible of the different approaches summarized above, and which claims to find such pluralism already in the New Testament itself.

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<sup>102</sup>On page 134 Wainwright says, "No one should be refused communion who has been moved by the celebration of the sign then in progress to seek saving fellowship with the Lord through eating the bread and drinking the wine." This entire sentence is emphasized in the text.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

As early as 1930 Yngve Brilioth identified at least five "dimensions" of the Lord's Supper (thanksgiving, communion, commemoration, eucharistic sacrifice and mystery), and encouraged restoring "wholeness" to the Sacrament by recognizing and making use of all these dimensions:

We have tried to show that in the eucharist there are both a manifoldness of diverse aspects and a central unity; just as the jewel shows endless changes of light and color as it is regarded from different angles. But the light which it refracts is one and the same; the Holy Presence, the Mystery. It is true to say that the other aspects of the eucharist are only different ways to approach to it; and the various forms of liturgy and systems of doctrine which we have surveyed have helped to show the richness of its variety in constantly changing forms. But it is also true that since the early centuries no part of Christendom has succeeded in expressing all the aspects together, in their harmony and completeness. Is it over-bold to look forward in hope to a future day when a fuller unity of Christendom shall again reveal the great Christian Sacrament in the wholeness of its many-sided glory?<sup>104</sup>

As if in response to Brilioth's plea, ensuing ecumenical statements tended to relativize and downplay historical differences over individual aspects of the Lord's Supper, and to emphasize instead the "many-sidedness" of the Lord's Supper. In the statements of the Arnoldshain Theses (1957),<sup>105</sup> for example, one can clearly see the influence of many of the approaches discussed above. The first thesis reads:

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<sup>104</sup>Yngve Brilioth, Eucharistic Faith and Practice, Evangelical and Catholic, translated by A. G. Hebert (London: S.P.C.K., 1930), p. 288. Cf. Bryan Spinks, Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of The Canon of the Mass (Bramcotte: Grove Books, 1982), p. 12.

<sup>105</sup>Word and Sacrament (Papers and Discussions at the second theological conference between Representatives of the Church of England and of the Evangelical Church in Germany), Theological Collections 10, edited by R. R. Williams (London: S.P.C.K., 1968), pp. 94-97. The following citations are all from these pages in this work.

In the Communion the Risen Lord invites his followers to his table, thus enabling them to participate here and now in the future fellowship of the Kingdom of God.

Lietzmann's "table-fellowship with the risen Lord" is unmistakable here; notice that it also becomes the link to the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the second half of the sentence. The second thesis says: "In the Communion Jesus Christ himself acts, under what the Church does, as the Lord who is present in the Holy Spirit, through his Word." Here room is made for the Holy Spirit as the one by way of whom Christ is present at the Lord's Supper. "Like preaching, baptism, and the special promise of forgiveness, Communion is one of the ways in which Christ bestows on us the gifts of the Gospel of salvation" (second thesis). Here accommodation is made for the "sacramental" view of the Lord's Supper, in which it is grouped together with other means of grace rather than distinguished from them. "Communion is an act of worship by the congregation assembled in the name of Jesus" (third thesis). Here the accent is on the Lord's Supper as the "eucharist" of the congregation. "In the Holy Communion the Holy Supper is indissolubly bound up with the oral preaching of the redemptive death of Jesus" (third thesis). In this statement the connection with "proclamation" is emphasized. "In the Communion we commemorate the death of Christ...in it we confess the presence of the risen Lord in our midst and joyfully await his return, as those called to share his glory in the final consummation" (third thesis). Anamnesis, fellowship with the risen Lord, and eschatology here are joined together as an explanation of the meaning of the Lord's Supper. "The Communion places us in a fellowship of brethren and thus proves that

the things which enslave and divide us in this present world have been broken down in Christ" (sixth thesis). Here the communio aspect of the Lord's Supper is highlighted.

It is not our purpose here to critically examine these theses, and it is obvious that much that is confessed here is confessed in accordance with the Scriptures. At this point we only want to illustrate the tendency towards combining the many different approaches to the Lord's Supper rather than focusing on the issues which divided groups (in this case Anglicans and German Lutherans) in the past. This tendency is also evident in the 1978 document produced by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, and it is interesting how the identity of the participants has influenced the nature of the statements about the Lord's Supper. In the Arnoldshain Theses nothing is said about "mystery" or "sacrifice" or "berakah," but in The Eucharist these elements become important parts of the "many-sided" Lord's Supper:

The Eucharist is the benediction (berakah) by which the Church expresses its thankfulness to God for all his benefits.<sup>106</sup>

Our two traditions agree in understanding the Eucharist as a sacrifice of praise...The eucharistic sacrifice of praise has only become possible through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; therefore this remains the main content of the Church's sacrifice of praise.<sup>107</sup>

The Lord's Supper is a mystery of faith in the fullest sense of the word. It belongs to the all-encompassing and incomprehensible mystery of salvation and it participates in its character as mystery.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission, The Eucharist (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

The 1971 Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement describes the Lord's Supper in terms of mystery, sacrifice, eucharist, anamnesis, prayer (anaphora), sacrament, paschal mystery and eschatological banquet, and repeatedly mentions the presence of the risen Lord and the presence of the Holy Spirit in and with the believer as he participates in the Sacrament.<sup>109</sup> The 1982 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document resulting from the Lima meeting of the World Council of Churches makes use of five familiar categories in describing the meaning and nature of the Lord's Supper: The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father; the Eucharist as Anamnesis or Memorial of Christ; the Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit; the Eucharist as Communion of the Faithful; the Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom.<sup>110</sup> Clearly the approaches to the Lord's Supper which we have summarized in this chapter have left their mark on modern ecumenical theology.

In a work which he acknowledges is patterned after Brilioth's Eucharistic Faith and Practice, Jean-Jacques von Allmen has, in his own words, "broken down the Supper into six fundamental phases, each one doubly polarized."<sup>111</sup> That leaves us, by Allmen's mathematics, with a Lord's Supper "broken down" into twelve different components. Allmen goes on to say:

It is in so far as all these phases are given due consideration, in so far as the Supper is freely allowed to be just what it is

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<sup>109</sup>The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist, pp. 10-23.

<sup>110</sup>Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp. 10-15.

<sup>111</sup>Jean-Jacques von Allmen, The Lord's Supper (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969; English translation, Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 114.

without any single one of its component elements being disregarded, made light of or cut out for the benefit of some other element, that it will be the vital sacrament of the ecclesial communion.<sup>112</sup>

It is clear that for Allmen--and perhaps for many whose approach to the Lord's Supper is determined by ecumenical concerns--the proprium of the Lord's Supper is the "due consideration" of all the "component elements" of the Lord's Supper, for only in this way will the Lord's Supper be "the vital sacrament" of the church. Maintaining this balance in giving equal attention to each individual "phase" of the Lord's Supper is no small challenge for the church, however; and the question arises whether other "phases" may be brought to light by theological scholarship which would then have to be added and amalgamated in order to preserve the Lord's Supper as "the vital sacrament of the ecclesial communion."

We will save a critical examination of this and previously summarized approaches until Part III of the paper. Having sketched, at least in broad strokes, the contemporary context, we are in a position to turn to our primary source for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the New Testament texts themselves. Now that we have heard from Lietzmann, Jeremias, Bouyer and others, we are ready to hear what the New Testament writers--and through them, Jesus Himself--have to say, and to see if they give us anything new and unique which has not been given us thus far.

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE LORD'S SUPPER

Four New Testament texts give an account of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Other New Testament passages (e.g., John 6:51b-58; 1 Cor. 10:1-5,14-22; 11:17-22,27-34) contain rich additional resources for further development of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, but these four are the only accounts of its institution and therefore are of primary importance. They are printed out below in the order of their (generally agreed-upon) documentary antiquity, from oldest to youngest:

#### 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this break and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### Mark 14:22-25

<sup>22</sup>And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take, this is my body." <sup>23</sup>And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. <sup>24</sup>And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup>Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

#### Matthew 26:26-29

<sup>26</sup>Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my

body." <sup>27</sup>And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Luke 22:15-20, (27-30)

<sup>15</sup>And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup>for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup>And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup>for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. <sup>19</sup>And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup>And likewise the cup after supper, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Textual and Historical Considerations

As we examine and compare these texts, the first question we face in light of the skepticism of modern scholarship is whether there are any contradictions or inconsistencies here which call into question the dependability of our sources. Upon examination, the historian must answer this question negatively. Certainly, there are minor differences in wording and slight shifts in emphasis, but all four texts hand down the same basic information: Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples with the words, "This is my body." He likewise took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples to drink, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant" (or, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"). Concerning these basic details all four texts are in full agreement. Regarding the question of reliability the words of Hermann Sasse apply:

The skepticism with which even the research in our part of that tradition has been confronted does not even provide evidence of the



historical sense of its representatives. In this skepticism the historian, who with Ranke wants to know how it actually was, is no longer speaking but the prosecuting attorney, who accepts no word of the man suspected of false witness unless proof is provided by eyewitnesses or circumstantial evidence. We must be clear about the fact that it means the end of historical investigation of the New Testament if the rule of all historical research is no longer valid, that a report is to be regarded as reliable until there are compelling grounds--and not mere conjectures--to question its accuracy. In our case this means: The traditions at hand...about Jesus' Last Supper have a claim to credibility where they agree until compelling grounds are produced that they are legendary and falsely report what actually happened in that Last Supper of Jesus. Whether there are such grounds is a question the conscientious historian must take quite seriously. When he has done this and when his investigation of the New Testament comes up with no such grounds, then he has only the one possibility: <sup>1</sup> that the reliability of that tradition is established indirectly.

Some would dispute the reliability of these traditions on the basis of textual difficulties in connection with Luke's account of the Last Supper. Much discussion and debate has been generated by the omission by Greek Codex D and the old Latin and Syrian manuscripts of verses 19b and 20 in Luke's text. If this shorter reading is correct, Luke's account would then end with the words, "This is my body," omitting the (second) cup, over which the word about the covenant-blood is spoken. One of the most thorough discussions of this problem is that by J. Jeremias, who devotes a major portion of an entire chapter to it in The Eucharistic Words of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The complex nature of the debate might best be illustrated by the fact that in the first German edition of his book Jeremias defended the short reading, while in the second edition he has reversed his position entirely, and argues

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<sup>1</sup>Hermann Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," in We Confess the Sacraments, translated by N. E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), pp. 53-4. Emphasis Sasse's.

<sup>2</sup>J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated by Norman Perrin, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) pp. 138-159.

strongly and convincingly in defense of the long reading.<sup>3</sup> Since there is evidence to support both the shorter and the longer reading, we are faced with having to deal with either possibility. In this connection Sasse's insights are again helpful.<sup>4</sup> He points out that, in either case, the tradition preserved by Luke contains no real inconsistencies with the other texts. If the long reading is accepted (which, with Jeremias, we see as the better alternative), Luke gives us a picture of the Lord's Supper that is strikingly consistent with Paul's, except for the unique addition of an earlier cup (Luke 22:17). In view of the passover nature of the meal, that addition hardly presents insurmountable difficulties. If the short reading is accepted, then Luke gives us a picture of the Lord's Supper which is more veiled than the others, but by no means inconsistent with them. Both the cup and the bread are still there, along with the crucial words, "This is my body." We find (with Sasse; fn. 4) a likely explanation for Luke's veiling of the cup-portion of the Supper in the circumstances of the early church, which was confronted with the need to reveal what was necessary for the sake of the believers, but to conceal from the heathen what might be used as ammunition for slanderous attacks. In either case, therefore, it is impossible to use Luke's account to disprove the reliability of the New Testament's portrayal of the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>3</sup>See Jeremias, p. 152. Sasse is depending on Jeremias' first German edition in "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament; thus his comment on page 55, which mentions Jeremias' as a defender of the short text.

<sup>4</sup>Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," pp. 55-57.

Harmony and Diversity

As we compare these four accounts it becomes apparent, first of all, that we are dealing with several different yet complementary traditions. The accounts in Mark and Matthew are nearly identical; Mark's greater conciseness is taken by most scholars as a sign that his account pre-dates Matthew. If the long text of Luke is accepted, it is easy to discern a common core, distinct from the Marcan tradition, in his version and Paul's. Paul's report "is the earliest literary source for our knowledge of the origin of the Lord's Supper," and is, according to Werner Elert, "the oldest document of Christianity that bears witness to Christ's words in direct speech."<sup>5</sup> Written by Paul in the mid-50s to a congregation he had most likely founded in the year 50, this account of the Lord's Supper was "received" (παρέλαβον) by Paul "from the Lord" (ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου), and then "handed on" (παρέδωκα) to the Corinthian congregation by the apostle. We cannot say with certainty whether Paul means to say that he received these words through a direct revelation of the risen Lord or whether he received them "from the Lord" mediately through the other apostles, the eyewitnesses of the Last Supper. In either case, the Greek terms used are Rabbinic technical terms which serve to establish the reliability of what was received (παρέλαβον) and delivered (παρέδωκα) by reference to their ultimate source, "from the Lord."

All four accounts of the Last Supper are marked by extraordinary conciseness. "The evangelists report what it seemed necessary for

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<sup>5</sup>Werner Elert, Der christliche Glaube, 5th ed. (1960), 361; quoted in Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," p. 49.

their first readers to know and not a word more."<sup>6</sup> This should caution us against two opposite extremes. First, we need to exercise great care and restraint in trying to reconstruct "exactly what happened on that night." We will never know all the details, since the New Testament writers are not concerned to give them to us. Here scholars like J. Jeremias, H. Lietzmann, L. Bouyer and others--despite the tremendous research they obviously have done--may be criticized for trying to tell us what "must have been" and what "probably" happened and what "in all likelihood" took place. Our only reliable source of information about the institution of the Lord's Supper are these four New Testament texts. Only as we stick to these texts are we on solid ground in our endeavor to know what Jesus did and said that night.

On the other hand, this same conciseness also cautions us against ignoring any of the evidence given here or treating it as if it were of little or no importance. Considering all that the authors could have told us, we need to pay special attention to what they did tell us. Each account holds its own treasures, and every gem here, however small, is of great value.

This fact becomes especially significant when we consider the unique contributions of each of the four accounts. Only Matthew, for example, gives us the words "for the forgiveness of sins" which Jesus spoke in connection with his blood of the covenant (v. 28). The long text of Luke fills in some of the details of the passover-meal by mentioning the use of two cups at the Last Supper. Luke also sets what happened most firmly into an eschatological context. Twice, according

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 61.

to Luke, Jesus spoke of the coming kingdom as he reclined at table with his disciples, and shortly after the meal Jesus settled a dispute among his disciples about "lordship" by means of an admonition to servanthood and a promise of future reign:

You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (22:28-30)

It is Paul who gives us the explicit time designation, "on the night when he was betrayed," and also passes on (with the long text of Luke, verse 19b) the dominical command: "Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is received in its New Testament fullness and wholeness only when each account is allowed to have its say and make its unique contribution.

Even more significant than the differences, however, is what these four accounts have in common. The first thing they have in common is that they are quite silent when called upon to defend the validity of several of the categories of interpretation which were summarized earlier. There is no word in these texts, for example, about the Lord's Supper as "sign" or "sacrament." Nowhere in these texts is the Lord's Supper spoken of as "communio." The only text in the New Testament which uses the word communio in connection with the Lord's Supper is 1 Cor. 10:16, where Paul says that the cup is a "communion of the blood of Christ" (κοινωνία τοῦ αἵματος) and the bread a "communion of the body of Christ" (κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος). The word "mystery" appears nowhere in these texts, and nowhere in the New Testament in connection with the Lord's Supper. Finally, there is no mention at all of the Holy Spirit in these texts or in the New

Testament as a whole in connection with the Lord's Supper. The point is not that none of these are in any sense connected with the Lord's Supper. How can the Holy Spirit, who is one with the Son, not be "connected" to all that the Son says and does? How can it be denied that the Lord's Supper involves communio in the mystical body of Christ through communio in his body and blood? How can it be denied that the Lord's Supper is a "mystery" in the New Testament sense, the mysterion of the Gospel which is foolishness to the faithless but clearly revealed and perceived, firmly believed and gladly received by those whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God (Mark 4:11)? There is no doubt that there is room for all of these elements in a Scriptural theology of the Lord's Supper. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper would, in fact, be impoverished if any of these themes were excluded.

The point is that none of these elements are identified by the writers of the New Testament as the proprium of the Lord's Supper, as that which is only in the Lord's Supper and nowhere else. The fact that the four primary sources of the Lord's Supper say nothing at all about the themes mentioned above is evidence enough against giving them a priority which the New Testament itself does not. When we do give them this unwarranted priority we run the risk of creating a Lord's Supper of our own doing and choosing (Law) rather than receiving the Lord's Supper that is given us by the Lord in His way (Gospel).

A similar caution is in order regarding the unique contributions of the individual evangelists. Paul (and possibly Luke) gives us the words of Jesus, "Do this in remembrance of me." There is no question, therefore, that "anamnesis" has a place in the New Testament's teaching

about the Lord's Supper. Every time the Lord's Supper is celebrated the eating and drinking are to be done in remembrance of Jesus Christ, and in willing and cheerful obedience to his command to repeat his words and actions. Yet there is really nothing new about the word anamnesis; the call to remembrance is a common theme in both Old and New Testament. What we need to ask is whether there is something new about this particular call to remembrance, something unique about this "memorial" which has no parallel in Old or New Testament.

Likewise, we gladly receive Paul's statement that as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's Supper we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26). Yet is this all that the New Testament says about this Sacrament, that it is a "proclamation" of Christ's death? Or is there something about this proclamation that sets it apart from every other proclamation mentioned in Scripture? And what are we proclaiming? According to Paul (1 Cor. 11:26) we are "proclaiming the Lord's death" by our eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord's Supper. Yet the proclamation of Christ's death is a central theme running throughout the entire New Testament. What, if anything, is new and unique about this particular "proclamation" of His death?

#### The Question of Proprium

With the question of this proprium we return to the texts, and to our examination of what they have in common; since what is unique to the Lord's Supper certainly would not have suffered omission by any of those who were entrusted with its delivery. Several common features are clearly discernable. First, all four accounts report that the Last

Supper happened in the context of a meal ("after supper," 1 Cor. 11:25; "as they were eating," Mark 14:22, Matthew 26:26; "this passover," Luke 22:15). In agreement with Luke, Mark and Matthew tell us in the immediate context that this was also a passover meal (Mark 14:12-21, Matthew 26:17-25). Due to complications caused by the witness of John (18:28), we do not know whether this was a true Passover in the traditional sense or a "pre-passover" meal celebrated in anticipation of the feast, or which of the possible calendars was observed. There are questions which the New Testament simply does not answer in certain terms, as the continuation of the debate indicates. That this passover-meal was in some ways similar to other kinds of Jewish meals (as Lietzmann, Bouyer and others have argued) can hardly be debated, nor can anything specific be proven on the basis of that evidence. Hypothetical reconstructions cannot claim more than "probably" or "most likely." Whether this meal had more in common with a traditional passover meal or with some other kind of Jewish meal, the question still remains: what was new and different about this meal? Is there anything here which distinguishes this meal from all other meals that Jesus shared with his disciples?

All four accounts also tell us that Jesus spoke a word of blessing over the bread and a prayer of thanksgiving over the wine which were distributed in connection with this meal (Paul mentions only the prayer before the bread). Thus we are justified, on the basis of the evidence, in affirming a connection between the Lord's Supper and "eucharist," the giving of thanks. According to the New Testament, the Lord's Supper began, as was customary, with blessing God thankfully for



his gifts. On the other hand, we are not told what Jesus said in these prayers beyond the fact that he spoke them. As with the "meal" aspect of the Lord's Supper, any attempt to "reformulate" the eucharistic prayers of Jesus is bound to end in failure, for it will always be rooted in "probability" and conjecture. We are cautioned again by the texts themselves against speaking where Scripture does not speak and giving things a priority and centrality not given them by the biblical texts themselves. Finally, there is certainly nothing new or unique about the giving of thanks before a meal. No proper meal began without blessing God for his gifts. If there is a proprium connected with this meal we will not find it here.

Another motif that all four accounts share in common is the eschatological motif. Paul makes the connection with the parousia of Christ when he says: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (v. 26). Jesus connects the Last Supper with a future celebration in the kingdom of God when, just after the distribution of the bread and wine and the words which accompany this distribution (according to Mark and Matthew), he says: "Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of the [Matthew: this] fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new [Matthew: with you] in the kingdom of God [Matthew: in my Father's kingdom]." In Luke's account Jesus utters two similar eschatological statements, but Luke places them both before the distribution of bread and wine:

And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among

yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:15-18)

As with the other common themes, the presence of this eschatological emphasis in all four accounts speaks strongly for its recognition and emphasis by those who seek to receive the Lord's Supper in its New Testament fullness and wholeness. If, as Wainwright maintains, we have failed to do justice to this eschatological dimension, then we have failed to receive and hand down the Lord's Supper as it has been handed down to us in the New Testament. On the other hand, there are many eschatological statements of Jesus scattered through the New Testament, even statements about the "Messianic banquet" in the kingdom of God. The presence of these statements here, as important as they may be, still does not give what is unique in the Lord's Supper. Like Wainwright, we could cite evidence of many meals in both Testaments (and between the Testaments) which have implicit or explicit eschatological connections. We could also cite the many passages in both Testaments (and from between the Testaments) which speak shadedly or clearly of a future "Messianic banquet." Yet all of this evidence still would not answer the question about the uniqueness of this particular "eschatological meal," nor the question about how this meal is connected to the feast in the kingdom of God. In order to answer those questions we must first answer the question of the proprium of the Lord's Supper, which is not given us by these eschatological statements.

There is still one piece of evidence left to consider, and precisely because of its uniqueness this piece of evidence is most

important of all: the words which Jesus spoke as he distributed the bread and the wine to his disciples to eat and to drink. All four accounts agree that on that night Jesus performed several simple actions: he took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to his disciples; he took a cup of wine, gave thanks for it, and gave it to his disciples to drink. These actions in themselves were not unique. We would never understand the significance of these actions nor the true meaning of the Lord's Supper were it not for the words which Jesus spoke as he distributed this bread and wine. That this was no ordinary Passover, that this was no mere "Jewish fellowship meal," that this was a meal unlike any before it in history is demonstrated by the words Jesus spoke of the bread and the wine.

A comparison of the four accounts reveals slight differences in wording, but there is a clearly discernable common core. Upon careful examination Jeremias says: "The oldest text of the words of interpretation obtained by a comparison of the texts agrees exactly with the Marcan text."<sup>7</sup> This text reads:

Λάβετε τούτο ἔσθιν τὸ σῶμά μου... τούτο ἔσθιν  
τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

"Take! This is my body . . . This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." What do these words mean? Sasse has summarized the confusion and contradiction which have resulted from the many attempts to take these words "symbolically."

[These examples] show that there has been no success so far in explaining the alleged parable in the words of the Lord's Supper. The exegetes indeed assure us: "Its meaning is quite simple. Each

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<sup>7</sup>Jeremias, p. 173.

one of the disciples could understand it" (Jeremias, Eucharistic Words, 224; similarly Jülicher, 243), yet they themselves quite clearly cannot agree what that meaning should be. In fact symbolic exegesis today does not seem to have gotten beyond the situation of the 16th century, when Luther again and again had to point out that his opponents were united in only one thing: that the words of the Lord's Supper were to be understood symbolically, while they differed widely on the interpretation itself. What sort of parable can it be when even learned exegetes cannot say with certainty what it actually means!

There is really only one "interpretation" that does justice to these words which Jesus spoke, and that is to take them as they stand, without watering them down or adding to them. The words mean what they say: "This is my body. . . . This is my blood of the covenant." Painstaking research into the "true origin and background" of the Lord's Supper is not necessary to decipher these words. These words do not require an explanation; they themselves are an explanation. They are a statement of the gift that Jesus gave on the night he was betrayed. They are a statement of what makes this bread and wine unique and without analogy in the Bible or in the world. These words communicate to us the proprium of the Lord's Supper, the very body and blood of Jesus Christ given for us to eat and to drink. No wonder Luther said of these words:

Everything depends on these words. Every Christian should and must know them and hold them fast. He must never let anyone take them away from him by any other kind of teaching, even though it were an angel from heaven [Gal. 1:8]. They are words of life and of salvation, so that whoever believes in them has all his sins forgiven through that faith; he is a child of life and has overcome death and hell. Language cannot express how great and mighty these words are, for they are the sum and substance of the whole gospel.

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<sup>8</sup>Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," p. 69.

<sup>9</sup>"The Adoration of the Sacrament" (1523), Luther's Works, American edition (edited and translated by Abdel Ross Wentz, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), volume 36, p. 277. cf. WA 11, 432.

And again, from his 1528 Sermons on the Catechism:

It is not the word of our prince or the emperor, but of God. Therefore, when you hear this word "is," then do not doubt. Thus the sacrament is bread and body, wine and blood, as the words say and to which they are connected. If, therefore, God speaks these words, then don't search any higher, but take off your hat; and if a hundred thousand devils, learned men, and spirits were to come and say, How can this be? you answer that one single word of God is worth more than all of these. A hundred thousand learned men are not as wise as one little hair of our God. In the first place, therefore, learn that the sacrament is not simply bread and wine, but the body and blood of Christ, as the words say. If you take away these words, you have only bread and wine. Hence the command of God is the greatest thing in the sacrament . . . <sup>10</sup> Take hold only of the words; they tell you what the sacrament is.

Quite simply, "Learn these words; in them the sacrament is summed up; if you have lost these words, you have lost the sacrament."<sup>11</sup> Nowhere is the Lord's Supper explained more simply and clearly than in the Small Catechism of Luther, for we find nothing here but the words of the New Testament and the words of Jesus.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar? It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

Where is this written? The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul [the Apostle] write thus: Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for

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<sup>10</sup>"Ten Sermons on the Catechism (1528), Luther's Works (ed. and translated J. W. Doberstein, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), v. 51, p. 189. Cf. WA 30<sup>1</sup>, 117-118.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 188.

you for the remission of sins. This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.<sup>12</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

It may seem superfluous to some that it has taken us 70 pages to get to the first question of the sixth chief part of the Small Catechism. If we think how long it took Luther to get there, and if we look at how far much of modern theology is from there, it may not seem quite as superfluous. How many "categories" and "methodologies" and "interpretations" did Luther have to work his way through before he was left with nothing else but the straightforward words of Jesus? We have intentionally worked through many of the "categories" and "methodologies" and "interpretations" of our day in order to show that at the end of them all there is one thing left, the most important thing of all, the words of Jesus: "This is my body...This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

We can be grateful to contemporary theology for reminding us of the many aspects of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and for introducing new opportunities to investigate them more fully and appreciate them more deeply. In view of our interest here, we are especially grateful for the attention being given to the Lord's Supper's eschatology, an aspect of the Lord's Supper which has not been (and perhaps still is not being) given the place and treatment it deserves in light of Scripture's testimony. All too often, however, modern theological scholarship seems to ignore, downplay or manipulate

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<sup>12</sup>A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), p. 20. Cf BKS 519.41.

the words of Jesus which give the Lord's Supper its real identity, meaning, and uniqueness. When this happens, it is impossible to understand properly or appreciate fully any of the various aspects of the Lord's Supper, including its eschatology, because "everything depends" on "these words;" "if you have lost these words, you have lost the sacrament."

If, on the other hand, we begin with these words as giving us the true proprium of the Lord's Supper and the key to understanding its true meaning, we can then hope to develop a theology of the Lord's Supper which takes into account all of the treasures with which the New Testament connects it without losing that which holds them all together, the body and blood of Jesus Christ which he bids us to eat and drink, and the words which communicate that proprium to us. Specifically, we can now begin to discuss the Lord's Supper's dominical eschatology, for we have learned from the Lord the true meaning and gift of his Supper. Since the real presence of the body and blood of Christ is the proprium of the Lord's Supper, it is also the proprium of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, for the Lord's Supper's eschatology may not be separated from the Lord's Supper. The Supper (like the Lord) is always to be kept whole in our theology, for that is how the Lord gives it to us in his Word.

### CHAPTER 3

#### A PROPRIUM - SOURCED ESCHATOLOGY: THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Where, then, do we go from here? A number of different directions are possible, each with its own potential rewards. We could focus on Paul's eschatological reference, "until he comes," and develop the connection between the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper and his coming again in the parousia. We could examine the eschatological statements in the synoptics, and develop the connection between the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper and the future feasting in the kingdom of God. We could go to the Gospel of John (6:51b-58) and develop the connection between the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper and the resurrection of the body on the last day. We could choose any number of the contextual elements in the Lord's Supper--the eucharistic prayers, the anamnesis, the passover background, the communio aspect--and develop their eschatological content in connection with the proprium of the Lord's Supper. We could study the writings of the fathers and the liturgies of the early church, and show how they sought to maintain the Lord's Supper's eschatology in connection with the proprium of the Lord's Supper.

Most of these themes and references, however, have received considerable attention for their eschatological content, and it is primarily a matter of relating that work to the proprium of the Lord's



Supper, which it too often lost, forgotten, or ignored. Before that could be adequately done, however, there is one statement in the Verba themselves which, surprisingly, has not been the subject of much research or enquiry and which carries significant eschatological freight: the words which Jesus spoke over the cup, "This is my blood of the covenant" (Mark, Matthew).

As we have seen, in both Matthew and Mark this word about the blood is followed immediately by an eschatological reference:

I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in y Father's kingdom.  
(Matthew 26:29)

Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kindgom of God.  
(Mark 14:25)

The giving of his blood to drink now "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew) is linked by Jesus to a "new" eating and drinking in the future "kingdom of God."

What is often overlooked is the Old Testament background to these words of Jesus about the (his) "blood of the covenant," which itself holds great promise for eschatological development. While a reference to Jeremiah 31:31 is usually seen in Christ's statement about "the new covenant" in Paul and Luke, Jeremiah says nothing about the blood which was at the heart of both "the new covenant" and the one which preceded it. For the precise phrase "the blood of the covenant," one must return to Exodus 24:8 and the making of the first covenant with Israel at Sinai, where blood played such a prominent and central

role.<sup>1</sup> The context here, of course, is Yahweh's great and gracious deliverance of Israel from Egypt by means of the passover and the exodus. After leading Israel to Sinai, Yahweh makes his covenant with Israel by means of sacrifice and sacrificial blood.

[Moses] sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar . . . . Then Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. (Exodus 24:5-6,8)

A comparison of the texts in Mark and Matthew with Exodus 24:8 makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that in his statement about the blood Jesus is quoting the words of Moses in Exodus 24:8 and referring back to the events that took place at Sinai. This connection is further strengthened by the sacrificial language used in connection with Jesus' statement about the blood, ἐκχυνόμενον<sup>2</sup> (synoptics) and ὑπὲρ<sup>3</sup> (Mark), since in Exodus 24 everything centers in the offering of sacrifices and sacrificial blood.

Most remarkable of all, however, is that as in the synoptics Jesus' statement about the blood is followed by an eschatological reference to the Messianic banquet, so in Exodus 24 Moses' statement

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<sup>1</sup>The precise phrase, "the blood of the covenant," appears only once in the Old Testament, in Ex. 24:8. Zech. 9:11 contains a rather obscure reference to "the blood of my covenant with you," but there is little in this text or its context which promises to shed further light on Jesus' use of the phrase in the Last Supper.

<sup>2</sup>Ἐκχύνω/Ἐκχέω<sup>2</sup> is used in the Old Testament (LXX) of drink offerings and libations connected with sacrifices (Num. 28:7; Is. 57:6; Ex. 30:8; Num. 19:17), translating the Hebrew יָצַק. See J. Behm, "Ἐκχέω," TDNT 2:268-9.

<sup>3</sup>For more on the sacrificial background of ὑπὲρ, see H. Riesenfeld, "ὑπὲρ," TDNT 8:511.

about the blood is followed by one of the most explicit and inexplicable eschatological events in the Old Testament. Immediately following the making of the covenant by splattering blood on the altar and on the people,

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank. (Exodus 24:9-11)

This is one of the most unique and vivid theophanies of the Old Testament, not only because of its explicitness but also because it involves not just one or two individuals, but a delegation of seventy elders representative of all of Israel, and an "eating and drinking" before God which is suggestive--indeed, proleptic--of that Messianic banquet to which Jesus refers in connection with "the blood of the covenant." There is certainly fertile ground here for further investigation of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, and best of all a proprium-sourced investigation, since Jesus himself leads us to Exodus 24 by quoting the words of Moses and applying them to his own blood of the "new covenant," the Lord's Supper.

We do not wish to suggest, of course, that this text (Exodus 24:1-11) holds the "key" for understanding the "true meaning" of the Lord's Supper. Apart from the Words of Institution, no single Old or New Testament text, nor any background or contextual information holds the "key" to the proper understanding of the Lord's Supper. The key to the Lord's Supper is the words of Jesus: "This is my body...This is my blood." These words can be heard and believed by any Christian, even if that person has no knowledge at all of the Old Testament passover,

the Jewish fellowship meal, the Jewish berakoth--or even the covenant made at Sinai in Exodus 24. That does not mean, however, that our understanding and appreciation of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology cannot be deepened and enriched by a better understanding of its context and background to which Jesus directs us by this phrase. The special benefit of seeking to deepen our understanding of the Lord's Supper's eschatology on the basis of Exodus 24 is that we are staying close to the words that make the Lord's Supper what it is, the words on which--as Luther said--"everything depends." Given these facts, we turn now to an investigation of the phrase "blood of the covenant" against the background of Exodus 24:1-11, with a special interest in the connection between this Old Testament "blood of the covenant" and the "eschatological" occurrence which followed its use.

PART II

"THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT" IN EXODUS 24:1-11

## Introduction

Nothing may here precede the study of this text itself, which relates Yahweh's making his covenant with Israel at Sinai. We are led to this text by the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, "This is my blood of the covenant." With these words Jesus quotes the statement of Moses in the making of the Sinai covenant, "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exodus 24:8). Exodus 24:1-11 therefore hold promise for elucidating the cup-word of Jesus at the Last Supper. A study of the connection in Exodus 24:1-11 between the blood of the covenant and what followed on the mountain may provide resource for probing the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

Following a translation of the Masoretic text with textual and philological notes, we will offer an excursus dealing with preliminary matters of textual, structural, literary and contextual questions. Exegesis and commentary are then provided along the lines of the pericope's threefold division (verses 1-2; 3-8; 9-11) and the various themes within those divisions (the call to worship, the covenant words, the covenant sacrifices, the covenant blood, the covenant theophany and meal). In Part III of the paper we will seek to apply what we have learned through the blood of the covenant in Exodus 24:1-11 to the Lord's Supper and its eschatology.

פ' נסב' ע' נ' כ' ד' ל' ה' ו' ז' ח' ט' י' י"א י"ב י"ג י"ד י"ה י"ו י"ז י"ח י"ט י"י י"יא י"יב י"יג י"יד י"טו י"טז י"יז י"יח י"יט י"כ י"כא י"כב י"כג י"כד י"כה י"כו י"כז י"כח י"כט י"ל י"לא י"לב י"לג י"לד י"לה י"לו י"לז י"לח י"לט י"מ י"מא י"מב י"מג י"מד י"מה י"מו י"מז י"מח י"מט י"נ י"נא י"נב י"נג י"נד י"נה י"נו י"נז י"נח י"נט י"ס י"סא י"סב י"סג י"סד י"סה י"סו י"סז י"סח י"סט י"ע י"עא י"עב י"עג י"עד י"עה י"עו י"עז י"עח י"עט י"פ י"פא י"פב י"פג י"פד י"פה י"פו י"פז י"פח י"פט י"ק י"קא י"קב י"קג י"קד י"קה י"קו י"קז י"קח י"קט י"ר י"רא י"רב י"רג י"רד י"רה י"רו י"רז י"רח י"רט י"ש י"שא י"שב י"שג י"שד י"שה י"שו י"שז י"שח י"שט י"ת י"תא י"תב י"תג י"תד י"תה י"תו י"תז י"תח י"תט י"י"א י"י"ב י"י"ג י"י"ד י"י"ה י"י"ו י"י"ז י"י"ח י"י"ט י"י"א י"י"ב י"י"ג י"י"ד י"י"ה י"י"ו י"י"ז י"י"ח י"י"ט י"י"א י"י"ב י"י"ג י"י"ד י"י"ה י"י"ו י"י"ז י"י"ח י"י"ט י"י"א י"י"ב י"י"ג י"י"ד י"י"ה י"י"ו י"י"ז י"י"ח י"י"ט

The Masoretic Text

Translation

24. <sup>1</sup>Then to Moses he said, "Come up to Yahweh, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance. <sup>2</sup>Moses alone, however, shall come near to Yahweh. They shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses went and recounted to the people all the words of Yahweh and all the judgments; and all the people responded with one voice and said, "All the words which Yahweh has spoken we will do." <sup>4</sup>Moses then wrote down all the words of Yahweh, and he rose diligently the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain along with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup>He then sent young men from the children of Israel and they offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen to Yahweh. <sup>6</sup>Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he splashed against the altar. <sup>7</sup>Then he took the book of the covenant and preached into the ears of the people; and they responded, "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do and we will hearken." <sup>8</sup>Then Moses took the blood and splashed it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words." <sup>9</sup>Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, <sup>10</sup>and they saw the God of Israel, and under his feet as it were a paved work of lapis lazuli, as the very heaven in clarity. <sup>11</sup>Yet against the chosen ones of the children of Israel he did not stretch forth his hand; but they saw God, and they ate and drank.



Textual and Philological Notes

24. 1. This is a very unusual Hebrew construction for the beginning of the new section; one would expect הָשִׁיר לְאַרְבָּעָה (cf. Ex. 24:12). See the discussion under the literary problems.

SP adds the names of Eleaser and Ithamar in vv. 1 and 9, completing the list of Aaron's sons. Cf. Leviticus 10:1-20.

וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתֶם The LXX has the third person plural προσκυνή-  
σουσιν in place of the MT second plural in an attempt to harmonize an apparent inconsistency.

The LXX also adds, "ἐνώπιον κυρίου," "before the Lord," at the end of v. 1.

2. The LXX reads θεός in place of the MT's Yahweh (cf. also v. 5,16). The LXX's use of μετ' ἐμοῦ where the MT has the singular is another attempt to harmonize the text.
3. The LXX adds ἀκουσόμεθα as in the MT of v. 7.
4. אֶבֶן "standing stone." The LXX and the SP read the more neutral אֲבָנִים which is understandable in light of the later abuses connected with the אֶבֶן and Deuteronomy's polemic against it (cf. 16:22).
5. עֹלָה and שְׁלָמִים "burnt offering" and "peace offering." We are employing the traditional translations; others have been suggested. Cf. the discussion of vv. 3-8.
10. וַהֲרִי often has the sense of ritual purity (cf. Ex. 30:35; 25:11; throughout Leviticus). The context here seems to suggest "clearness" as the intended meaning, which is supported by Ugaritic. Cf. C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, Rome 1965, under thr, glossary #1032; also W. Paschen, Rein und Unrein, Munich, 1970. H. Ringgren suggests the translation "gleaming" in Ex. 24:10 on the basis of OT parallel passages and a survey of the semantic field (TDOT 5:290). Cf. the discussion of vv. 9-11.
11. The etymology of לִצְדָקָה is debated. Gesenius-Buhl, Koehler and BDB derive it from a root לצדק, "to be firmly rooted." Other connect it to a Hebrew verb meaning "put to the side."

וַיִּרְאֵהוּ "see," became a technical word for the prophetic vision (cf. Amos 1:1; Isaiah 1:1, etc.); here, however, linked as it is with וַיִּרְאֵהוּ, it is best taken as a synonym of וַיִּרְאֵהוּ. The use of both words perhaps indicates the inability of the author to express this theophany in human language.

EXCURSUS:

PRELIMINARY CONCERNS

Literary and Traditio-Historical Questions

A crux is presented already with the opening words of 24:1. The Hebrew has וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה "And to Moses he said." B. Childs says: "Ordinarily one would have expected a different Hebrew construction from the beginning of a new section."<sup>1</sup> Normally a fresh address would begin וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה. A common argument is that a section has fallen out here, and/or that a later redactor has added a bulk of material just previous to this section which intrudes upon the flow and unity of the text.<sup>2</sup>

A related question is the syntactical order of the words in 24:1. The implication is that Yahweh is continuing a previously initiated speech, but with a shift of focus as concerns the addressee. The Hebrew emphasizes Moses as that new addressee to whom Yahweh now turns his attention. This seems to contradict Exodus 20:22 and 21:1, and involves a noticeable stylistic alteration which appears to support the literary-critical argument mentioned above.

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<sup>1</sup>Brevard Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 498. Hereafter Childs.

<sup>2</sup>Surveys of the various critical views may be found in Childs, 498-505; also in Martin Noth, Exodus (London and Philadelphia: Old Testament Library, 1962), pp. 196-197.

Another difficulty which appears to some to involve a contradiction is that the instructions in verse 1 seem to controvert those given in verse 2 (or vice-versa). First it is stated that Moses is to come up to Yahweh along with Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's elders, so that the whole group can worship at a distance. But the second verse says: "Moses alone shall come near to Yahweh, but they shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." These words raise a question not only about the relationship between verses 1 and 2, but also about the relationship of these opening verses to the eventual ascent of the mountain in verses 9-11. Consequently Beyerlin (and others) assign verse 2 to a separate fragment.<sup>3</sup> Noth is even more pessimistic: "We might just as well assume that the whole passage vv.1f. is secondary and has not been appropriately formulated."<sup>4</sup>

By far the greatest question, however, and what Childs calls "the major literary problem of the chapter," has to do with the unity of the pericope (verses 1-11) as a whole. Childs provides this summary:

Verses 1-2 contain instructions which are carried out first in vv. 9-11, but which form a continuous account. In between, vv. 3-8 appear to constitute an independent account. The striking differences in the portrayal of Moses, the setting of the action, and the action itself would seem to point to two different strands of narrative.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions, translated by S. Rudman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 14-18 and pp. 27-30. Beyerlin also has a well-documented survey of various critical views on this point.

<sup>4</sup>Noth, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup>Childs, p. 500.

Martin Noth speaks in more absolute terms:

In this section two different literary strata may easily be distinguished...We are given in this chapter two versions of the account of the making of the covenant which, while dealing with the same subject, are widely different in their individual details.<sup>6</sup>

The ascription of the sections within the pericope to various sources becomes a matter of great complexity and debate. A survey of these diverging opinions is given in L. Perlitt's Bundestheologie im Alten Testament.<sup>7</sup> Perlitt observes that the only real point of consensus among exegetes in the whole of chapter 24 is that vv. 15b-18a belong to the Priestly source. There is also rather wide agreement in the assignment of vv. 3-8 to the E source, says Childs, "chiefly because of the consistency in general content with the portrayal of the Sinai events."<sup>8</sup> Adherents of this view must explain, however, why the divine name "Yahweh" is used throughout this section. Those who follow the more strict and original rubrics for assigning sources therefore stick to the view that these verses belong to J. Opinions vary widely as to the origin of vv. 1f. and 9f. Several scholars (Dillmann, Bacon, Driver, Hyatt) assign them to J. Such exegetes "admit the lack of clear criteria, but assume J to be likely if the other verses are given to E."<sup>9</sup> Problems with this view are that there are sharp differences

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<sup>6</sup>Noth, p. 194

<sup>7</sup>Luthar Perlitt, Bundestheologie im Alten Testament (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

<sup>8</sup>Childs, p. 501.

<sup>9</sup>Childs, p. 500. The references to the commentators are also in Childs (p. 499), but he gives no page numbers. See A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus, edited by V. Ryssel (Leipzig: Fues, 1897); B. W. Bacon, The Triple Tradition of the Exodus (Hartford: Student Publ. Co., 1894); S.R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge:

in this section with the way J's style and theology are usually characterized and that it is generally conceded that J's account of the covenant sealing occurs in Exodus 34. As a result some scholars (Bäntsch, Beyerlin) assign the section to a different stratum of the E source, while others (Smend, Eissfeldt) attribute it to J<sup>1</sup> or L, or even (Eerdmans) to a very late scribe.<sup>10</sup>

There is no question that the studies of these scholars have revealed and grappled with very real logical, philological and theological questions raised by the text, questions which should not be discounted or ignored. Unfortunately, however, in the words of Childs, "As a result of these problems and the increasing complexity of the analysis, the effect has been the complete atomization of the chapter into a myriad of disparate and contradictory fragments."<sup>11</sup> Where this has happened, exegesis has been deterred from its goal of understanding and confessing "what the text says" in its present form and has engaged in the less helpful task of hypothesizing and theorizing about the prehistory of the text: what some portion of the text might once have said, who might have originally said it, and what might have been the original writer's (or speaker's) motive in saying it.

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University Press, 1911); J. P. Hyatt, Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971).

<sup>10</sup>B. Bäntsch, Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1903), pp. 213ff.; Beyerlin, op. cit., pp. 27ff.; Smend, Eissfeldt and Eerdmans are cited without clear reference in Th. C. Vriezen, "The Exegesis of Exodus xxiv 9-11," Oudtestamentische Studiën, Deel 17, edited by A. S. Van der Woude (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), pp. 104-5. See Vriezen for the most complete summary of critical research on these verses.

<sup>11</sup>Childs, p. 500.

The recent critical commentaries, abandoning all effort to obtain a coherent account, have tended to highlight the discrepancies and have interested themselves only in historical reconstructions. The weakness of the first approach lies in its failure to deal seriously enough with the given text, substituting one's own opinion of what the text should have said. The weakness of the second lies in its complete atomizing of the narrative in disregard of the final stage of the text, and its failure to realize that the whole is more than its parts. What is needed is a synthetic approach which, while recognizing the historical dimension of the text, will seek to describe as objectively as possible what the final editor actually accomplished with his narrative. In this way the expositor does not himself go beyond the witness of the text.<sup>12</sup>

Adopting such an approach does not allow us to ignore the questions which the text raises. Very often, however, answers to those questions are suggested or even provided by the text itself. Listening to the text which has been given, Childs would argue, is preferable to surmising about possible sources for which there is often no clear evidence.

To illustrate we refer to the several difficulties mentioned above. The apparent problem caused by the Hebrew idiom at 24:1 is based mainly on the presupposition (supported by the English chapter division) that this must be the start of a new section. If one admits the possibility that 24:1 is simply the continuation of a previous section of material beginning in 20:22 or 21:1, the problem virtually disappears. The proper idiom to begin a new section comes in 24:12 and 25:1; it is here one should look when seeking the start of a new block of material. In this case 24:1 also links the making of the covenant

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<sup>12</sup>Childs, p. 503. Cf. also, by the same author, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) Introduction to Old Testament Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979) Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). All references to "Childs" are to his commentary on Exodus unless noted otherwise.

(24:1-11) with the content of the book of the covenant (20:1-23:33). The change of addressee in 24:1 can also be explained without resorting to arguments of literary transposition or redaction. One plausible answer is that the previous chapters (21-23) are to be viewed as spoken by Yahweh through Moses to the people as a whole. The ten words were spoken by Yahweh directly to the people (20:18-19). The "ordinances" of chapters 21-23 are to be transmitted by Moses to the people (20:22; 21:1). In 24:1, Yahweh shifts the focus and begins speaking directly to Moses.<sup>13</sup> This is consistent with the events to follow, for vv. 3-8 emphasize Moses' role as covenant mediator, a role which had been introduced in ch. 19 and in a sense as early as ch. 3. This may also explain why Moses is addressed in second person in v. 1 and in third person in v. 2. Verse 2 may be a brief aside addressed again to the whole people, stressing the importance of the command and assuring that all understand it. On the other hand, the change in person may be one of the many stylistic devices common in the Hebrew language which sound peculiar only to modern ears.

The alleged contradiction between the instructions given in verses one and two may also be explained on the basis of the given text. These instructions, viewed in light of the events throughout this and surrounding chapters, are compatible with the text's portrayal of a series of gradual climbs involving different heights and various groups or individuals. Moses has already gone up the mountain several

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<sup>13</sup>Childs says: "Certainly it seems far more reasonable to suppose that the reversal of the normal Hebrew syntax has been done by the author with an intent to indicate a shift in emphasis rather than to mark that a prior section has been omitted" (p. 504). The roughness of the transition, says Childs, is more typical of Hebrew than English.

times (19:3,20; 20:21); no details are given as to the height of these climbs, but apparently he returned each time and related to the people the words of Yahweh (19:7,23). In 24:1-2 Moses receives instructions for another series of graded climbs. Aaron and his sons are invited to accompany Moses to a certain height, along with Israel's elders; then there takes place the theophany and meal described in vv. 9-11. Moses then continues the climb alone (24:12,15,18), perhaps also in various "stages" (cf. also 32:31; 33:17-23; 34:2-6). The other alternative is to see here a number of complete "ascents" and "descents," which is possible but seems far less likely.

The question of the literary unity of the pericope bears commentary here as well. It should first be noted that the failure to reach anything that might be called a consensus on the nature of its alleged disunity certainly leaves room for alternative views. After summarizing recent literary-critical work on the passage, Childs comments that "the arbitrariness of much of this reasoning does not increase confidence in the suggested source-analysis."<sup>14</sup> Arguments for the pericope's disunity, furthermore, are seemingly double-edged. It is true that the instructions given in vv. 1-2 are not finally carried out until vv. 9f., and that vv. 3-8 describe a distinct event; the relationship between the two events (vv. 3-8 and vv. 9-11) is not spelled out by the text. It is just as conceivable, however, that the presence of vv. 3-8 between vv. 1-2 and 9-11 speaks for the unity of the passage rather than against it. When we listen to the text as it has been given and seek to understand it in that form, we may well

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<sup>14</sup>Childs, p. 500.



conclude that the writer's purpose was to show how these two events are interrelated and intimately connected. Childs explains:

As it stands, a certain effect seems to have been deliberately achieved by this arrangement. The covenant meal of the elders does not come as a loosely connected anticlimax to the ratification of the covenant in vv. 3-8. Rather, the covenant meal is announced to Moses as a continuation of the divine instruction which began at 20:22ff. Moreover, by enclosing the covenant ratification in vv. 3-8 within the announcement and execution of the covenant meal, the latter incident is made to appear not as an afterthought, but as an essential part of one ceremony...The covenant meal no longer functions as a parallel ceremony by which to seal the covenant, but rather as a joyous confirmation of the new relationship which had already been accomplished in vv. 3-8.<sup>15</sup>

While E.W. Nicholson disputes the original unity of these two events (or the accounts of them), he does recognize, with Childs, their "redactional" or canonical unity:

The remarkable contents of this passage [Exodus 24:9-11] and its redactional relationship with the description of the covenant ceremony in vv. 3-8 suggest that it is intended as a description of the very crowning of the covenant which has finally conveyed Israel to God as his holy people.<sup>16</sup>

Along with Childs and Nicholson, other recognized critical scholars (Nötscher, Cassuto, Dillman; to some extent Beyerlin),<sup>17</sup> have defended the view that Exodus 24:1-11 is, in fact, a formal and literary unit, a description of a multi-faceted yet unified event, not of two separate "covenant ceremonies" or two versions of the ratification of the Sinai covenant.

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<sup>15</sup>Childs, p. 504.

<sup>16</sup>E.W. Nicholson, "The Covenant Ritual in Exodus XXIV 3-8," Vetus Testamentum XXXII, 1 (1982), p. 85.

<sup>17</sup>F. Nötscher, "Sakrale Mahlzeiten von Qumran," Lex tua Veritas; H. Junker-Festschrift (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1961), pp. 145-174, esp. p. 167; U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. by Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967); Dillmann, pp. 257ff.; Beyerlin, pp. 36ff.

Since, therefore, the literary disunity of Ex. 24:1-11 has by no means been proven, and since many scholars have shown that fruitful exegesis can be carried out on the basis of the text's unity (whether original or redactional), it is this text in its given form that will engage us here in exegetical study.

#### The Literary Structure of Exodus 24

The literary structure of Exodus 24 is our first task. Vv. 1-2 link this text with events that take place later in the chapter and book. Verse 1 announces the immediate result or goal of the ensuing covenant-ratification: Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy of Israel's elders are invited to come up to Yahweh on the mountain and worship him. This goal is achieved in verses 9-11. The inclusion of verses 3-8 between vv. 1-2 and 9-11 suggests that the events of the covenant ratification described in these middle verses play a key role in joining together the goal (verses 1-2) with its consummation (verses 9-18).

Verse two emphasizes Moses' special role as covenant mediator, a role which was requested by the people themselves (20:19) and which Moses fulfills throughout the book. This role takes on a priestly character in verses 3-8. Yet verse two also points beyond the pericope of 24:1-11 to verses 12-18, since it speaks of Moses' approaching Yahweh alone. Thus verses 1-2 really anticipate the events of the whole chapter, and the location of verse 2 indicates that verses 1-18 are in a sense one unit, with a new section beginning at 25:1. This is typical of Hebrew narrative which is often episodic with a general introduction to the following episodes.

Exodus 24 appears to be a literary unity in which four events follow each other in regular sequence: after the introduction (vv. 1-2), we find the making of a covenant by means of a blood-ritual at the foot of Mount Sinai (vv. 3-8), the ascent of the representatives of Israel to a place from which they could behold God (vv. 9-11), the ascent of Moses alone to the place of his revelation to receive the tablets of stone (vv. 12-15), and the encounter at the very top of the mountain between Yahweh and Moses, hidden by the cloud (vv. 15-18)<sup>2</sup>

The repetition of "Yahweh said to Moses" and of verse 2 in verse 12 (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַלְהֵם) justifies regarding vv. 12-18 as a sub-section within the larger chapter unity, and thus taking vv. 1-11 as a distinct pericope. The division of the Hebrew text at this point by the Masoretes indicates that they also regarded the two "halves" of this chapter as distinct pericopal sections. If there is a "high point" in the pericope as a whole (chapter 24), it would seem to be the event described in verses 9-11, for here Yahweh reveals himself directly and to the entire group of worshippers, while in verses 15-18 Yahweh appears in a cloud, hidden to the eyes, and to Moses only. An argument may be made for two different "high points," however, as the possible outline below indicates:

- I. v. 1: Introduction A--Yahweh calls Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy to participate in the covenant meal
- v. 2: Introduction B--Yahweh calls for Moses' own approach as covenant mediator
- vv. 3-8: Moses' descent and mediation of covenant ratification
- vv. 9-11: Compliance to "A" call: they go up the mountain, see God, and eat and drink before Him (high-point of I)
  
- II. v. 12: Introduction B repeated
- v. 13-15: Compliance to "B" call: Moses' approach to Yahweh

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<sup>2</sup>Peter H. Talia, A Critical and Exegetical Analysis of Exodus 24 with Special Attention to Covenant Ratification (Th. D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1980), p. 2.

v. 16-18: Moses enters glory-cloud and sees God in "hidden" form (high point of II)

#### The Context of Exodus 24

If Exodus 24:1-11 is a distinct pericope within the larger unit of chapter 24, what then is the specific context into which this chapter and pericope fit? Further, what is the place and function of the pericope within the book of Exodus as a whole? These questions call for a brief discussion of the major lines of movement within the book of Exodus.

Few books of the Bible are easy to outline, and Exodus is not one of the few. A survey in the commentaries of the many and various outlines suggested for the book confirms that fact. This may well serve as a warning or caution against such outlining as becomes an imposition or intrusion upon the text rather than its elucidation. On the other hand, the decision not to outline the book at all is becoming more common. Implicit in this decision is a degree of pessimism regarding the validity and usefulness of the book's own structure, often resulting in the atomization and attempted reconstruction of the text discussed earlier.

The most frequent method of outlining the book of Exodus is to rally around the great events which it so graphically describes. Thus the colorful story of Israel's final days in Egypt might constitute the first section of the book, detailing the bondage and bitter labor under Pharaoh, the call of Moses, the confrontation with Pharaoh and the divine plagues which led to Israel's eventual release (1:1-11:10). The tremendous account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, including the

institution of the Passover and the miraculous crossing of the Sea of Reeds, may well be seen as the second major phase of Israel's history as given by the text of Exodus (12-18). A new stage begins at 19:1 with the preparation for the reception of the covenant, the ratification of which takes place in chapter 24. Yahweh's revelation of the "heavenly blueprint" for the tabernacle and guidelines for Israel's continuing life of worship and service may be identified as a further division (25-31), followed by the sin-and-grace episode of the golden calf apostasy and Yahweh's renewal of the covenant through the intercession and mediation of Moses (32-34). The book closes with the actual execution of God's plans for the worship-life of his people, including the building and consecration of the tabernacle, through which Yahweh assures his glory-presence in the cloud which is to accompany the children of Israel (35-40).

The value of such an approach to outlining is that it highlights the events which are highlighted by the book itself; it allows the ebb and flow of the narrative itself to form the book's structure. One potential weakness of this approach is that it may fail to show how these events are related to one another. A series of events is reported, each prominent in its own right, but little help is offered for viewing those events in reference to the unity of the book as a whole. It would be helpful if there were a connective theme employed by the book itself to bind these various events into a unified whole. Several possible themes emerge as one reads through the book of Exodus: holiness/glory; the "name" of God/Yahweh; "remembering"; "seeing"; "saving"; "interceding"; "choosing"; worship. Each of these has its

own validity as a possible theme of the book of Exodus, and each has its own unique contribution to make the richness of the book. It appears, however, that there is another, more prominent, theme which directs and ties together the events of the book of Exodus. This theme is ברית, "covenant."<sup>3</sup>

The word ברית appears 13 times in the book of Exodus. The first passage in which it occurs may well serve as a summary statement of the entire book:

And the sons of Israel sighed because of their bondage, and they cried out: and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. And God heard their groaning; and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and he knew them. (2:23-25)

Even if this were the only Exodus reference to ברית, it would nearly suffice to place the whole book in a covenant context. These words link the Abrahamic covenant with God's gracious acts of hearing, remembering, seeing and knowing, and they imply that all further gracious acts performed by God in Exodus out of compassion for his beggarly people will be acts flowing out of this covenant of promise (cf. Genesis 15,17). As will be discussed in more detail later, these verses also prohibit setting at odds the covenant ratified with Abraham

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<sup>3</sup>ברית in the Old Testament has initiated a massive amount of literature in all areas of Old Testament exegesis and theology. Various aspects of those discussions will come into play throughout this study, but we are limited by our specific purpose and will not even attempt a summary of modern work concerning this term and its meaning. See the excellent bibliography in M. Weinfeld's article on ברית in TDOT v. 2, pp. 253-279. See also Mendenhall's article in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1962), v. 1, pp. 714-723. (hereafter IDB), and the articles by Weinfeld and P. A. Reimann in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume, edited by Keith Crimm (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1976), pp. 188-197. (hereafter IDBS).

and the covenant ratified through Moses. The text suggests that the former gives birth to the latter; therefore they share the same essential nature.

The covenant theme introduced in chapter 2 is continued in 6:2-9. In this passage Yahweh/El-Shaddai reminds Moses of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and says that what he (Yahweh) is about to do is in remembrance of that covenant (verse 5). The "new" covenant is described by Yahweh as follows:

I am Yahweh; and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, and I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God...(6:6-7)

In Exodus 19:5 the word בְּרִית emerges again, and the surrounding verses provide a clear description of what sort of covenant Yahweh intends to make with this group of former slaves.

...You shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. (19:5b-6)

In Ex. 23:32, Israel is warned about making "covenants" with the pagan inhabitants of the promised land and with their gods: "You shall make no covenants with them or with their gods...lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you" (23:32-33). Even sin and apostasy, then, may be described in covenant terms; rebellion against Yahweh consists in "covenanting" with false gods and the unbelieving peoples who worship them. In the following chapter the covenant is ratified (24:1-11); the "book of the covenant" (verse 7) and the "blood of the covenant" (verse 8) play key roles in this event. There is a grouping of references to the covenant

in chapter 34 (verses 10,12,15,27,28) connected with Yahweh's "renewal" of the covenant following the golden calf incident and the public apostasy under Aaron's leadership. Even the theme of the continuing worship life of God's newly-created people is set in a covenant context, since in 31:16 the sabbath is described as a "perpetual covenant" to be observed throughout all generations. This connection between the covenant and Israel's ongoing worship life is further demonstrated by the sacrifices offered in the covenant ratification itself (24:5), since these point forward to the cultic manual of the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus (see below, p. 143ff).

Nearly all the momentous events and institutions of the book of Exodus, then, are tied together by the text itself by means of the theme בְּרִית. These events, as "covenant events," carry the theme of covenant throughout the book, even into contexts where the word itself does not appear.

If the evidence outlined above justifies seeing בְּרִית as the central and unifying theme of the book of Exodus, then it further suggests that the Exodus 24 pericope is rightly viewed as the heart and center of the book. Obviously there are a number of "momentous events" in Exodus: the first Passover, the Reed Sea crossing, Moses' encounters with Yahweh, first at the burning bush (where Yahweh reveals his name) and later on Mt. Sinai (see especially 32:17-23). Yet if בְּרִית is really the theme which directs and unifies even these major events, then the real heart of the book is surely the ratification of the covenant which occurs in 24:1-11. Nor has this gone unobserved by various commentators. J.G. Murphy calls the pericope the "kernel" of



the book of Exodus.<sup>4</sup> G.H. Davies says that the ratification of the covenant at Sinai "really inaugurates the history of the covenant community in Israel."<sup>5</sup> Strictly speaking, it is with the sealing of the covenant in Exodus 24 that Israel can rightly be called for the first time a "nation," a "people," a "kingdom" of God (See Ex. 19:5-6). Therefore Bernhard Ramm concludes that "the great event in chapter 24 is the climax of the book of Exodus."<sup>6</sup>

Some go even further. In a doctoral dissertation on Exodus 24, P. Talia suggests that this event has a centrality which reaches beyond the book of Exodus:

This event [the covenant-ratification in Ex. 24:1-11] became like a fossil which marked the stratification of the nation. The theological implication of this aspect of the passage is presupposed by and freely used not only in the later books of the Pentateuch (e.g. Num. 25:12; Deut. 4:13,14; 5:2-5), but throughout the Bible. With one accord the Psalmists (105:8; 106:45; 111:5) and the prophets (Is. 61:9; Jer. 31:31-34; Amos 2:10; Hosea 6:7; Micah 6:3-4) refer back to this event of the remote past as the decisive point at which God had revealed Himself.<sup>7</sup>

Talia also makes reference to several New Testament passages which point back to Exodus 24:1-11 as one of the key events of the Old Testament, including all four accounts of the institution of the Lord's

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<sup>4</sup>James G. Murphy, The Book of Exodus (New York: I.K. Funk & Co., 1881), p. 172.

<sup>5</sup>Gwynne Henton Davies, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 195.

<sup>6</sup>Bernard L. Ramm, His Way Out (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1974), p. 139.

<sup>7</sup>Talia, pp. 9-10. While the Exodus 24 event is not explicitly mentioned in the passages Talia cites, it is difficult to argue with his assertion that later references to God's "covenant" with Israel are rooted in this original ratification event.

Supper. Talia is not alone in emphasizing the central place of this event in the history of the Old Testament. A. Edersheim has written:

This transaction [the covenant-ratification in Ex. 24] was the most important in the whole history of Israel. By this one sacrifice, never renewed, Israel was formally set apart as the people of God; and it lay at the foundation of all the sacrificial worship that followed.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, G. Auzou argues similarly in his work De la Servitude au Service:

Six versets pour [Exodus 24:3-8] raconter l'événement le plus important de tout l'Ancien Testament! Au vrai, la longueur ne fait rien au récit. Ceux de l'institution du Sacrement de la nouvelle Alliance, dans les Évangiles, seront encore plus courts.<sup>9</sup>

Even if one feels that Auzou has overstated the case, it may be that such overstatement is justified by the desire to call attention to this pericope, the importance of which for Old (and New) Testament theology has not, perhaps, been sufficiently recognized.

If it can be agreed that Ex. 24:1-11 is the central event at least of the book of Exodus, then it should also be said that the ratification of the Sinai covenant serves as a bridge within the book. "Chapter 24 serves as the connecting link with the preceding themes of the book while at the same time pointing forward to succeeding themes."<sup>10</sup> In other words, the pericope is not only theologically central to Exodus it is also structurally central. It recalls and fulfills the promise given to Moses as covenant mediator. "The theme of Moses' special role as mediator which is adumbrated in ch. 19, and

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Edersheim, The Exodus and The Wanderings in the Wilderness (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1876) p. 118.

<sup>9</sup> G. Auzou, De la Servitude au Service (Paris: n.p. given, 1961), p. 268.

<sup>10</sup> Childs, p. 503.

then made explicit in 20:18ff., is climaxed by his role in sealing the covenant in 24:3ff.<sup>11</sup> Further, says Childs,

The chapter forms a bridge to the Priestly account of the ascent of the mountain to receive the instructions for the tabernacle. Similarly, ch. 24 introduces the theme of the golden calf, and the need for a renewal of the covenant in Ex. 34<sup>12</sup>

In this connection the relationship between chapters 24 and 19 is especially worthy of attention. We noted earlier that chapters 19-24 constitute one major section of the book of Exodus. Nicholson calls this section "the locus classicus of the Sinai tradition," and argues that our knowledge of the Sinai covenant rests "largely if not exclusively" on the basis of the pericopes 19:3b-8 and 24:1-11.<sup>13</sup> Nicholson also demonstrates that Ex. 24:1-11 cannot be properly discussed until one has become familiar with the contents of ch. 19.<sup>14</sup> Childs treats the two chapters in light of each other throughout his commentary on them both, as do many other commentators. He says that 19:3b-8 "presupposes the ratification of the covenant which comes in 24:3ff.," and that "the whole section [of ch. 19-20] only anticipates what is to follow."<sup>15</sup>

While we cannot do justice within the scope of this paper to all of the contrasts and parallels between these two sections of the book of Exodus, we will have opportunity at several points in our discussion

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>E.W. Nicholson, Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1973), pp. 61-63.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 77-81.

<sup>15</sup>Childs, p. 360,367.

to draw attention to some of them by way of example. One feature common to both these sections which bears mentioning before we give attention to the details of Ex. 24:1-11 itself is that in both cases there is an obvious concern to locate these events in history. In Exodus 24 this is evident from the way in which the covenant ratification is described or "reported." The account is concise, and carefully told; as in the accounts of the Lord's Supper's institution, we are told only what is seen as necessary for us to know. The several unique and even "shocking" details of this event are further witnesses for its historicity. It is hard to imagine an Old Testament Israelite inventing, for example, the blood rite described in verse 8; and if it were invented, it is even harder to imagine its continued acceptance in the Old Testament canon. The same is true of the events reported in verses 9-11. We are therefore led to conclude that the events reported here really happened, just as the text says. Similarly in Exodus 19 there is a concern to establish the historical "located-ness" of the events it describes. Here this concern is evidenced by details of geography and chronology:

On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone forth out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. And when they set out from Reph'idim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain. (19:1-2)

Clearly the author of Exodus 19 intends to remove all skepticism about whether or not the events he is about to recount "really happened." He gives names, dates, places, and he gives them with precision. "Exodus 19 remains as a witness that God did enter a covenant with a historical

people at a particular time and place."<sup>16</sup> "The first thing to be said about this Sinai experience," says Murray Newman, "is that it actually happened."<sup>17</sup> W. Eichrodt also speaks of the "factual nature" (Tatcharakter) of the Sinai revelation:

It must be noted that the establishment of a covenant through the work of Moses especially emphasizes one basic element in the whole Israelite experience of God, namely the factual nature of the divine revelation. God's disclosure of himself is not grasped speculatively...it is as he breaks in on the life of his people in his dealings with them and molds them according to his will that he grants them knowledge of his being. This interpretation of the covenant is indicated by the whole historical process leading up to it...This demonstration of the will of Yahweh appears as a concrete fact of<sub>18</sub> history, as a covenant expressed in the forms of actual events.

With this in mind we proceed to the task of the exegesis of Exodus 24:1-11, bearing in mind also the necessary limitations presupposed by our scope of study.

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<sup>16</sup>Childs, p. 384.

<sup>17</sup>Lee Murray Newman, Jr., The People of the Covenant (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 30.

<sup>18</sup>Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, volumes 1-2, translated by J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 37-38. Emphasis Eichrodt's.

## CHAPER 1

### THE CALL TO WORSHIP

#### The Inviter

Verse 1 of Exodus 24 receives relatively little attention from commentators, but it is remarkable enough in its own right. "Then to Moses he said, 'Come up to Yahweh, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance.'" The first noteworthy fact has to do with the Inviter. How often in the Old Testament do we read of a direct and personal invitation from Yahweh himself to "come up...and worship"? It might be argued that all subsequent "calls to worship" announced through the psalmists (50; 95:6; 96:9; 99:9; 100; etc.) and the prophets (Is. 24:6ff.; 27:13; Ezek. 39:17ff.; Joel 2:15ff.; Michah 4:1ff.; Zeph. 3:9ff., etc.) are echoes of this original call which corresponds to the birth of Israel as a worship community. This suggestion gains weight from the fact that many of those later "calls to worship" or descriptions of worship picture it in Sinai-like fashion, as taking place on a "holy hill" or mountain in the very presence of the God of Israel.

The word סוּד (verse 1) literally means "bow down," "prostrate oneself," "make obeisance," "bend low."<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommonly used to express honor and respect shown on a human level (cf. Gen. 23:7,12;

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<sup>1</sup>H. D. Preuss, "סוּד," TDOT 4:249.

33:3,6). Here, however, as often elsewhere in the Old Testament, the object of "obeisance" is Yahweh himself; hence, "to worship." We observe that the pericope begins on a note of divine initiative. It is not Moses' idea to "come up and worship," nor that of the elders or the congregation of Israel, certainly not after the terrifying events of chapters 19-20! It is Yahweh who calls, summons, invites, just as it is Yahweh who initiates every other event leading up to the birth of the nation Israel (Exodus 19:6) in the book of Exodus.

#### The Invitation

The call to worship in Exodus 24:1 is evidence of the continuing fulfillment by Yahweh of several divine oaths or promises given earlier in the book. The first and most explicit of these promises came to Moses out of the burning bush:

But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign (אִיָּה) for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall worship (עֲבֹד) God upon this mountain. (3:12)

The word אִיָּה is usually translated "sign," but this seems to be an inadequate translation in light of Old Testament usage.<sup>2</sup> An אִיָּה is not merely a "sign" or a "symbol." It is a concrete, often physical and palpable seal of a divine promise. One might say that the אִיָּה is the promise made visible; it is the promise "incarnate" in some earthly form so that in that form it may be received by people,

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<sup>2</sup>F. J. Helfmeyer wrestles with this inadequacy as he tries to explain that the Old Testament אִיָּה actually "motivate people to believe in Yahweh and to worship him. Therefore they may be called signs producing faith [or] . . . signs that confirm faith." F. J. Helfmeyer, "אִיָּה," TDOT 1:175 (emphasis Helfmeyer's).

who in such receiving are brought to or confirmed in faith in Yahweh/Elohim and his word.

Two תַּאֲוָה are mentioned in connection with the covenant made at Mt. Sinai.<sup>3</sup> The sabbath is called an תַּאֲוָה in Ex. 31:12; it is also called a בְּרִית in Ex. 31:16. Noteworthy, however, is that in both cases these descriptions lack the definite article. The sabbath is a "covenant," but as such is only an outgrowth of the covenant made at Sinai. The sabbath is an תַּאֲוָה, but as such is only one aspect of the תַּאֲוָה promised by God in Ex. 3:12 in order to produce and confirm faith in himself and his word. The תַּאֲוָה of the Sinai covenant is given by the words: "You shall worship God on this mountain" (Ex. 3:12). The word עָבַד used in this verse often has the more general meaning "work" or "serve," but all major Hebrew lexicons include "worship" as the best rendering in some contexts. It is clear from the events of chapters 19 and following that Ex. 3:12 is such a context.

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<sup>3</sup>Each of the Pentateuchal covenants was accompanied by an תַּאֲוָה or תַּאֲוָה. The תַּאֲוָה of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow (Gen. 9:12). In and of itself, of course, the rainbow had no power to produce or confirm faith; but linked with the word of promise (Gen. 9:12,17) which was inextricably bound up with it, even an "ordinary" rainbow could serve a faith-strengthening function. The תַּאֲוָה of the covenant with Abraham was circumcision (Gen. 17). Again, in and of itself circumcision had no value or power, as was made clear to Israel even in the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 10:16, Lev. 26:41). But received together with God's word of promise (Gen. 17:7,11,13), circumcision was indeed an effective means of God's grace towards his people, comparable to the New Testament gift of Baptism (cf. Col. 2:11-14). Through circumcision the promise of God, "to be God to you and to your descendants after to you" (Gen. 17:7), was sealed even to eight-day old infants, models of passive receptivity (Gen. 17:12).



H.D. Preuss demonstrates, in fact, that "the verbs וָרָח and וָבַעַ often occur together and are used as synonyms."<sup>4</sup>

The fulfillment of the וָרָח-promise of Ex. 3:12 begins with the arrival of the people of Israel at Sinai in 19:1: "There they encamped before the mountain," the mountain to which God had attached his promise in 3:12. There also, however, the worship event promised to Israel in Ex. 3:12 begins on an ominous and terrifying note. If, in fact, the events of Exodus 19-20 were the only record given by Exodus of the fulfillment of the וָרָח spoken in Ex. 3:12, we should have to call this וָרָח a "threat" rather than a gracious promise of blessing. It is important to recognize, therefore, that the covenant ratification of chapter 24 is the gracious sequel to the frightening occurrences connected with Yahweh's self-revelation in chapters 19-20. Each of the two events is to be read in the light of the other. Only in this way are both understood. Chapter 19 sets the stage for the high point of the fulfillment of the וָרָח, the covenant ratification of Ex. 24:1-11.

The promise "you shall worship" (3:12) is confirmed by the call to worship (24:1). It is fulfilled, moreover, in a very concrete, tangible, physical and visible way. Most specifically, the invitation to worship in 24:1 points forward to the unique theophany in verses 9-11 which, though practically indescribable, is nonetheless very real, concrete and visible. This is no dream: "They ate and they drank"

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<sup>4</sup>H. D. Preus, p. 254. Preuss also gives numerous examples from Scripture of how and where these words are paired and used as synonyms. The LXX has λατρεύετε, which can also have the sense of "worship" as "priestly service" (BAG, p. 467).

(24:11). Yet inseparable from the events of verses 9-11 are those of verses 3-8 which, as will be seen, are even more palpable and tangible. H.D. Preuss notes that the verb חנה often suggests cultic activity, particularly when used in conjunction with a verb such as עבר. In such cases חנה "can almost be rendered 'carry out a cultic action (before Yahweh).'"<sup>5</sup> The very term חנה, viewed in conjunction with its synonym is Ex. 3:12, is therefore further evidence that verses 3-8 and 9-11 are not to be separated but rather are to be taken together as distinct parts of a unified cultic event. At the heart of this entire event, it will be argued, is that by which the covenant is ratified, the blood of the covenant. If this is true, then the חנה of Ex. 3:12 points forward most specifically to this blood, around which the events of Ex. 24:1-11 are centered.

It should also be said, however, that the promise of Ex. 3:12 and even the call to worship of 24:1 point beyond the events of 24:3-11 to the future worship life of Israel, since the events of 24:1-11 (as the book of Leviticus shows) are prototypical of that future worship. J.M. Oesterreicher says that "the Old Testament leaves no doubt whatever that Israel was freed for no other reason than to worship the true God."<sup>6</sup> Israel was redeemed and freed not in order to worship Yahweh for a few days at Sinai, but to be unto him a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), whose entire lives may then be given back in worship to Yahweh, the Giver. As Yahweh had commanded Moses: "Go to Pharaoh, and say to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 252.

<sup>6</sup>John M. Oesterreicher, The Israel of God: On the Old Testament's Roots of the Church's Faith (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 19.

him: 'Thus says Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may worship (עבדו) me"' (Ex. 9:1). It is not at all surprising, then, that immediately following the covenant ratification Moses goes up to Yahweh and receives specific instructions concerning the continuing worship life of Israel, including the blueprint for the tabernacle, sabbath-keeping guidelines, rubrics for the special priesthood and initial details about the regular sacrifices (Exodus 25-31). Yahweh has no interest in a fleeting encounter with Israel; his intention is to dwell among them on a permanent basis.

There [at the door of the tent of meeting] I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am Yahweh their God. (Ex. 29:43-46)

Exodus 24:9-11 provides a glimpse (although a very unique and spectacular glimpse) of the ultimate gift of Yahweh's covenant with the newly-born nation of Israel: Yahweh-God dwelling with them in grace and in glory. Exodus 24:3-8 provides resource for understanding by what means a gift such as this is given.

#### The Invitees

Along with the Inviter and the invitation itself, another unique and noteworthy feature of the introduction to this pericope is the group of invitees. Here too, a noticeable contrast with Exodus 19 suggests itself. There only Moses and Aaron (19:24)--but usually Moses alone (19:3; 20:21)--were allowed to go up to Yahweh; everyone else was strictly prohibited.

You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, "Take heed that you do not go up onto the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the border shall be put to death; no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live." (19:12-13)

As if one such warning were not sufficient, Yahweh repeats the warning three times within the next twelve verses (21,22,24); no one is to come near, "lest they perish," "lest Yahweh break out against them."

What a contrast with the opening words of chapter 24! Here there are no threats, no warnings, not even a sober word of caution. Here there is only a gracious invitation to worship, extended not only to Moses and Aaron, but also to Aaron's eldest sons and to seventy of the elders of Israel. What accounts for the difference? One could posit different sources, reflecting various and conflicting theologies. One could judge Scripture guilty of inconsistencies in its portrayal of God. One could even conclude that the God of the Old Testament was by nature capricious and inconstant. Or one could look to the text itself for an answer, to the events of verses 3-8, to "the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (verse 8). This, however, awaits further development; we return to the group of verse 1.

What is the significance of this delegation? Moses clearly heads the group as covenant mediator; Aaron has served as his assistant throughout the book. Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's eldest sons, are undoubtedly invited as representatives of the future ("official") priesthood of Israel, although they would soon be replaced by Eleazar and Ithamar (see Leviticus 10 and the SP's footnote to the MT text, p. 81 above). Most surprising is the inclusion of the seventy elders.

Little is known about the origins of the "office" of "elder" in the Old Testament; the term זקן first appears in Exodus in 3:16, where the institution of a group of elders seems to be taken for granted. In the pre-Deuteronomic period, according to J. Conrad, the elders "constitute an entity representing the league of all twelve tribes." "They are silent representatives of the people" in Exodus, "who are summoned or instructed by Moses."<sup>7</sup> This "representative" role of the elders seems to gain support from Gen. 46:27, which tells us that "all the persons of the house of Jacob that came into Egypt were 70 in number." Later (Num. 11:16) 70 elders are chosen under Yahweh's direction and given of "the spirit that was upon Moses" in order to help him "bear the burden of the people." In Ex. 18:12 "all the elders of Israel" sit at table with Moses, Aaron, and Jethro after offering sacrifices to Yahweh.

It would have been highly impractical, to say the least, for all Israel to ascend Mt. Sinai and worship Yahweh in the manner described in verses 9-11. Yahweh therefore designates 70 elders, as representatives of the people, to take part in this unique and remarkable event. In contrast to chapter 19, which is characterized by repeated warnings to keep the people from "breaking through" to Yahweh, here all Israel--albeit through its representatives--is to see the God of Israel. The eschatological implications of this worship on the mountain will be discussed in some detail in connection with our study of verses 9-11. In reference to the occurrence of the terms זקן and זבן, however, it may be appropriate to mention here that in

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<sup>7</sup>J. Conrad, "זקן," TDOT 4, p. 129.

Scripture there is always an eschatological dimension to "worship."<sup>8</sup> The eschatological goal of worship is a recurrent theme in the Psalms (22:27-29; 66:1-4; 96-100, etc.) and in the prophets (e.g. Is. 11:9; 27:13f; 66:23; Zeph. 2:11, etc.). The term "worship" (ΠΡΟΣΚΥΒΕΨ) appears in the book of Revelation nearly twice as frequently as in any other New Testament book.

Still, the eschatology that may be implicit in the term וָיָבִיחַ in Ex. 24:1 and made more explicit in verses 9-11 is tempered by a "not yet" in verse 2: "Moses alone, however, shall come near to Yahweh. They shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him." Perhaps we must withdraw our earlier statement, "not even a sober word of caution" (p. 108 above). That the people are now enabled to worship Yahweh and see him (through their representatives) does not eliminate the special office and function of the mediator Moses. The "kingdom of priests" is still to have a mediator, a priestly "office." As remarkable the worship that occurs in verses 9-11, it is still "worship at a distance," "worship from afar" (verse 1).<sup>9</sup> This is in accordance with the gracious word and will of Yahweh, who has redeemed his people

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<sup>8</sup>Preuss notes this in his article on וָיָבִיחַ, pages 252-253; likewise H. Greeven on ΠΡΟΣΚΥΒΕΨ, TDNT 6:764-765.

<sup>9</sup>Samuel E. Loewenstamm has a very helpful article on this expression, "worship from afar," utilizing parallels in Ugaritic and Accadian. He finds it an accepted practice which is depicted in various ancient near eastern sources describing "homage" paid to a king or deity. Based on this evidence Loewenstamm defends the unity of Ex. 24:1-11, which, as he notes, has been attacked by many as self-contradictory. "In light of...ancient near eastern parallels...this criticism turns out to be gratuitous. Moses and his companions are expected to appear before the Lord and to prostrate themselves before Him in accordance with accepted rules of ceremony." "Prostration from Afar in Ugaritic, Accadian and Hebrew," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 188 (December 1967), pp. 41-43.

from bondage and set them free to worship him. In order that they may worship him gladly, willingly, and without cringing fear, Yahweh gives the gift of the covenant, which he himself ratifies by the blood of the covenant and in accordance with the words of the covenant (Ex. 24:8).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE COVENANT WORDS

"Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of Yahweh and all the judgments; and all the people responded with one voice and said, 'All the words which Yahweh has spoken we will do'" (verse 3). Preparation for the ratification of the covenant thus begins with the speaking of words. These are not just any words, however, but "the words of Yahweh." They are also written down (verse 4a). They are read aloud or "preached" (אָרַךְ) in the middle of the blood rite(s) (verse 7). In each case (verses 3,7) the people are moved to speak some words in the way of an "Amen." The covenant sealed by blood is said to be ratified "in accordance with all these words" (verse 8). Which words? Yahweh's words or the people's words? What are Yahweh's words? What have they to do with the covenant? What role do the words of the people play? The obvious interconnection between דָּבָר (word) and דָּם (blood) in this section requires--even within the perimeters of our study--that the דְּבַר־דָּם be clarified.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>We note here Gispin's comment that verses 3ff. relate "what Moses did on his own initiative." Such a statement is hard to explain and harder to justify. Time and again throughout the book of Exodus Moses is instructed by Yahweh to recount his words to the people (6:6; 12:3; 14:2; 16:9; 19:6,9,21, 22; 20:22; 21:1). That explicit record of such instruction is not supplied by the text here is very uncertain grounds for assuming that this time Moses decided to preach on his own. Similarly when Moses builds the altar for sacrifice (verse 4) he is



The **דברים** and the Nature of the Sinai Covenant

The term דבר appears four times as a substantive in verses 3-8 and twice as a (Piel) verb; in each case it refers to the דבר-יהוה. When the people or even Moses speak, it is always אמר or ספר or קרא. Regarding the Hebrew word דבר the first thing that must be mentioned is its versatility. To illustrate, H.W. Schmidt lists the following meanings, each appropriate in its context: word, speech, thought, promise, threat, commission, command, rule, regulation, order, precept, suggestion, counsel, request, wish, news, information, attitude, refusal.<sup>2</sup> Context is therefore paramount, and in this case (thankfully) very helpful. The דברי יהוה mentioned in verse 3 clearly seem to refer back to 20:1ff; in both cases the adjective כל is also used. Confirmation for this view comes from Ex. 34:28, where the "words of the covenant" are identified with the "ten words" (Cf. also Deut. 9:10-12; 10:4). It is possible that the term דבר in verse 3 also has reference to the "words" spoken in connection with the covenant in Ex. 19:3-6. These words Moses was also instructed to recount to the people, and there (as in 24:3,7) they also elicit a response from the people. The אשפותים mentioned in 24:3 almost certainly refer back to 21:1ff, which continues through the end of chapter 23. The word דבר seems to be used in a more general sense in 24:4, which says that Moses "wrote down all the words of Yahweh."

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only carrying out previously given directions (see 20:22-26). The initiative lies with Yahweh; Moses is only "servant" (cf. Ex. 4:10). See W. H. Gispin, Exodus, translated by Ed van der Maas (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1982), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>W. H. Schmidt, "דבר," TDOT 3:104.

Does not "all" suggest also the אִשְׁפֹּטִים ? Support for this inclusion comes from the previous verse, where the people respond by saying, "All the words (הַבְּרִיּוֹת) which Yahweh has spoken we will do." Surely the people do not mean to exclude the אִשְׁפֹּטִים from their confession. It seems likely, then, that "the book of the covenant" mentioned in verse 7 consists of the "ten words" of Exodus 20 and the "ordinances" of chapters 21-23. The הַבְּרִיּוֹת of 19:3-6 may have been included as a "historical prologue" or preface.

What is the content of these "words" and "ordinances?" This is a rather important question, since the covenant is ratified "in accordance with all these words" (verse 8). Generally and quantitatively speaking, it seems that that content would be most accurately described as "law," including what has traditionally been termed both "moral" (Exodus 20) and "political" (21-23) law, both "apodictic" (20) and "casuistic" (21-23) law. The latter part of Exodus 23 also contains instructions for several of the festivals which were to become an important part of Israel's ongoing worship life.

Because of the predominately "legal" content of these chapters, the covenant ratified at Sinai is often depicted as a "covenant of law" and set against, for example, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants which are alleged to be covenants of "pure grace," based on "unconditional promises." The "oath" of the people (19:8; 24:3,7) is also commonly used to mark the covenant of Sinai as a "law covenant" in opposition to the "promise covenants" made with Abraham and David. Thus D. N. Freedman writes:

The covenant of divine commitment finds its principal illustration in the story of God's promise of Abraham in Gen. 15.... The

covenant of human obligation has its classical locus in the events at Mt. Sinai/Horeb, where Moses mediated the covenant between God and Israel.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise F. C. Fensham speaks of the "superiority of the covenant of grace (the covenant of Abraham) over the covenant of stipulations (the covenant of Sinai)."<sup>4</sup> M. Weinfeld writes:

The covenant with David constitutes a pledge given by God to establish David's dynasty forever and is typologically similar to the covenant with Abraham, which is an oath by God to give his children the land of Canaan forever. Both covenants are diametrically opposed to the Mosaic covenant, in which the people pledge loyalty to God. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are the promissory type, while the Mosaic covenant is an obligatory type.<sup>5</sup>

A survey of the evidence in the book of Exodus, however, makes such assertions difficult to justify. The real story of the Exodus and of the Sinai covenant begins in Ex. 2:23-25:

And the sons of Israel sighed because of their bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. And God heard their groaning; and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and he knew them.

Clearly the story does not begin as one of "human obligation" or "divine stipulations." The story begins with the beggarly cries of helpless slaves. It begins with divine compassion, divine grace, divine commitment to divine promises. It begins with divine initiative and action: "God heard...God remembered...God saw...God knew." It

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<sup>3</sup>David Noel Freedman, "Divine Commitment and Human Obligation," Interpretation 18 (1964), p. 420.

<sup>4</sup>C. H. Fensham, "Covenant, Promise and Expectation in the Bible," Theologische Zeitschrift, 23:5 (Sept.-Oct., 1967), p. 310.

<sup>5</sup>M. Weinfeld, "Covenant, Davidic" in IDBS, p. 189. The same point is made by John Bright, Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of the Covenant in Pre-Exilic Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975).

begins with a divine remembrance of the covenant made with Abraham, a covenant which nearly all scholars confess was one of "pure grace" and promise. According to Ex. 3:23-25, however (as well as Ex. 6:6-8, etc.), the covenant of Sinai flows out of a divine recommitment to this former covenant with Abraham! Is it then Yahweh's plan to build a covenant of law on the foundation of a covenant of promise? Did Yahweh "remember" his gracious covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob only to inflict upon their descendants a legalistic "covenant of human obligation?" This is the conclusion some scholars seem to derive from the evidence in Exodus 19-24; yet the history of the Sinai covenant as given by the book of Exodus speaks against such a conclusion (see the excursus below on "The Sinai Covenant," page 118).

The covenant at Sinai, as all divinely-initiated covenants in the Old Testament, is a covenant conceived by the elective grace of God for the purpose of human redemption.<sup>6</sup> In that sense it is, as are all God's covenants, an unconditional covenant, since it is based on God's unconditional love for those whom he has chosen and adopted as his people, those to whom he has "bound himself" unconditionally through his covenant with them. If such covenants (including the Exodus 24 covenant, but also the Abrahamic covenant--cf. Genesis 17:1,9-14; 22:16f; 28:22) appear at times to be expressed in "conditional" terms, "conditional" upon obedience to divine laws and stipulations, this is only indicative of the theological truth expressed clearly in the Old

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<sup>6</sup>See Walter R. Roehrs, "Divine Covenants: Their Structure and Function," Concordia Journal 14:1 (1988), pp. 7-27; also, by the same author: "Covenant Theme in the Old Testament," Concordia Journal 3 (1977), pp. 25-32, and "Covenant and Justification in the Old Testament," Concordia Theological Monthly 35 (1964), pp. 583-602.

(and New!) Testament that God's (covenant) word and promise contain in and of themselves the gracious and efficacious power to create true faith, which always (in turn) seeks to serve the will of the gracious Savior-God who initiated the covenant. God's love for Israel (and indeed, for the world) is unconditional, but the benefits of his covenant are enjoyed only by those who listen to his promises and thereby receive the gift of faith. Faith then seeks to obey, gladly and willingly. If it does not it is not faith. This does not indicate a deficiency on God's part, but a failure on man's part to hear and to hearken to the unconditional love of God. God's covenants are "conditional" not in the sense that the gift of his love is conditional upon human activity, but only in the sense that his love (revealed through word and promise) will create a new "condition" of response in the person who hears and believes God's word and promise. But divine grace and adoption are not irresistible. They can be rejected or lost due to human unbelief. If such a faith-response is not created, it indicates that the benefits of the covenant have not been realized by (and thus are not realized for) that individual. The covenant, however, is still intact, and God's love and saving intention are never qualified or withdrawn as a result of human failures.

So it is with the covenant at Sinai. Neither the covenant words nor the confession of the people in Exodus 19-24 can be used to justify the conclusion that the Sinai covenant was, in opposition to other covenants of Scripture, a covenant of "human obligation" or "divine stipulations" rather than a covenant of divine grace and gift. At the heart of both the covenant words and the response of the people is the

gracious and powerful word of Yahweh, the Redeemer-God himself, "incarnate" and living and active to save and to bless through his word. And with this word in Exodus 24 are given the covenant sacrifices, along with that which is especially highlighted by the text, the covenant blood. These, too, are gifts of Yahweh, and in these, too, he is "incarnate," present, and active to give and to forgive, to save and bless.

#### Excursus on the Sinai Covenant

As noted above (pp. 114-115), a fair number of scholars tend to categorize the covenant at Sinai as a "law covenant" based on the oath of the people in Exodus 19:8 and 24:3,7, and the corpus of "law" revelation surrounding the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24. The Sinai Covenant is then often contrasted with other "grace covenants" such as the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. This interpretation calls for more serious and detailed examination in light of our purpose here, at least by way of excursus.

A good place to begin is with the history of the covenant in the book of Exodus itself. It was observed earlier (page 115) that the real story of the Exodus and the Sinai covenant begins in Exodus 2:23-25, with God's hearing Israel's groans and cries for help and his "remembering" his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The next reference to the covenant in Exodus comes in chapter 6:

. . . I have heard the groaning of the people Israel whom the Egyptians hold in bondage and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment (אֲשֶׁר לִי !), and I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that

I am Yahweh your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am Yahweh." (verses 5-8)

It bears asking already at this point: Is this a prologue to a covenant of human obligation and divine stipulations? All the "doing" is Yahweh's; he obligates himself by divine "oath." Israel is on the receiving end. "I have heard . . . I have remembered . . . I AM YAHWEH . . . I will bring you out . . . I will deliver you . . . I will redeem you . . . I will take you for my people . . . I will be your God . . . I AM YAHWEH . . . who has brought you . . . and will bring you . . . I swore to give . . . I will give . . . I AM YAHWEH." The words speak for themselves.

It has been suggested that the concise phrase "I AM YAHWEH" was given to Israel as its first "creed," much like the "JESUS IS LORD" (1 Cor. 12:3) of the New Testament. The phrase occurs four times (verses 2,6,7,8) in the above context. Zimmerli says: "All that Yahweh had to say and to proclaim to his people appears as a development of the basic announcement: 'I am Yahweh.'"<sup>7</sup> "All that Yahweh had to say" in connection with this basic announcement in Exodus 6 was that he had remembered and recommitted himself to the oath/covenant which he swore/cut with Abraham, and that he was determined to accomplish, on the strength of his own will and grace, the fulfillment of those covenant promises.

The next twelve chapters (7-18) give the account of Yahweh's doing what he said he would do. It is an account of deliverance. It

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<sup>7</sup>W. Zimmerli, Gottes Offenbarung (Munich: n.p. given, 1963), p. 20. Cited in Childs, p. 401.

speaks of redemption with "outstretched arm" and "great acts of judgment." It tells of Yahweh taking for himself a people, and binding himself to them as God. It contains a future promise: "I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (6:8). It tells of singing, praise, worship (chapter 15). It vividly portrays divine patience and divine provision (see chapters 16-17). Then Israel arrives at Sinai (19:1), and there is further elucidation of the covenant which is often described as one of "human obligation":

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (19:4-6)

The words "if," "hearken," and "keep" in the above passage (verse 5), along with the so-called "oath" of the people in 19:8, are often cited as evidence to support the thesis that the Sinai covenant was "conditional" in nature and based on human obedience rather than divine grace. Considering all that Exodus has given us thus far of divine election, divine initiative, divine grace and deliverance, divine commitment to divine promises, such a conclusion seems unwarranted. First, notice even in the above passage the prefatory words of divine grace and deliverance: "You have seen what I did . . . how I bore you . . . and brought you to myself." In light of such powerful reminders of God's grace in action, the response of the people in verse 8 ("All that Yahweh has spoken we will do") is most naturally understood as an honest "confession" or "profession" of faith, a promise to be faithful to Yahweh in response to his faithfulness to his covenant promises.



Second, it is by no means unquestionable that the וְ-clause in v. 4 is best translated "conditionally" in the narrow sense of the term. It is widely admitted that many similar clauses in Hebrew are really quite ambiguous, and non-conditional translations of them are in numerous contexts to be preferred.<sup>8</sup> Grammatically speaking, in fact, a more accurate (literal) translation of Ex. 19:5 might be as a relative clause, which would allow the reader more freedom in determining (from the context) the intended relationship between protasis and apodosis. "You who will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be [= "continue to be"] my own possession..." (verse 5).<sup>9</sup> Any covenant--even a covenant of grace--may be spurned or rejected. A gift can be refused. The possibility that Israel will not listen to Yahweh's voice does not require the conclusion that this is a "law covenant." The benefits of God's gracious covenant are to an Israel who hears,

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas O. Lambdin, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (New York: Scribner, 1971) pp. 276-277. See also Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch, revised by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 493-495. for a discussion of the wide variety of possible meanings of וְ-clauses.

<sup>9</sup>The main point is that the Hebrew grammar in such clauses does not define precisely the relationship between protasis and apodosis; as Gesenius notes, this is often determinable only from "the subjective judgment of the speaker" (p. 493,495), i.e., the context. There are also numerous instances in Scripture where the logical apodosis (the consequence of the condition) precedes the condition in grammatical order (cf. Gen. 18:23,30; Judges 11:10; Psalms 65:6f.; 137:6; Is. 4:4, etc.). This, and the indefinite sense of the Hebrew imperfect which is used here, warn us against interpreting this clause in a strict temporal sense, i.e. first the "keeping" and "obeying," then the "you shall be my own possession," etc. Such an interpretation is not necessitated grammatically and is not defensible theologically. The "if" clause defines the Israel that will benefit from God's promises and remain God's possession. Israel's faithfulness is not the basis of the divine commitment to Israel.

believes, and responds to his grace (and at the same time by his grace).

Third, close attention should be paid to the verbs of the protasis, יִשְׁמְרֵנִי and יִשְׁמְרֵךְ. The latter, usually translated "keep," has at its basic meaning "to exercise great care over."<sup>10</sup> Thus one's understanding of יִשְׁמְרֵךְ is largely dependent upon one's understanding of the nature of the covenant. If the covenant is seen as primarily a legal code of stipulations detailing human obligation to God, then a law-oriented understanding of יִשְׁמְרֵךְ will inevitably follow. If, however, the covenant is seen as a gift of Yahweh, as a pledge of divine protection and guidance, then יִשְׁמְרֵךְ would take on the connotation of "guarding" or "watching over," as one might guard with his very life a precious gift or treasure. Note also the object of יִשְׁמְרֵךְ: it is "my (Yahweh's) covenant." "God is always the subject in concluding the covenant, and afterwards he is always said to have 'concluded' (karath), 'established' (heqim), 'founded' (sim), or 'given' (nathan) the Covenant!"<sup>11</sup> The people are not commanded to "make" the covenant or to "establish" the covenant; they are graciously invited to stand guard over the covenant which Yahweh has established and given them as a gift. Certainly, this involves "doing" (19:8; 24:3,7) and "living" according to the "words" of Yahweh, including the

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<sup>10</sup>"יִשְׁמְרֵךְ" in TWOT 2:2414. Also noteworthy is that יִשְׁמְרֵךְ stands behind the Greek τηρειν, which has a similar sense of "preserve, protect, guard," and is used by Jesus in Matt. 28:20 with reference to the disciples "guarding," "preserving" and "protecting" his teachings from error and abuse. H. Riesenfeld, "τηρειν," TDNT 8:140-146.

<sup>11</sup>Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 141.

קְלוּמָה of Exodus 21-23. But these "laws" and "stipulations" are still the "words" of the gracious Redeemer-God, who established the covenant not for his own benefit but for Israel's. Even the "stipulations" are for Israel's own good, given in order to lead them more fully into Yahweh's way of life for the people he loves. Again, everything depends upon the proper distinction between Law and Gospel when it comes to a proper understanding of the covenant and the God who gives it.

The same is true with the verb שָׁמַע. Its object is "my voice," the voice of Yahweh. שָׁמַע is usually translated "obey"; its basic meaning is "hear" or "listen." It is those who listen to the voice of Yahweh who receive the blessings of the covenant, for it is through such listening that these blessings are appropriated. In that sense, this--and every--covenant of Yahweh might be called "conditional." Behind the "listening" of man, however, stands the Word of God: "The hearing of man represents correspondence to the revelation of the Word, and in biblical religion it is thus the essential form in which the divine revelation is appropriated."<sup>12</sup> There is nothing about "listening" as such which commends itself; what is essential is that which is listened to, that which arouses the listening, and that which brings grace and blessing through the listening: the Word of God. According to Scripture, such listening ultimately will produce "obedience" (however imperfect), but this is always "effect" and never "cause" of divine grace. First Yahweh speaks, then Israel listens; the listening comes out of the speaking.

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<sup>12</sup>R. Kittel, "ἀκούω," TDNT 1:216.

First Yahweh redeems, then Israel obeys; the obedience comes out of the redeeming. The order is crucial, and we are given this order by the text itself:

For Israel to carry out this mission [cf. Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9] requires commitment: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant." It is important to note, however, that this call for commitment is not some kind of prerequisite that Israel must meet in order to qualify for God's choice. God uses his people for the sake of the world only when they are obedient...But commitment is possible only in response to God's prior act of grace. It is the people whom he has already delivered who are challenged by God and called to his service. The order within the message Yahweh gives Moses is important: "You have seen what I did...if you will obey...you shall be..." The grace of God is first; then the people can respond.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the threefold description of Israel in the apodosis of 19:5-6 is loaded with precious "Gospel." "You shall be to me נְסִיבָה, "private property," "personal possession," "treasured heirloom." The grace of divine election is paramount here also: "all the earth is mine," but I have chosen you. "You shall be to me a priestly kingdom" (LXX: "royal priesthood"); this promise, we will suggest, is fulfilled in a unique way through the covenant-ratification in 24:3-8. "You shall be to me a holy nation," a "community of saints." This too is a word of grace and--as will be discussed--points forward to the ratification of the covenant in chapter 24 and especially to the blood by which that covenant is ratified. James Murphy comments on the grace which overflows out of the first of these descriptions:

A peculiar treasure unto me. To belong to God is an inestimable blessing. How much more to be his in a special sense above all others, λαὸς περιούσιος, a peculiar people! For all the earth is mine. All the inhabitants of the earth belong to God by right of creation and general benefaction; but ye belong to him,

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<sup>13</sup>Lester Meyer, The Message of Exodus: A Theological Commentary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), pp. 114-115.

over and above all this, by special grace and covenant; and out of his free grace flows to you all that is comprised in remission, redemption, and regeneration. This part of the promise is therefore <sup>14</sup>a comprehensive summary of all the blessings of salvation.

It is in this context of "free grace and blessing" that the "covenant words" of Ex. 20:1ff. and 21:1ff. are also given. The inadequacy of the translation "commandment" for דבר in Exodus 20 comes to light immediately when one reads the first "word" of Exodus 20, the word which Judaism has always counted as first in the decalogue: "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This first "word" begins with the credo, "I am Yahweh," concerning which B. Childs says:

The revelation of God's name serves as a prologue to the Decalogue, but also as a recapitulation and summary of the chapters which have preceded. In Exodus 6:2 (cf. 3:14) the revelation of God's name to Moses was tied to the promise that he would deliver Israel from Egypt...When Israel learned to know God's name, she would understand the nature of his redemption and his purpose for his people. Now the promise of redemption has been fulfilled. Israel has been delivered. The introduction of the formula at this place in the narrative points back to this history of redemption, but it also points forward to a new stage in the relation between God and his people.<sup>15</sup>

The words in 20:1ff. are given by Yahweh to the redeemed, and only the redeemed can truly understand the purpose for which they are given. Israel has seen the "outstretched arm" of Yahweh; they have seen his "mighty acts of judgment" against Israel's (Yahweh's) enemies; they now know his name: Yahweh . . . Deliverer . . . Savior . . . Redeemer; they know him, for they were first known by him (Ex. 2:25). Knowing Yahweh,

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<sup>14</sup>J. Murphy, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus (New York: I. K. Funk, 1881), p. 129.

<sup>15</sup>B. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 401.

they listen to and receive his word. It is a gracious word, even when it describes the life that the redeemed of Yahweh are given to live. Grammatically, it is possible to translate the Hebrew verbs throughout 20:1-17 as imperfects rather than imperatives. As you live within the gift of the covenant, says Yahweh to Israel, "you will have no other gods" (who would want one?); "you will not take the name of Yahweh in vain" (that precious name!); "you will remember the sabbath day" (the gift of the sabbath!); and so on. Yet even as imperatives they serve a gracious function for the redeemed of Israel, in that they expose the sins which keep the redeemed continually mindful of their utter dependence on Yahweh for grace and forgiveness.

God has kept his promise. He had brought his people out of the land of slavery. Israel had experienced his redeeming hand. Recognizing their complete dependence upon the mercy and grace of God, and trusting in his continued promise of help, Israel was now to respond obediently by following the commands which they were about to receive. It is important for us to understand the Ten Commandments in light of this introductory statement by the Lord [20:1]. He did not give the decalog so that Israel should obey his commands and thereby earn a favorable relationship with him. God had already made clear what this relationship was. He was their Savior-God. He had proved that to them in many ways. In love he had adopted them as his chosen covenant people. He now showed them by these commandments how they could respond to his grace by living according to his holy will. From this same moral code they could determine in what ways they would still fall short of that perfect standard which he place before them, how much they still transgressed his law, and how much they still needed the forgiving love which only a gracious God could freely grant them.<sup>16</sup>

All of this holds true also, then, for the "judgments" or "ordinances" of chapters 21-23. These, two, are part of the gift of the covenant, gift in a double sense: first, as a description of the blessed life the redeemed were given to live under Yahweh's gracious

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<sup>16</sup>E. H. Wendland, Exodus (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1978), pp. 133-134.

direction; second, as a constant reminder of Israel's sinfulness which continually called her back to her Savior God. The sense of "gift" is implicit, moreover, in the very word לְפָאָה, which tends to be heard negatively ("judgment"). "But to those within the covenant," says H. Hummel, "(that is the 'righteous,' that is the 'justified') it is a word of Gospel and deliverance."<sup>17</sup> We encountered it in this sense earlier in the book of Exodus (6:6), where Yahweh uses it to describe his deliverance of Israel: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment (אֲפָאָה)." The "sanctification-אֲפָאָה" of 21:1ff. must not be read in isolation or separation from the "salvation-אֲפָאָה" of the rest of the book of Exodus. Both are gifts of Yahweh, Israel's Redeemer-God. Both are gifts of Yahweh's covenant.

A word is also in order here regarding the "vow" of the people which occurs three times in various forms in chapters 19-24, twice in the covenant ratification pericope itself (19:8; 24:3,7). This "vow" demands attention especially in light of recent study which has emphasized the connection in the ancient near east between "oath" and "covenant." Weinfeld says:

berith as a commitment has to be confirmed by an oath: Gen. 21:22f.; 26:26ff.; Dt. 29:9ff. [etc.]; which included most probably

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<sup>17</sup>Horace D. Hummel, "Justification in the Old Testament," Concordia Journal 9 (Jan. 1983), p. 13. This fact is rather extensively developed by V. Hertrich in his discussion of לְפָאָה under κρίνω in TDNT 3:923-933. Hertrich says that for Israel לְפָאָה meant first of all "help and deliverance" (930). "It is a gracious revelation of Yahweh's will--the revelation upon which the covenant with Israel was founded" (932). It must be understood in the context of "The historical situation of the making of the covenant," which began with Yahweh's initiative and is based on his covenant promise (925). לְפָאָה implies grace, mercy, and salvation (929).

a conditional imprecation: "May thus and thus happen to me if I violate the obligation." The oath gives the obligation its binding validity...<sup>18</sup>

Originally, says Weinfeld, the two terms expressed "two different concepts;" in the course of time, however, "oath" and "covenant" became virtual synonyms.<sup>19</sup> Mendenhall agrees:

Occasionally the word 'lh, "oath," may for all practical purposes by a synonym of "covenant," for it was the act which formally constituted a binding contract. It is difficult to say whether [in some Old Testament contexts] there is any real distinction between the oath and the covenant.<sup>20</sup>

Mendenhall also distinguishes between a suzerainty covenant, in which only the inferior party (vassal) was bound by the oath, and a parity treaty, where both parties were bound by an obligatory oath.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Weinfeld, "ברית." TDOT 2:256.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. Perhaps the most extensive development of the covenant-oath relationship has been the work of another German scholar, Ernst Kutsch. Kutsch wrote a series of articles from 1967-1973 on this subject, which were published in a supplemented and revised form in Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum sogenannten "Bund" im Alten Testament, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, [hereafter BZAW] herausgegeben von Georg Fohrer, 131 (Berlin, New: Walter de Gruyter, 1973). Kutsch postulates two major lines of the ברית: Selbstverpflichtung, in which the maker of the ברית offers a promise, often confirmed by solemn oath; and Fremdverpflichtung, in which the maker of the ברית imposes an obligation upon someone else, in which case the recipient is often required to take a solemn oath. Kutsch places the Ex. 24 in the latter category, so that his interpretation of the "oath" of the people is very similar to Kline's (below), whom we have chosen as a representative example of this view. We will discuss Kutsch's work further in connection with our discussion of the blood-rite in Exodus 24, since his interpretation of that event is representative of a significant school of thought concerning the covenant-blood of Exodus 24 and sacrificial blood in general.

<sup>20</sup>G. Mendenhall, "Covenant," IBD 1:716.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. For further information concerning the alleged parallels between Old Testament covenants and ancient near eastern treaties, see George E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Biblical Colloquium 1955). See



Sometimes the connection between oath and covenant is emphasized to the point where the oath is viewed as the characteristic element or proprium of the covenant. Such a view is reflected in the statements above by Weinfeld and Mendenhall; Weinfeld gives it more explicit utterance elsewhere, and makes use of it to demonstrate the alleged contrast between the legalistic covenant of Sinai and the "promissory" covenants of Scripture (see p. 115 above). Another advocate of this approach is Meredith Kline, who here outlines his criterion for distinguishing covenants:

The ratificatory oath was taken by both parties in parity covenants, but in other covenants, the sworn commitment was ordinarily unilateral. It is this swearing of the ratificatory oath that provides an identification mark by which we can readily distinguish in the divine covenants of Scripture between a law covenant and one of promise. For it is evident that if God swears the oath of the ratification ceremony, that particular covenantal transaction is one of promise, whereas if man is summoned to swear the oath, the particular covenant thus ratified is one of law.<sup>22</sup>

Applying this criterion to the Abrahamic covenant, Kline categorizes it as one of "promise," sealed with a divine oath which is imprecatory in nature. "By this ritual [Genesis 15] God declared in effect that if he failed to fulfill the promises of the covenant, he was like these creatures to be slain and devoured as feast for the fowls."<sup>23</sup> The Sinai covenant, says Kline, is exactly opposite in nature.

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also Klaus Baltzer's The Covenant Formulary, translated by David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). Finally, and for a tremendous bibliography on the subject, see Dennis J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963).

<sup>22</sup>Meredith G. Kline, "Law and Covenant," Westminster Journal of Theology 27 (Nov. 1964-May 1965), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

Exodus 24 contains the record of the ratification ceremony of another divine covenant. On this occasion, however, the oath was sworn by the people of Israel, not the Lord. It was an oath of allegiance by which they devoted themselves to the service of their sovereign Lord according to all the law he had revealed to them.

Kline therefore categorizes this covenant as a "law covenant" as opposed to a covenant of promise.<sup>24</sup>

This alleged contrariety between the Abrahamic (etc.) and Sinaitic covenants was discussed just previously, but the arguments presented here get at that conclusion from a different angle, and so merit a separate analysis and response.

First, Kline's criterion for classifying the covenants of the Old Testament seems much too simplistic, even when viewed within its own methodology of the covenant-oath relationship. If Kline's approach were valid, it would be quite simple to categorize all Old Testament covenants. We simply locate the oath, note the speaker(s), and classify: bilateral or unilateral, law or promise. The Old Testament evidence, however, does not lend itself to such a neat system of interpretation. Not every Old Testament covenant has an explicit oath attached to it (e.g. the sabbath as "covenant," Ex. 31:16). Even where an oath or oaths are expressed, it is not always a simple matter to determine what role the oaths play in the covenant ratification. To classify as "bilateral" every covenant where both parties "swear an oath" simply does not accord with the evidence in every case.

Second, when it comes to evaluating specific covenants, Kline seems to bypass portions of the evidence which complicate or contradict theory. Thus when discussing the Abrahamic covenant as a promise with

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p. 4.

no emphasis at all on human obligation, Kline ignores Gen. 17:1-2, where Yahweh commands Abraham, "walk before me and be blameless, and I will make my covenant with you . . . ." Similarly when discussing the Sinaitic covenant, Kline focuses all of his attention on the "oaths" of the people, which (quantitatively and qualitatively) constitute only a small portion of the evidence. Kline never mentions the many "oaths" uttered by Yahweh leading up to the Sinai experience (e.g. 3:13-21; 6:1-9), nor the words of promise ("oath") and deliverance which preface and are a key part of the actual "words" of the Sinai covenant (19:3-6; 20:2; 23:23ff).

Finally, as grateful as we are for the insights provided by the ancient near eastern parallels upon which nearly all of these oath-covenant theories are based, such theories often fail to ask the crucial question for biblical exegesis: what is unique about the Old Testament covenants? Even if we grant the similarities with their ancient near eastern counterparts, we still need to ask: what are the characteristic and distinguishing features, if any, which make the covenants of the Old Testament stand out? One well-known Old Testament scholar who does consistently ask this question is Dennis McCarthy. Responding to theories such as that proposed by Mendenhall, McCarthy notes several features of the Sinai covenant which distinguish it from the standard ancient near eastern "covenant form." There is very little "historical prologue" anywhere in chapters 19-24; there is no real parallel to the "curse-blessing formulae;" there is no ancient near eastern parallel to the making of a covenant with a god or gods! The primary thing about Sinai, and all major Old Testament covenants,

is that they are covenants with Yahweh (or rather, Yahweh's covenants with his people).<sup>25</sup> Further, the most distinctive thing about the covenant ratified by Yahweh at Sinai is the role of sacrifice and sacrificial blood. "In the treaties among the Hittites, it is the word which effects the desired end; at Sinai it is sacrifice."<sup>26</sup> Contra Kline (et alii):

The people accept the covenant by acclamation; the vassal of the treaty took an oath to keep it. But note, it is an acclamation and not an oath, though Israel certainly knew of a covenant made on oath (Gen. 26:26-30; Gen. 21:22-31). The failure to use the term here serves to point up to the fundamental situation: acclamation or not, the emphasis in Exodus is on the rites, covenant meal, and sacrifice as constituting the alliance between God and Israel...It is an idea of covenant,<sup>27</sup> in which the ritual looms larger than the verbal and contractual.

While the evidence in Exodus 24 does not justify setting "word" against "ritual" (sacrifice, blood), the text does seem to emphasize the latter (particularly the blood) in its description of the covenant ratification (see verses 6-8 and the discussion of these verses below). Surely McCarthy is correct in recognizing the comparatively insignificant role of the "oath" of the people, which, as he observes, is not so much an "oath" as it is an "acclamation," an "Amen," an "affirmation" or "confession". Kline says not a word about the covenant sacrifices nor the covenant blood at Sinai. By this omission he fails to recognize its most distinctive feature, and exposes the dubious nature of his methodology.

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<sup>25</sup>D. J. McCarthy, pp. 152-155.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, p. 163.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

More on the blood later. We still need to ask, if Kline's view of the Sinai covenant is not supported by the evidence, what can be said about the nature and function of the "acclamation" of the people in Exodus 19 and 24? We would suggest that the key to understanding these acclamations is the יְהוָה דָּבַר, the יְהוָה קָם, which in each case immediately precedes the proffered response of the people. Nowhere do we read that an "oath" or a "promise" was demanded by either Moses or Yahweh. It is not at all clear whether it was even a necessary element in the ratification of the covenant; how much less its central feature! Rather, in all three cases the words of the people "gush forth" spontaneously after the words of Yahweh are read, after the voice of Yahweh speaks through his spokesman Moses.

In view of what the Old Testament teaches about the word and voice of Yahweh, this is not at all surprising. "In the deepest insights of theology or prophecy alike, Israel took as her starting point her conviction that the word possessed creative power."<sup>28</sup> In creation, God spoke and the thing happened. "By his word the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it came to pass; he commanded, and it stood forth" (Ps. 33:6,9). The same is true of Israel as a nation; it was created by the word and promise of Yahweh, by the "oath" he swore (cf. Ex. 3:7ff; 6:2-8, etc.). The future of the nation Israel also depended upon that word, which was to be handed down from generation to generation, never forgotten, guarded like a treasure (cf. Deuteronomy 11, and the entire

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<sup>28</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, volumes 1-2, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), v. 2, p. 93.

book passim). The word of Yahweh "is the real motive-force and creator of Israel's history."<sup>29</sup>

The word of Yahweh is alive and brings things to life (see Ezekiel 37). It "appears as a material force which is always present and at work, which runs and has the power to make alive."<sup>30</sup> The word of Yahweh is life. "This word is your life," says Moses (Deut. 32:47). "Man shall not live by bread alone, but...by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh" (Deut. 8:3).

"The word is described as a subject who has been sent out by his master to accomplish a mission."<sup>31</sup>

Verily, as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return not thither without watering the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so it is with my word that goes forth from my mouth. It does not return to me empty without accomplishing that which I purposed or fulfilling that for which I sent it. (Is. 55:10-11)

Von Rad calls this "the most comprehensive statement about the word of Yahweh and its effects." Both sending of the rain and the sending of the word are "contingent events which took their origin from Yahweh alone."<sup>32</sup> As little as man contributes to the sending of rain or snow, or that which results from their being sent, so little does man contribute to the sending of Yahweh's word or that which is effected by its being sent. "The Word of God is fulfilled; it comes to pass, it

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup>R. Kittel, "λόγος," TDNT 4:93.

<sup>31</sup>D. Baltzer, Ezekiel und Deuterjesaja, BZAW 121 (1971), p. 128. Cited by W. H. Schmidt in TDOT 3:124.

<sup>32</sup>Von Rad, v. 2, p. 93.

stands forever, without any cooperation on man's part."<sup>33</sup> Nor is this word "far off," distant and separated from God's people. "The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deut. 30:14). "The Word is present revelation. It carries within itself the power of performance. The mouth and the heart are organs to proclaim and fulfill it."<sup>34</sup>

The revealing Word does not only proclaim salvation, but also brings it near and actualizes it. The revelation of God is efficax, it effects something (ps. 19:8f)...In the Old Testament God's word of revelation precedes the decisive event; it is creative and, being the Word of the Creator, it is connected with God's creative and with his sustaining activity...In the history of the patriarchs...the Word of God again and again precedes the event, introduces it, and even brings it about.<sup>35</sup>

To the point: If the word of Yahweh has the power within itself to create the heavens, to create the earth, to create history, to create the nation Israel, to create faith and to create obedience, then we should have no trouble understanding how it is that the word of Yahweh, by virtue of the power within itself, creates the response of the people found in Exodus 19 and 24. The power of this word, further, is the power of divine grace and promise. "I am Yahweh; you have seen what I have done; you will see what I will do." What Yahweh does is choose, save, forgive, bless, give. So the people respond, they affirm, they assent, they confess. They promise--yes, they vow--to remain faithful to God: "all the words he has spoken we will do [gladly and willingly] do!" The word "all" is worth emphasizing in

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<sup>33</sup>R. Kittel, "λόγος," TDNT 4:96.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup>Th. C. Vriezen, Outline of Old Testament Theology, pp. 238-239.

this connection. There is here no "partial" commitment, no "partial" promise, no "partial" hearing, believing, and responding. The people respond to God's total commitment by totally committing themselves to him. The previous "all" in verse 3 is also worth noting: "all the people answered with one voice and said . . . ." The people were completely united in their confession as a result of hearing the powerful word of Yahweh. His Word bound them together into a united body of believers, who all together uttered the "Amen" with one united voice and together made confession of their faith.

All of this flows out of the יְהוָה שָׁקַט. The confession of Israel is important in that it indicates that the word has been heard and received. Those who fail to listen and believe are not given to. The blessings of the covenant are to those who hear, who trust, who confess; such are also called to obey.<sup>36</sup> But failure to obey, failure to confess, failure to recognize or remember the Redeemer does not render void Yahweh's word nor destroy his covenant. Nowhere is this truth expressed more eloquently than in Psalm 78, which is a historical commentary on the covenant events of Exodus and beyond. According to the psalmist, Yahweh never gives up. Israel never stops sinning, but Yahweh never stops forgiving, and he never stops disciplining in order to create beggarly hearts into which this forgiveness may be poured. Nothing can stop the covenant. Nothing can stop Yahweh from keeping

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<sup>36</sup>This is true, again, also of the Abrahamic (cf. Gen. 17:1-2) and Davidic covenants (consider all the warnings of the prophets, and finally the fall of both kingdoms and the exiles). Never in Scripture are covenant-blessings guaranteed to individuals "automatically," apart from faith and the obedience, however imperfect, which inevitably flows from faith (cf. also Psalm 89:30ff; Is. 1-3, Jeremiah, passim, etc.)



his covenant. Yahweh will stop at nothing in order to keep it. He has made his choice (cf. Deut. 7:6-8); he will stick with it. This is not only true of Yahweh's covenants with Abraham and with David; this is also true of his covenant with all of Israel at Sinai. That covenant, too, cannot be annihilated. Its blessings, like the blessings of the covenants before and after it, can be forfeited by unbelieving individuals, even by an unbelieving nation (cf. Ps. 78:22,32,37,56ff). Even in Leviticus, before Israel had broken camp from the wilderness of Sinai, Yahweh spoke soberly of a day when Israel would "despise my statutes . . . abhor my judgments . . . spurn my words . . . break my covenant" (26:15).

Yet for all of that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break my covenant with them; for I am Yahweh, their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am Yahweh. (Lev. 26:44-45)

These are words of grace. This is a covenant of grace. Yahweh is a God of grace. When we move from the covenant words to the covenant blood, we get--as we shall see--grace upon grace.

One more detail bears mentioning in this excursus before we return to the text to consider the covenant sacrifices and the covenant blood. Verse 4a reports that "Moses wrote down all the words of Yahweh." We have already suggested (p. 113, above) that the term דבר is used here in a more general sense (as in verses 3 and 8) to indicate not only the "ten words" of chapter 20 but also the אשר נאמר of chapters 21-23, and possibly even the דברי of 19:3-6. This, then, is the "book of the covenant" read in the middle of the blood rite of verses 6-8. Ancient near eastern studies and archaeology have

effectively silenced the argument that Moses could not possibly have known how to write, much less in the polished legal style evident in the book of Exodus. "No one seriously doubts today that Moses could, and doubtless did, write in a variety of languages; such languages would be known to any Hebrew with an Egyptian court education."<sup>37</sup> "It is unthinkable, in this millennium, that any treaty should exist without some written form"<sup>38</sup> This fact should also put to rest fruitless arguments about the "vitality" of the oral, spoken word over against the "dead letter" of the written, inscriptured word. In the Exodus 24 pericope, in the sealing of the Sinai covenant, and in Scripture generally, the oral and written word, the preached and read word, are in complete harmony, each serving its own function. Whether written or spoken, it is still Yahweh's word; that is what counts. Some are puzzled that these same words are seemingly repeated twice within the context of the covenant ratification (24:3,7); it is assumed that we must have some kind of "doublet" or scribal repetition here. Then again, some express doubt about any idea of "liturgy" based on the word of God which is read and repeated again and again to deliver and to teach, to re-emphasize and to proclaim, to give opportunity for listening and for confessing. Those who have heard the נא' שפ, however, are eager to hear more, even--especially!--more of the same, and always more.

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<sup>37</sup>R. Alan Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman, general editor (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1973), pp. 46-47.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, p. 185.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE COVENANT SACRIFICES

The making of the Sinai covenant really begins in verse 4b of Exodus 24. The events of verses 3-4a took place on a previous day and were preparatory. Following the receiving, recounting and recording of the covenant words of Yahweh, Moses "rose diligently"<sup>1</sup> the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain along with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel" (verse 4b). The building of an altar is therefore of first importance in the covenant ratification. Sacrifice plays not a subordinate, but a central, role. Contra W. H. Gispin (cf. p. 112 above) and those who would maintain with him that this "also" is something Moses did "on his own initiative," we find in Exodus 20:23-26 explicit instructions from Yahweh to do what Moses does in Exodus 24:4-5.<sup>2</sup> Even the types of sacrifice are specifically named

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<sup>1</sup> קָדַם is often translated "to rise early in the morning," and this aspect of the word may well be in view here also. Other contexts, however, show that it has the transferred meaning of "earnestness" or "diligence" (sometimes even "urgency"). See Jer. 7:13; 11:7; Zeph. 3:7; 2 Chron. 35:15. See also Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, translated by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1877), p. DCCCXXII. Hereafter Gesenius's Lexicon.

<sup>2</sup>For a variety of opinions regarding the several prohibitions mentioned in Ex. 20:23ff., see B. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), pp. 466-467.; R. A. Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), pp. 164-165; Roland deVaux, Ancient Israel Religious Institutions, English translation: Darton, Longman & Todd (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 2:408-409.

(20:24). It is noteworthy that these instructions about the building of the altar and the offering of sacrifices serve as a transition between the דְּבָרִים of Exodus 20 and the אֲשֶׁר־טָמְאָה of Exodus 21-23. There is certainly no polemic in Exodus between "word" and "sacrifice," nor any setting of one above or against the other. Both are essential for the making of the covenant and for the future worship life of Israel. Nowhere are the two more intimately joined than in the "words of institution" of the Sinai covenant, "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (24:8).

#### The Altar

Exodus 20:23-26 is one of the precious few passages in the Old Testament which gives an explanation of the purpose and function of the altar from God's point of view. Yahweh says to Moses:

An altar of earth you shall make for me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless (בָּרַךְ) you (20:24).

There are many theories of Old Testament sacrifice which fail to distinguish it from pagan sacrifice, and therefore see as its proprium man's gift, man's effort, man's initiative, man's attempts to placate and pacify an angry or hungry god.<sup>3</sup> The Old Testament contradicts this theory at every point along the line, starting with the stated

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<sup>3</sup>See below, pp. 143ff. Two major representatives of this view of sacrifice as man's gift to God are T. H. Gaster, "Sacrifices and Offerings, OT," IDB 4:147-159; George Buchanan Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925). See also H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament," John Rylands University Library Bulletin, v. 33 (1970), pp. 74-110.

purpose of the altar. The altar is Yahweh's idea, not Moses'. The instructions come from Yahweh. The initiative lies with Yahweh. "I will cause my name to be remembered . . . I will come to you . . . I will bless you." Above all, as this last phrase clearly indicates, the altar is given as an instrument of blessing.<sup>4</sup> It is designated as the place at which Yahweh is pleased to bring about a gracious advent of himself to his people. If abused or desecrated by willful disobedience, the altar could become a place of wrath and danger, as Nadab and Abihu learned too late (see Leviticus 10). But this is clearly an "alien purpose" of Yahweh's for the altar; his real and essential purpose is to use the altar as a place and means of blessing. Ex. 20:24 speaks clearly on this point.

Little more can be said about the nature of the altar and the "blessing" attached to it apart from a discussion of sacrifice. In contrast to paganism, the Old Testament attaches no intrinsic sacredness to the altar itself apart from what goes on at the altar, viz. sacrifice. The very word זֶבֶחַ comes from a verbal root meaning "to slaughter," thus "to slaughter with a view to sacrifice."<sup>5</sup> Israel's altars, to be sure, were "sacred space" inasmuch as they were the places designated for Yahweh's sacred advents to his people. In the early days of Israel's history various altars were utilized by Yahweh ("wherever I cause my name to be remembered," verse 24); after these temporary altars had outlasted their purpose, however, they were

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<sup>4</sup>Christopher Wright Mitchell, The Meaning and Significance of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>deVaux, Ancient Israel, p. 406.

not to become objects of superstitious worship. Our emphasis here is that the presence of the altar in Ex. 24:4 and its description in 20:23-26 further enrich the Exodus 24 context of grace, gift and blessing, this time from a cultic perspective. The altar also points us ahead to the covenant sacrifices and blood for which it was appointed to be used.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Twelve Standing Stones

Exodus 24:4 speaks of the construction of twelve "pillars" (תִּבְּנֹת) "for the twelve tribes of Israel." This term is used elsewhere (cf. Deut. 12:3; 2 Sam. 18:18) in a negative context; pagan worship also had its "pillars" which Israel was to "smash to pieces" (Deut. 12:3). This they often did not do.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, however, the תִּבְּנֹת could have a positive, God-pleasing purpose; what that purpose is in this context the text does not tell us. Carl Graesser distinguishes from the Biblical evidence four functions of the תִּבְּנֹת: memorial, legal, commemorative and cultic. He classes the Ex. 24 תִּבְּנֹת in the second category. "They marked both the relationship of each tribe to Yahweh and the fact that the relationship of the tribes was founded on their common commitment to Yahweh."<sup>8</sup> E. Stockton has suggested a cultic function for these תִּבְּנֹת:

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<sup>6</sup>See Ibid, pp. 406-414 for a more complete discussion of the altar in the history of Israel and in the ancient near east.

<sup>7</sup>See Ibid, pp. 284-288.

<sup>8</sup>Carl Graesser, "Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine," Biblical Archaeologist 35 (1972), pp. 34-38. We would take issue, however, with Graesser's suggestion that "common commitment to Yahweh" was the glue that held the tribes together; more properly it was Yahweh's commitment to them (though, of course, the former would flow from the latter).

In the ceremony itself the pillars were not said to perform any role . . . But after the ceremony, presumably, they would continue to stand before the mountain throne of God, as it were, perpetuating the liturgical stance of the people...It appears that such pillars in a cultic setting stand as permanent surrogates of the covenanted people, face to face with their God.

The silence of the text and the lack of definitive explanation given in the Old Testament generally allow us some freedom in interpretation, yet at the same time caution us against over-emphasizing the role of the pillars in the covenant-ratification. Perhaps the most--and the least--we can say is that the pillars were mandated by Yahweh as another visible, tangible, "located" reminder of his choosing Israel as his people and declaring them to be his own "holy nation" of twelve individual yet united tribes.

### The Sacrifices

#### Introduction

Verse 5 brings us back to the altar and what happens there, the sacrifices without which the covenant is not made. "He then sent young men from the children of Israel and they offered burnt offerings (עֹלֹת) and sacrificed peace offerings (זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים) of oxen to Yahweh." Augustine theorized that these "young men" were sons of Aaron, a suggestion which may reflect some of the same uneasiness which led Targum Onkelos to propose that these were first-born sons who were called to officiate--by right of primogeniture--as priests prior to the

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<sup>9</sup>E. Stockton, "Stones at Worship," Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology 1:3 (1970), p. 59.

institution of the Levitical priesthood.<sup>10</sup> As something like proto-priests they are there, delegated by Moses, to slaughter the sacrificial animals. At this point in Israel's history it is really Moses who serves as priest, as is shown by his "mediating" activities throughout the book, and particularly by what he does and says in verses 6-8.

For information about the sacrifices themselves we are heavily dependent upon related Old Testament sources, particularly the sacrificial textbook of the Old Testament, Leviticus. That dependency will be evident and explicit at numerous points throughout the discussion which follows, and thus requires, perhaps, some justification. There are those who would argue that what is given in Leviticus regarding sacrifice cannot properly be used to elucidate what is going on sacrificially in Exodus. A number of presuppositions come into play here which we cannot hope to address, but from the standpoint of the canonical text and structure of these two Old Testament books such a criticism would appear to be difficult to defend. As it is given, the book of Leviticus is a logical sequel to the book of Exodus. There is no apparent time lapse between the books. Although the last three verses of Exodus (40:36-38) anticipate Israel's future journeyings, it is clear that the instructions of Leviticus are also given at Sinai (see Lev. 25:1; 26:46; 27:34). No geographical movement, therefore, has taken place. Theologically, the revelations given in the third book of the Pentateuch follow fittingly upon those

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<sup>10</sup>Augustine and Targum Onkelos are cited without reference in Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 157.



given in the second. As was mentioned earlier, Yahweh's stated purpose for bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt was so that they might "worship" him (cf. Ex. 3:12; 8:1). More frequently this "worship" is described in terms of sacrifice; Israel must "go and offer sacrifice to Yahweh, our God" (cf. Ex. 3:18; 5:3,8,17; 8:8,25,26,27,28,29; 10:25). The first and foundational instance of this "sacrificial worship" of the people as a whole takes place in Exodus 24, and the book of Leviticus builds on this event by explaining further and in more detail what this sacrificial worship will entail. Exodus closes with the record of the completion of the tabernacle; Leviticus begins with the rubrics for the sacrifices which will be at the heart of all future tabernacle worship and service.

There is also a "covenant connection" between the two books, since the book of Leviticus is read properly only in the light of the covenant ratified at Sinai. Wenham explains:

Though the word for covenant (brth) is rare [in Leviticus], covenantal ideas pervade the whole book. Like the presence of God with Israel, the covenant is one of the fundamental presuppositions informing the theology of Leviticus.

Leviticus is the sequel to Exodus. At the heart of Exodus (chs. 19ff. is the Sinai Covenant. All that follows in Exodus is a working out of the covenant...Leviticus explains how covenant worship should be conducted (chs. 1-17), then how a covenant people should behave (18-25), and closes with a section of blessings and curses, entirely appropriate to a covenant document (ch. 26). Indeed, the last verse of this chapter connects all that precedes with Sinai, where the covenant was concluded. "These are the rules, judgments, and laws which the Lord put between himself and the Israelites in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses" (24:46)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 29.

It may not be going too far to say that all of the Levitical sacrifices were in this sense "covenant sacrifices," since their purpose (as we will argue) was primarily to mediate covenant blessings, give ongoing expression to covenant realities (e.g., sin, grace, atonement, holiness, etc.), and to serve as means of the divine presence of the covenant God who became Israel's God through the covenant ratification at Sinai.

We are confident, then, that we are not doing injustice to the text of Exodus 24 by looking to its sequel for further elucidation of sacrificial details, elucidation which is not explicitly provided by the text in Exodus. At the same time we recognize the need to exercise caution and restraint in this approach, both because of the uniqueness of the Exodus 24 events and also because even the book of Leviticus seldom provides detailed and explicit "theological" explanations of the sacrificial rituals and the rites of cleansing it prescribes or describes.

### The עֹלָה

The covenant ratification of Exodus 24 centers in two sacrifices. The first, עֹלָה, is usually translated "burnt offering" or "whole burnt offering" because the entire victim is consumed by fire on the altar.<sup>12</sup>

The rubrics for the proper immolation and blood-manipulation of the עֹלָה are given in Leviticus 1, where its purpose is also clearly

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<sup>12</sup>Roland deVaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice, translated by Joseph Bourke and Roland Potter (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), p. 27. Hereafter deVaux, Studies.

expressed. The one who brings an offering "shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Though the meaning of the "laying on of the hand" is disputed, many scholars see this rite as involving a confession or acknowledgment of sin on the part of the worshipper, as was certainly done (by the priest on behalf of the people) in the scapegoat ritual (cf. Lev. 16:20f.).<sup>13</sup> The text does make clear, however, the central (though not sole) purpose of the עֲלָה: to make atonement (כִּפּוּר).<sup>14</sup> Those who argue this point--and there are those who do--argue against the primary prescriptive for the burnt offering, Leviticus 1:4.<sup>15</sup>

The burnt offering was also "the commonest of all the Old Testament sacrifices."<sup>16</sup> It appears already in the book of Genesis (8:20, Noah; 22, Abraham and Isaac), and continues to play a central role in the worship life of individual believers and Israel as a nation

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<sup>13</sup>For a variety of observations regarding the "laying on of the hand" before sacrifice, see deVaux, Studies, p. 28; Wenham, p. 63; R. K. Harrison, Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1980), p. 45; A. Noordtzig, Leviticus, translated by R. Togtman (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1982), p. 33; Angel M. Rodriguez, Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus, Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1979), pp. 193-224.

<sup>14</sup>For more on the term כִּפּוּר, see excursus beginning on page 187 below.

<sup>15</sup>See Wenham, pp. 57ff. for additional Old Testament evidence which shows that the main purpose of the burnt offering was כִּפּוּר; but cf. also pp. 58-59, where the same author also acknowledges other purposes of the עֲלָה. In this connection see also J. Milgrom, "Sacrifices and Offerings, OT," IDBS, p. 769. Others assert that the main purpose of the עֲלָה was, for example, "gift" (deVaux, Studies, p. 37); "dedication" (C.R. Eerdman, The Book of Leviticus [New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1951], p. 22); "attraction" (Baruch A. Levine, In the Presence of the Lord [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974], p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Wenham, p. 63

throughout the Old Testament (cf. Ex. 10:25; 18:12; Num. 15:24; 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Chron. 21:26; Job 1:5; Psalm 51:18-19, etc.)

The שְׁלֵמִים

The second type of sacrifice offered in Exodus 24 is the שְׁלֵמִים, traditionally translated "peace offering" because it appears to share a common root with שָׁלוֹם, "peace." Its etymology, however, is subject to question.<sup>17</sup> Since its characteristic feature is a sacrificial meal in which the meat of the victim is eaten not only by the priests but also by the worshippers (cf. Lev. 7:11-18; 19:5-8), the translation "communion offering" or "fellowship offering" has become a popular one.<sup>18</sup> Rudolf Schmid has advocated naming the שְׁלֵמִים "covenant sacrifice" because of the concluding meal which is often a feature of the sealing of covenants.<sup>19</sup>

R. DeVaux calls the שְׁלֵמִים, along with the עֹלָה, "the two most frequently attested kinds of sacrifice in the Old Testament," and "the most characteristic of Israelite ritual."<sup>20</sup> The שְׁלֵמִים is specifically mentioned for the first time in the Old Testament in Ex. 20:24, where Yahweh gives the instructions which Moses carries out in Exodus 24.

<sup>17</sup>A good summary of this debate is given in Wenham, pp. 76-77; see also Milgrom, IBDS, p. 769 and Levine, pp. 8-12.

<sup>18</sup>Among those who adopt this translation are deVaux, Studies, pp. 27-30; H. Ringgren, Sacrifice in the Bible (London: Lutterworth press, 1962) pp. 23-26; H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), p. 80.

<sup>19</sup>Rudolf Schmid, Das Bundesopfer in Israel. Wesen Ursprung und Bedeutung der alttestamentlichen Schelamim (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 9); Munich: Kösel, 1964.

<sup>20</sup>deVaux, Studies, p. 27.

The covenant ratification in Exodus 24, therefore, is the first instance in the Old Testament where a זָבַח is offered by name. Many scholars argue, however, that the term זָבַח used alone in the Old Testament often designates what is in fact a זָבַח זָבַח (cf. Gen. 31:54; 46:1; Ex. 5; 10:25; 18:120, especially in cases where the sacrifice is followed by a meal. It appears that subsequent to Exodus 24 the terms are, at times, used synonymously (cf. Lev. 17:11-21; 2 Kgs. 16:13,15).<sup>21</sup> The pairing of the זָבַח with the זָבַח is also a common phenomenon in the Old Testament (cf. Lev. 9:22; Lev. 17; Judges 20:26; 2 Chron. 31:2; Ezek. 46:2,12); Exodus 24:5 may be the precedent for this practice.

The main prescriptive text for the זָבַח is Leviticus 3 (cf. also Lev. 7:11-38); the instructions for immolation and blood-manipulation are nearly identical with those for the זָבַח. The major difference is that in the case of the זָבַח only parts of the animal (generally the internal organs) were consumed on the altar. The other parts were divided between priests and worshippers, in order to be eaten in a sacrificial meal (7:31-34; 18:3), provided the participants were ritually clean (7:20). Strict regulations are also given concerning the length of time within which the meal may be eaten; anything remaining after the allotted time was to be completely destroyed (7:17).

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<sup>21</sup>A detailed discussion of this terminology and the history of the זָבַח in the Old Testament would take us too far afield. It remains, however, that Ex. 24:5 is the first explicit mention of a זָבַח זָבַח being sacrificed. See, however, deVaux, Studies, pp. 33f.; Levine, pp. 3-54; W.B. Stevenson, "Hebrew 'Olah and Zebah Sacrifices," in Festschrift Alfred Bertolet, edited by W. Baumgartner (et al.) (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), pp. 488-497.

Unlike the burnt offering, in the case of the peace offering the texts do not provide a clearly identifiable statement of purpose. In Lev. 17:11-18 three types of peace offerings are outlined, "thanksgiving," "votive" and "freewill." Little explanation is provided, however, about the peculiarities of each. A subject of great debate is whether or not atoning value can be ascribed to the קָטֹבֶת. Milgrom says flatly: "This offering [the קָטֹבֶת] never serves as expiation."<sup>22</sup> R. Daly says: "No atoning power can be properly attributed to the קָטֹבֶת."<sup>23</sup> Others, however, disagree. J. E. Steinmueller, for example, surveys the biblical evidence and concludes:

It seems that there was contained in each and every kind of sacrificial blood offering (regardless of its species determined by the intention of the giver and the disposition of the victim's meat, as in the case of holocausts, peace offerings, etc.) an expiatory or atoning element.<sup>24</sup>

There are several Old Testament texts (cf. 1 Sam 3:14; Ezek. 45:15) which imply that the קָטֹבֶת had an expiatory function; the clearest text, however, is Lev. 17. This chapter, which specifically mentions קָטֹבֶת (verse 5; see also verses 7,8) also contains the most explicit statement in the Old Testament about the atoning value given to sacrificial blood (Lev. 17:11). We will discuss this text in some detail below (see pages 161ff).

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<sup>22</sup>Milgrom, "Leviticus," IBDS p. 541.

<sup>23</sup>Robert J. Daly, Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), p. 92.

<sup>24</sup>John E. Steinmueller, "Sacrificial Blood in the Bible," Biblia 40 (1959), p. 562.

The Sacrificial Blood

While Leviticus 17 clearly seems to grant atoning value also to the זָשׁוּ, that debate is not central to our purpose here.<sup>25</sup> We are more concerned with the use, function and purpose of sacrificial blood than with general theories about the "main purpose" of each individual sacrifice. That concern stems first of all, of course, from a prior and primary interest in "the blood of the covenant" of Exodus 24 as background for the Lord's Supper. Several other reasons may be given, however, for focusing on the blood rather than on the sacrifices in general. First, the text of Exodus 24 focuses primarily on the sacrificial blood. The sacrifices are merely mentioned (verse 5); no details or explanations are given in connection with the זָשׁוּ or זָשׁוּ in general. The text moves quickly to what it seems to want to highlight about the covenant ratification ceremony, the manipulation of sacrificial blood (verses 6-8). E. W. Nicholson, who has done more work on this pericope than perhaps any other contemporary scholar, says:

It is clear that in the narrative as it now stands the offering of the sacrifices is subordinate to the blood ritual; it is upon the latter that the emphasis lies, whilst the former is but the necessary preliminary to it...To subordinate cultic officials is assigned the subordinate task of immolating the sacrificial victims, whilst to Moses is assigned the task of manipulating the blood of these sacrifices upon which the emphasis lies.<sup>26</sup>

Obviously these two--sacrifice and blood--cannot be separated or played off against each other: no sacrifices, no blood! Yet it is true that

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<sup>25</sup>See the works referred to above by W. B. Stevenson; Levine; Daly; Rodriguez; Milgrom, "Leviticus," IDBS.

<sup>26</sup>E. W. Nicholson, "The Covenant Ritual in Exodus xxiv 3-8, "Vetus Testamentum 32:1 (1982), p. 81.

the text itself emphasizes this one aspect of the sacrificial ritual (the manipulation of blood) above any other.

Second, it appears that what is true in Exodus 24 is also true of sacrificial worship generally in the Old Testament, particularly as such worship is prescribed and described in the cultic manual of the Old Testament, the book of Leviticus. We would suggest, in other words, that according to Leviticus the key to the purpose and meaning of sacrifice may be found in the sacrificial blood. Nearly every sacrifice or cleansing ritual in the book of Leviticus centers in some type of blood manipulation; the word "blood" (דָּם) appears 86 times in the 27 chapters of the book. It is the most frequently used sacrificial term in Leviticus, appearing more often even than the common term for sacrifice (זָבַח, 27 times) and the verb indicating the "offering" of a sacrifice (קָרַב, 58 times). The word "atone," furthermore, runs like a refrain throughout the book of Leviticus (44 occurrences). Even if the atoning value of certain individual sacrifices (like the שִׁטְמֵי) may be argued, it is difficult to deny (without ignoring the evidence at hand) that according to Leviticus, the main purpose of Old Testament sacrifice in general is to make atonement.<sup>27</sup> If this fact is accepted, then we are brought back once

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<sup>27</sup>The Old Testament evidence supporting this statement will come to light more abundantly as we continue our study. For now, consider the following statements by several important Old Testament scholars. G. Von Rad, for example, says that "the most important purpose in the offering of sacrifices [in the Priestly documents] is expiation." Therefore, concludes Von Rad, the study of sacrifice in such texts "narrows down to the elucidation of one single concept, kpr." (Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2:262.) Ringgren says that "in the majority of [sacrificial] cases, the emphasis is on the removal of sin and guilt, the keyword being kipper, to atone," p. 36. R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans,



again to the blood, "for it is the blood which makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11). Metzinger says: "Leviticus speaks often of sacrificial animals, but most often of the blood of the sacrificial animal as the means of atonement."<sup>28</sup> Kidner says: "In every sacrifice, whatever its character, there must be the ritual of the blood; for though atonement was not the be-all and end-all of every offering, relations with God could not exist without it."<sup>29</sup>

Wenham notes that in addition to atonement, cleansing and sanctification are also important themes of the book of Leviticus. These themes, too, however, lead us to the blood: "In Leviticus, sacrifice, or more precisely sacrificial blood, is regularly associated with cleansing and sanctification."<sup>30</sup> H. Hummel speaks for many scholars when he recognizes more than one "motif" involved in Old Testament sacrifice. Alongside atonement (expiation/propitiation), Hummel mentions motifs of gift (of thanksgiving) and communion/fellowship. "All three motifs," he says, "interpenetrate: all of the concepts seem to be present in all sacrifices."<sup>31</sup> This observation fits with Kidner's reminder that atonement was not the "be-

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1969), says simply: "The purpose of the sacrificial enactments, as defined by Leviticus, was to effect an "atonement" on behalf of the person offering the sacrifice" (p. 602).

<sup>28</sup>A. Metzinger, "Die Substitutionstheorie und das alttestamentliche Opfer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von LV 17:11," *Biblia* 21 (1940), p. 171f. Metzinger is "quoted freely" in Daly, p. 119-120. (Emphasis Metzinger's)

<sup>29</sup>F.D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1952), p. 14.

<sup>30</sup>Wenham, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup>Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh, p. 81.

all" and the "end-all" of Old Testament sacrifice; other aspects clearly were also involved. Just as clearly, however--and as Kidner expresses--each of these other motifs or purposes was finally and ultimately dependent upon the central purpose of atonement, for "relations with God could not exist without it." Without atonement, there could be no "communion," no true fellowship with God or man. Without atonement, there could be no offerings of "thanksgiving," no "gifts" acceptable to God. Everything centers in atonement; and at the center of atonement is the blood, which "I [Yahweh] have given...to you upon the alter to make atonement" (Lev. 17:11).

By focusing on the blood of Exodus 24, therefore, we are not only following the witness and emphasis of that text, but we are at the same time getting at the heart of the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament, which centered in atonement (כפר)<sup>32</sup> by means of blood (דם). And if, as A. Edersheim suggests (see p. 98 above), Exodus 24:3-8 was truly "the most important transaction in the whole history of Israel;" if it really "lay at the foundation of all sacrificial worship which followed," then it should not surprise us that this pericope should lead us to the heart of Old Testament sacrifice and Old Testament covenant: the sacrificial blood, the blood of the covenant. We now give attention to that blood as the foremost subject of our investigation.

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<sup>32</sup>Again, see the excursus on כפר for a discussion of this term, page 187 below.

CHAPTER 4  
THE COVENANT BLOOD

Introduction

The first time in Scripture that sacrificial blood is mentioned by name and designated by Yahweh for specific use is the account of the Passover in Exodus 12. After the slaughter of the lamb, some of its blood was to be put on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which the lamb was to be eaten (12:7). "The blood shall be a sign (אִיָּמָה) for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (12:13; cf. also verses 21-27). By the blood of the lamb, the judgment of Yahweh, which was to fall upon his and Israel's enemies, was averted for the people of Yahweh. This sacrifice and this use of blood is unique in the history of Israel. Though it was to become a permanent institution in the future worship life of Israel (see Ex. 12:14, "אִיָּמָה"), it occupies a position in distinction from the general sacrificial system as outlined by Yahweh in Leviticus (the passover is mentioned only once in Leviticus, and then in passing--Lev. 23:5). The distinctive features which give it this position are, for example, the historical circumstances which surround it, the familial (rather than the public-ceremonial) nature of the sacrifice and the unique meal which accompanied it (Ex. 12:8-11), and the non-presence of an altar or a

priest/worship leader in the ritual. While we cannot enter into discussion of the passover here, two things are especially noteworthy about this first instance of the use of sacrificial blood: its judgment-averting function and its designation as "sign" (see Ex. 12:13 for both). The covenant blood of Sinai is also placed in an rit context by Ex. 3:12, and the question of its judgment-averting function will be discussed below.

The second time in Scripture that sacrificial blood is mentioned by name and (implicitly) designated for use by Yahweh is the pericope under discussion, Ex. 24:1-11. The historical circumstances surrounding this sacrifice, its link with the worship events and instructions which follow, and its similarity to the Levitical sacrifices in general lead us to affirm Edersheim's conclusion that this sacrifice at Sinai really did "lay at the foundation of all the sacrificial worship which followed." Sacrifice as a divinely established institution of the nation/kingdom/congregation Israel was inaugurated in Ex. 24:1-11, at the ratification of the Sinai covenant. Yet, as will be discussed, there are some unique features of this ratificatory sacrifice and ritual which can claim no true parallel in subsequent Israelite worship nor in the Old Testament as a whole. Only part of this rite becomes a standard feature of the regular sacrificial cult of Israel. Another part of the rite is never again repeated in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> It is repeated for the first time, we will

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<sup>1</sup>We speak here of what is recorded in Ex. 24:8, the blood splashed upon the people. A bit later (pp. 215-222 below) we will discuss two "similar" Old Testament blood rites which may shed light upon the Exodus text. It is still true, however, that there is no real Old Testament parallel to what happens in Ex. 24:8.

suggest, in the New Testament, though in a unique way and in a way that supercedes the original event which it recalls. Exodus 24:6-8 reads:

Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he splashed against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and preached aloud to the people; and they responded, "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do and we will obey." Then Moses took the blood and splashed it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The text begins on a unique note with the dividing of the blood. Perhaps the first question is: which blood? Presumably the blood of both sacrifices (הָשֵׁוּ and אֲשֵׁוּ) is meant. If so, this in itself is rather exceptional; the norm in Leviticus is that each type of sacrifice is accompanied by its own separate blood-manipulation, even when these sacrifices are offered as part of a common rite (cf. Lev. 8:9). In Exodus 24 it appears that the blood of these two types of sacrifice is treated as "one blood." Even more exceptional, however, is the dividing of this "one blood." Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we read of sacrificial blood being divided into two "halves" in order to be used for two distinct rituals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>One way to measure the uniqueness of an Old Testament event is to check the reaction of the rabbis. In this case we find that their attention was aroused. Rabbi Jehuda El'ai (c. 150) suggests that the blood divided into two halves by itself; Bar Qappara (c. 220) says that an angel from heaven descended and performed the act. Rabbi Nathan (c. 160) allows that Moses did it, yet that he had divine assistance: half the blood turned black and half remained red, designating how the blood should be divided. According to Rabbi Jicchaq a voice came from heaven with instructions for the proper dividing of the blood. Then, not surprisingly, there is the concern for cultic rubrics; how did Moses know the proper regulations for blood-handling? Rabbi Jischma'el supplies this answer: "Mose war mit den Halakhoth (Regeln) des Blutes vertraut und teilte es." One is impressed by the rabbis' concern that the blood be rightly handled; this is also an obvious concern of Yahweh's throughout the book of Leviticus. As usual, however, their attempts to "help" or "protect" the text are characterized much more by eisegesis than exegesis; in many instances this leads them to miss or

The dividing of the blood is followed by two distinct blood rites (verses 6,8) which are part of a single ceremony. Both rites involve the "splashing" (פֶּרַט) of blood, the first upon the altar and the second upon the people. "It is noteworthy that this is the only instance of two פֶּרַט rituals on the same occasion."<sup>3</sup> Even more noteworthy is the nature of the second פֶּרַט rite:

Nun war dieses Opfer gegenüber den üblichen Opfern des A.T. etwas Einmaliges. Es ist das einzige alttestamentliche Opfer, von dem berichtet wird, daß das Blut nicht nur an Altar, sondern zugleich auf das Volk gesprengt wird, v. 6, 8. Hier und nur hier im ganzen A.T. finden wir also, daß das Prinzip des Abstandes von der heiligen Opfermaterie, in diesem Fall dem Blute, durchbrochen wird.<sup>4</sup>

Aalen may have overstated the case just a bit; we find other instances in the Old Testament of contact with "der heiligen Opfermaterie,"<sup>5</sup> even--as will discuss--with the blood.<sup>6</sup> This is, however, the only case in which blood is "splashed" (פֶּרַט) on people (priests or laymen), and is therefore the only case in which sacrificial blood is distributed so liberally, freely and generally.

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cover up the very truth which the text seeks to convey. Hermann Leberecht Strack, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, von Hermann Leberecht Strack und Paul Billerbeck (München: C. H. Beck, 1922-1961), vol. I, p. 991-993.

<sup>3</sup>G. Andre, "פֶּרַט," TDOT 4:163.

<sup>4</sup>Sverre Aalen, "Das Abendmahl als Opfermahl im Neuen Testament," Novum Testamentum 6 (1963), p. 149.

<sup>5</sup>The meat of the sin and guilt offerings, for example, is specifically designated as "holy" (cf. Lev. 6:16,26; 7:6), and is eaten by the priests; that the meat of the peace offerings is also regarded as "holy" is at least implied (cf. Lev. 19:5-8), and this meat was eaten by both priests and laymen (Lev. 7:11-36).

<sup>6</sup>See Lev. 8:23-24,30 and Lev. 14:6-7,14, and the discussion below, pp. 215ff.

While the text does not justify divorcing these two blood-rites or setting them against each other (as some interpreters do) it does justify, we believe, a separate treatment of each. The "interruption" of the blood-handling by the "preaching" and acclamation of verse 7 indicates that the two blood rites were separated liturgically. This, and the uniqueness of the second blood rite, seems to indicate that each had its own distinct purpose and meaning in the ceremony as a whole. Failure to recognize this on the part of commentators often results in an impoverished view of the blood of the covenant and the covenant ratification as a whole. We will discuss verses 6 and 8 separately, therefore keeping in mind their unified role in the ratification as a whole.

### Blood on the Altar

#### Introduction

Moses put half the blood in basins; "the other half of the blood he splashed against the altar" (זרקו על - המשבח). The term זרק means to "toss (in handfuls)," "to toss or throw (in volume)," "to scatter abundantly,"<sup>7</sup> and should be distinguished from other cultic terms such as נזח, "sprinkle"; שפך, קצו, "pour out"; and גצה, "squeeze out" or "drain."<sup>8</sup> זרק-rites are characteristically no "tidy" affairs. "Splash," "dash" or "throw" captures the sense of the word much more accurately than "sprinkle," which is how some

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<sup>7</sup>BDB, p. 284.

<sup>8</sup>See J. E. Steinmueller, "Sacrificial Blood in the Old Testament," Biblica 40 (1959), p. 559.

translations render it. The preposition סו has the basic meaning of "on," "upon" or "against."<sup>9</sup> In some blood-rites the blood is merely poured out near the base of the altar or dabbed on the "horns" of the altar; the intended picture in Ex. 24:6 is clearly a splashing of blood upon or against the altar.

The blood-rite described in verse 6 is completely consistent with the Levitical prescriptions for blood manipulation in the case of both the burnt offering (cf. Lev. 1:5,11) and the peace offering (Lev. 3:2,8,13; also, incidentally, the guilt offering--Lev. 7:2). In the above texts we find the phrase, "קָרַע סוֹ אֶת־זֵבַח הַבָּיִת," "throw [the blood] round about against the altar." What is the significance of this action, which is described for the first time in Ex. 24:5 and subsequently becomes the central cultic act of the most customary and representative of Israel's sacrifices? The text of Exodus 24 is silent on this point. Nor does the immediate context of the prescriptive texts listed above offer any specific explanation of the blood rite, although in Lev. 1:4--the verse immediately preceding the first description of this קָרַע-rite in Leviticus--it is closely linked with the stated purpose of the sacrifice: "It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." There is, however, one verse in the Old Testament which appears to provide an explanation of how it is that blood splashed (etc.) upon the altar in accordance with Yahveh's instructions makes atonement. This verse is Lev. 17:11, which consists of three Hebrew clauses:

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<sup>9</sup>BDB, p. 752.



כִּי בָּשָׂר הַבְּשָׂר בָּרֶגֶל הוּא :  
 וְאֵיךְ כִּתְּבוּ אֵלֶיכֶם עַל-הַזֶּבֶחַ  
 לְכַפֵּר עַל-בְּשַׂרְיֵיכֶם  
 כִּי-הֵדֶם הוּא בְּבִשְׂרֵיכֶם ?

The immediate context of this verse is a prohibition against "eating" blood (verses 10-16), which is found elsewhere in Scripture as well (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26-27; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23-28). The seriousness of this prohibition may be seen from the repeated statement that anyone who does eat blood shall be "cut off" from his people (Lev. 7:26-27; 17:10,14). In Gen 9:4 and Deut. 12:23-28 the connection between blood and "life" (נֶפֶשׁ) is also stated, but only in Lev. 17:11 is this statement connected with the blood rite carried out at the altar for the purpose of making atonement.

It appears, therefore, that a study of Leviticus 17:11 holds the most promise for shedding light on the blood rite of Ex. 24:6. This text has aroused much discussion and debate, so that our review of the scholarly work on this verse will have to be limited to a treatment of representative views. Following this we will discuss the exegesis which seems to best confess what the Hebrew text expresses.

#### Leviticus 17:11

##### Problems of Interpretation

There is no question that according to Lev. 17:11 the sacrificial blood somehow "makes atonement" (כִּפֶּר); this statement requires no

"interpretation." The question is, does this text further elucidate how such atonement was accomplished by the blood? That appears to be the intention of the text, but in this case there are a number of philological matters that make this question more difficult to answer. Those matters may be summarized as follows. First, there is the question of the meaning of שׁוֹרֵץ, which is used once in each of the three clauses in Lev. 17:11. Does it refer, as some suggest, to some "metaphysical entity," some inherently immortal "soul" which exists within every living thing, and which continues to exist even after the death/destruction of the physical form which contains it? Or does it refer simply to the "vital principle" of a living being, that which distinguishes the "living" from the "dead?" In this latter case the שׁוֹרֵץ has no existence or "life" apart from the physical being in which it dwells. A related--but for our purposes secondary--question is whether בְּשָׂר in clause 1 is meant to include all living beings (humans, animals). In other words, does the statement "בְּהֵמָה וּבְחַיִּים וּבְשָׂר" have reference only to the specific context or is it a general statement which can be applied to all בְּשָׂר?

Then there is the question of how to translate בְּ. Should the בְּ be given a locative sense ("in") or is it better taken as beth essentiae? The second clause is rather straightforward; the only real question here is how to translate שׁוֹרֵץ, which here clearly refers to human "life." In the third clause we must make another decision about בְּ, which this time is attached to שׁוֹרֵץ: "for it is the blood which makes atonement בְּשָׂר." What sense does בְּ have here? And whose "שׁוֹרֵץ" is meant? And how does this clause relate to the

previous two clauses? The complexity of these problems and the variety of philological possibilities caution us against asserting what cannot be asserted on the basis of text. We can at least, however, evaluate possible interpretations and attempt to rule out those which are not consistent with the data of the text or which contradict other clear Old Testament texts. Further, we can suggest a view that seems to be based on the data of the text and is consistent with the rest of the Old Testament evidence. In this way we hope to shed some light on the meaning of the blood-rite in Ex. 24:6; or at least avoid wrong interpretations of it.

#### Various Views (and Evaluations)

##### Blood as Divine Life

The first major interpretation of Lev. 17:11 might be called "blood as divine life." This interpretation has three main features, despite variations among interpreters. First, it favors an understanding of וְחַי as a "metaphysical entity" which retains life-power even after the death/destruction of the body/form which contained it. Second, it supports a locative sense for בְּ in the term בַּדָּם (this וְחַי, vital-force, is in the blood, regardless whether that blood is part of a living creature or separated from one now dead). Third, it relies heavily on religionsgeschichtliche evidence for its interpretations of sacrificial blood and of Lev. 17:11.

This interpretation has several variations. One of these is commonly described as the alimentary interpretation of sacrificial blood, represented (for example) by T.H. Gaster. This view, that the

purpose of sacrifice was to supply food--and thereby life and energy--to the gods, merits little discussion here, since it has found meager support among Old Testament scholars and finds no support in the Old Testament itself.<sup>10</sup> Others, such as Baruch Levine, argue that the blood served not an alimentary but an apotropaic function by virtue of the life-force within it. Citing Lev. 17:11 as a primary text, and relying on "parallel" evidence from ancient "chthonic cults," Levine says:

In the Biblical cult, Yahweh accepts the blood as an apotropaic agent, and contains his wrath, which on occasion has been known to strike out at the Israelites standing in his immediate presence. The underlying conception here is the role of blood as the life force."<sup>11</sup>

There is no question that sacrificial blood in the Old Testament cult had an "apotropaic" ("propitiatory") function, in that it somehow averted the wrath of Yahweh and provided a (divinely instituted) escape from the deadly consequences of sin. Levine's portrayal of Yahweh, however, as a basically self-centered deity whose concern in instituting the offering of sacrificial blood was not for man but for the preservation of his own "life" (which is seriously endangered by "demonic forces") finds no support whatsoever in the Old Testament itself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>T. H. Gaster, "Sacrifices and Offerings, OT," IDB 4:149-150. See also B. Kedar-Kopfstein, "קָרָן," TDOT 3:248, where this view is refuted.

<sup>11</sup>Baruch Levine, In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), p. 68.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 78; Levine's interpretation (like Gaster's) must stand or fall on the basis of the question whether it is at all necessary, when studying Old Testament texts in the historical context of ancient culture, to take into account the evidence within the Old Testament itself.

Both the above views take as their starting point the idea that in the ancient world blood was regarded as in some sense "divine," that even after death its "vital power" remained, so that it could be used for beneficial purposes. In his article "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," D. J. McCarthy attributes the popularizing of this view to J. Wellhausen and W. Robertson Smith.<sup>13</sup> There is a significant school of scholarly thought which would not necessarily embrace the specific elements of either Gaster's or Levine's view as summarized above, but would still hold to the idea that in the ancient world (and so also in the Old Testament) blood was regarded as an essentially divine substance which could be used in various ways to appropriate blessings. In this view the death of the victim is seen as a relatively insignificant event; its only function is the liberating of the blood, in which the life-power resides. E.O. James, a major spokesman for this interpretation, summarizes his view in Origins of Sacrifice:

[In ancient sacrifice] the fundamental principle throughout is the same; the giving of life to promote or preserve life, death being merely a means of liberating vitality. Consequently, the destruction of the victim, to which many writers have given a central position in the rite, assumes a position of secondary importance in comparison with the transmission of the soul-substance to the supernatural being to whom it is offered. This may be done simply by applying the blood to a sacred stone, or pouring it out at its base. Or an altar may be erected and a

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<sup>13</sup>D. J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," Journal of Biblical Literature 88 (March-Dec. 1969), p. 166. See W. R. Smith, Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions, edited by Stanley A. Cook, 3rd. ed. (Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1969; first published in 1927). We will return to Smith's views in connection with our discussion of Ex. 24:8; see page 216 below. See also J. Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentumes (Berlin, 1887), p. 120. Another contemporary of Smith's that might be mentioned as sharing very similar views is H. C. Trumbull, The Blood Covenant (New York, 1885).

priest employed to make the presentation according to certain prescribed rites in association with subsidiary ceremonies.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Gaster and Levine, James is less dogmatic in his determination of the significance of this "liberating of life" through the blood; he allows for a variety of possibilities, each of which may have held sway in varying rites and cultures, as to what the blood-life accomplished and how it accomplished it:

In all the manifold variations of the ritual the underlying significance consists in the setting free of life for one or more of the following reasons: (a) to augment the power of the god or spirit approached to enable him to perform his beneficent functions on earth; (b) to meet the forces of death and destruction by a fresh outpouring of vital potency, and so to strengthen the worshipper against malign influences... (c) to establish or re-establish a bond of union or covenant with the benevolent powers in order to maintain a vital relationship between the worshipper and the object of worship.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the intended purpose or desired result of such blood rites, however, its effect was accomplished by the "setting free of life" which resides by nature in the blood.<sup>16</sup>

The view of James and those who follow him must be criticized on two grounds. First, since it derives its cogency mainly from sacrificial rituals of the ancient world, it depends heavily on the

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<sup>14</sup>E. O. James Origins of Sacrifice: A Study of Comparative Religion (New York/London: Kennikat Press, 1933), P. 256.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. James' specific interpretation of the Exodus 24 blood rite(s) falls into the third category, and so fits well with the views of Smith and others which are discussed below in connection with Ex. 24:8, pp. 210-213 below.

<sup>16</sup>See deVaux, Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), p. 93; his view is very similar. H. H. Rowley, The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament (Manchester, England: John Rylands Library, 1950), has a very thorough summary and bibliography of those who share this understanding of "blood-life," pp. 78-85.

supposition that the "divinity" of blood was, in fact, an established "dogma" in the religious thinking of these ancient cultures. This thesis, however, has not gone unchallenged. In an important series of articles, Dennis McCarthy has asserted that a "survey of the actual data from the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world does not offer any real support for a theory of sacrifice based on the sharing of a divine substance, blood."<sup>17</sup> According to McCarthy, the ancient sources show that blood was associated much more with "unpleasantness, war and death"<sup>18</sup> than with "life." McCarthy does not on this basis forsake his personal view that in the Old Testament blood is portrayed as a "divine substance;" he merely concludes that such a view must be regarded as "specifically Israelite."<sup>19</sup>

The second ground of criticism is the evidence of the Old Testament itself. It is surprising how many and how easily interpretations of Lev. 17:11 and sacrificial blood in the Old Testament generally are offered without even a basic examination of the pertinent Old Testament philology and terminology. The understanding of נִשְׁמָה, for example, which is fundamental to this issue, as a quasi-divine "life force" which has an existence even after death and apart from the body, has no foundation in the Old Testament. E. Jacob explains:

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<sup>17</sup>D.J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," p. 175. See also his follow-up article, "Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (1973), pp. 204-210.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

According to the OT the nphsh has no existence apart from the individual who possesses it, or, better, who is it. It never leaves him to pursue an independent life of its own. Even less is it a force outside the individual that works variously in life and death. The inhabitants of sheol are never called nphsh.<sup>20</sup>

Jacobs again:

The nphsh is almost always connected with a form. It has no existence apart from the body. Hence [in the case of human beings] the best translation in many instances is "person",<sup>21</sup> comprised in a corporeal reality...Each individual is a nphsh....

B. Kedar-Kopfstein, writing on "נפש," has this to say about the relationship between the נשמה and the נפש:

The word [dm] is semantically close to nephesh to the extent that this can denote life as such (2 S. 23:17; Lam 2:12). Since, however, nephesh, the breath of life, is present in a living person, but blood is found in one who is bleeding to death, the emphasis in the former is mainly positive, but in the latter, negative: when a man's life is saved, it is called his nephesh,<sup>22</sup> but when he loses it, it is called his dam (Ezk. 3:16ff.; 33:1ff.).

The writer also makes the point that in the Old Testament "the shedding of blood...results in the destruction of a nephesh."<sup>23</sup> We will return to these facts momentarily when we attempt an explanation of Lev. 17:11.

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<sup>20</sup>E. Jacob, "ψυχή"--The Anthropology of the Old Testament," TDNT 9:621.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 620.

<sup>22</sup>Kedar-Kopfstein, p. 240.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 241. R. K. Harrison, Leviticus (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980), p. 182, mentions B.F. Westcott, A. Cave and V. Taylor as other scholars who adhere to the view that blood shed means "life-force released." He comments: "None of these writers, or others who adhere to this view, has offered factual evidence to support it." See also Leon Morris, The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1983), pp. 56-57.



## Milgrom

Another view of Lev. 17:11 which bears mentioning because of the prominence of the scholar in Old Testament studies is that of Jacob Milgrom. Milgrom's goal is to solve the seeming contradiction between the fact that in Lev. 17:11 the blood of the קָשׁוּ seems to be given expiatory power and the fact that the קָשׁוּ itself "never functions as a kippur."<sup>24</sup> The problem is resolved, according to Milgrom, by viewing Lev. 17:11 in its "context," which he interprets as the opening verses of the chapter. These verses, says Milgrom, "make explicit [that] animal slaughter constitutes murder except at the authorized altar."<sup>25</sup> Milgrom admits that "the doctrine that unauthorized animal slaughter constitutes murder is found nowhere else," but claims that "it accords well with the general view of the animal in biblical literature."<sup>26</sup> The blood rite described in Lev. 17:11, then, does not have reference to the atoning power of sacrificial blood in general. In its specific context it merely "informs the Israelite that slaughtering a sacrificial animal for its flesh constitutes murder unless he offers its blood upon the altar as expiation for his life."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>J. Milgrom, Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology [hereafter Studies]. This is only a contradiction, of course, if one begins with the assumption that the קָשׁוּ cannot be viewed as expiatory; an assumption, we would suggest, that is not necessitated by the evidence of the Old Testament.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 102.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 103. Milgrom also presents this interpretation of Lev. 17:11 in his article on "Leviticus" in IDBS, p. 543 and in his article in IDBS, pp. 769-770, "Sacrifices and Offerings, OT."

The strength of Milgrom's view is that it attempts to deal seriously with the text and context of Lev. 17:11; many others fail to do this. By doing this, Milgrom begins to recognize some sort of "expiatory" or atoning value attached by the text to the blood.<sup>28</sup> The weaknesses of Milgrom's interpretation are his insistence that the קִשׁוּ cannot have expiatory value (which severely limits his application of Lev. 17:11) and his rather peculiar suggestion that unauthorized animal slaughter was a capital crime in Israel. This stems from Milgrom's insistence that verses 11ff. be read in the light of verses 1ff. But this view seems forced; each of the sections appear to have its own specific context and concern, and they are linked together in the chapter by means of the common theme of the proper handling of sacrificial blood.

#### Rodriguez ("Traditional" View)

The final interpretation of Lev. 17:11 which will be summarized here might be termed the "traditional" view. It is evident from a survey of contemporary commentaries on Leviticus that if this view was once out of favor its number of adherents is gaining. This is the view that Lev. 17:11, and thus, by application, the blood-altar rites of the Old Testament in general, indicates that atonement is secured as a gift from Yahweh through the vicarious substitution of a sacrificial animal, who is slain in the place of the worshipper and whose blood is offered up to God upon the altar. Here, then, in distinction to most of the

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<sup>28</sup>Milgrom translates Lev. 17:11; "For the life of the flesh is the blood, and it is I who have assigned it to you upon the altar to expiate for your lives, for it is the blood, as life, that expiates." (Studies, p. 103).

views presented above, the main thing is not blood as "divine bearer of life," but blood as life which is poured out in death and offered to God in lieu of the worshipper's life, who because of his sin and uncleanness deserves to die. In this way, through the vicarious and substitutionary death of the victim whose blood is splashed against the altar, Yahweh provides atonement for his people. The blood of atonement saves them from the consequences of their sin and qualifies them to stand and live in Yahweh's holy presence without fear and danger.

As mentioned above, this substitutionary view of Lev. 17:11 and Old Testament sacrifice in general is not without support in contemporary scholarship. Perhaps the most recent and thorough exegetical examination of this question, however, has been offered in a doctoral dissertation by A. Rodriguez, Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus.<sup>29</sup> Rodriguez studies the question of substitutionary sacrifice both in ancient near eastern literature and in the major sacrifices/sacrificial rituals of the Old Testament, and gives a detailed exposition of Lev. 17:11 as part of that larger study. It is our opinion that the approach taken by Rodriguez is the most successful in listening to and confessing "what the Hebrew text says"; we offer, therefore, a rather thorough summary.

The context of Leviticus 17 evidences "one underlying concern... the proper disposition of animal blood."<sup>30</sup> Within the context a number of specific concerns are addressed. The concern in verses 10-14 is

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<sup>29</sup>A. Rodriguez, Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1979).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 234.

clearly the prohibition against the eating of blood; the כִּי which opens verse 11 shows that at least one of the purposes of this verse is to explain this injunction. Rodriguez denies as foreign to the Old Testament the idea that נַפְשׁוֹ refers to "a metaphysical entity" (cf. pp. 163ff. above); rather it is the "life-principle" or "life-essence."<sup>31</sup> בַּשָּׂר in clause 1 refers in this context only to the animal. Whether a more general application of the statement בְּדַם הוּא הַחַיָּה נַפְשׁוֹ הַבְּשָׂר can be made is really a moot question; the concern in this clause is with the animal נַפְשׁוֹ, animal בַּשָּׂר, animal דָּם. The וְ in דָּם is best taken as beth essentiae: "the life of the flesh is the blood." This translation is directly supported by Deut. 12:23 and Lev. 17:14a and c which explicitly state, "the blood is the life" (הַדָּם הוּא הַחַיָּה), and indirectly supported by Gen. 9:4 which can be taken the same way. "The identification of blood and life is to be understood as indicating that for the Hebrew mind דָּם ("blood") was 'the tangible manifestation' of the נַפְשׁוֹ ("life").<sup>32</sup> Thus blood flowing through the veins is an indication that נַפְשׁוֹ, too, exists; blood poured out in death means the cessation of נַפְשׁוֹ. In other words, if blood is life, then the loss of blood signals death or impending death.<sup>33</sup>

The first thing of importance in the second clause is the emphasis on divine initiative and divine grace.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 235.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 236.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

Blood belongs to Yahweh, but He has a special function for it: "I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement."...This is an extremely important statement in at least two respects. First, the expiatory power of the blood is not an intrinsic characteristic of it. There is nothing magical in the blood. Its expiatory power is found in Yahweh. It is He who assigned to the blood that function on the altar. So, secondly, it is not any blood that can be used for expiation. That function has been limited to the sacrificial blood on the altar (mzbh). We are here outside the realm of magic, or even of human achievements. Expiation is the activity of God on behalf of his people.<sup>34</sup>

A second question is, does Lev. 17:11 imply that the blood of all Old Testament sacrifices, when used at the altar in accordance with Yahweh's instructions, has such atoning value? Several facts, including the generalized reference to sacrifice in Lev. 17:8 ("burnt offering and sacrifice") and the seemingly intentional non-exclusiveness of 17:11b ("I have given it [i.e., sacrificial blood in general] to you upon the altar to make atonement") lead Rodriguez to answer this question affirmatively.

It is, therefore, better to conclude that the blood assigned to the altar by Yahweh is the sacrificial blood in general...The Biblical writer phrased his thought carefully in order to make it clear that he was referring to all sacrificial blood.<sup>35</sup>

This point is rather important for our application of Lev. 17:11 to the sacrificial blood splashed on the altar in Ex. 24:6. A third question in the second clause concerns נַפְשֵׁיכֶם. It obviously refers here to the "lives" of the worshippers, but how should it be translated? We have already heard E. Jacob's suggestion (see p. 168 above) that when נַפְשׁ is used of human beings the best translation is often simply "person." Rodriguez cites additional studies which support that point

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 242. Emphasis Rodriguez's.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 241-2.

of view as most consistent with the Old Testament evidence.<sup>36</sup> Further support is gained from the immediate context, in which שׂוֹפֵר is used several times meaning simply "person" (Lev. 17:10,12,15). Thus Rodriguez suggests that the phrase שׂוֹפֵר עַל-לֵוֹ is really synonymous with the shorter and more common phrase, לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו, "to make atonement for him."<sup>37</sup> In other words, Lev. 17:11, like the many other atonement passages in Leviticus, speaks of atonement being made for the "person," for the "individual," and not merely for some "life essence" of man ("soul") as distinct from the body. One final point about the second clause is that it implies that the life of the individual is in jeopardy, thus explaining the need for atonement.

That the individual is endangered is to be implied because he is designated as a sinner, one who has violated...Yahweh's commandments. We come here extremely close to the idea of sacrificial substitution. The idea of substitution seems to be insinuated already.<sup>38</sup>

It is the third clause, however, Lev. 17:11c, which provides "the basic problem of interpretation." More specifically, "the main problem is the expression בְּיָפֶטֶחַ."<sup>39</sup> According to Rodriguez, nearly all the ancient versions took verse 11c as merely a restatement and a repetition of verse 11b. In this case בְּיָפֶטֶחַ in verse 11c is simply parallel in singular form to נַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם in verse 11b. "Such an

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 243. Rodriguez mentions J. Scharbert, Fleisch, Geist und Seele im Pentateuch, Stuttgarter Bibel Studien 19 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibel-Werk, 1966), pp. 71-72; also H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the OT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 10.

<sup>37</sup>Rodriguez, p. 243.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, p. 244.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

interpretation," says the author, "is hardly possible." It fails to explain the change in number and in preposition, and fails to follow the logic of the verse, which (as indicated by the particle וְ, which is to be taken in its usual causal sense) clearly means to explain in 11c how the life-blood of 11a accomplishes the atonement mentioned in 11b.<sup>40</sup>

The typically contemporary interpretations of this verse, however, also present problems--theological problems. These normally take וְחַי in verse 11c as referring to the "life" inhering in the blood of the animal (cf. verse 11a), and render בְּ as either instrumental or essentiae. In the former case the interpretation would be that taken by Metzinger: "The blood (of the sacrificial animal) atones by means of and with the power of the 'soul'" (contained in this sacrificial animal).<sup>41</sup> We have already discussed the problems inherent in this sort of interpretation of sacrificial blood--nowhere else does the Old Testament say or even imply that animal blood (or for that matter, human blood) has some vital "power" by virtue of a "soul" that remains in the blood even after death. If one takes this בְּ as beth essentiae the resultant meaning is not much different: "For it is the blood, as life, that expiates." Philological problems with this view are that "nowhere else is nfs the instrument of kpr"; "more than that, whenever the preposition b governs the noun nfs it never has an

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 245.

<sup>41</sup>A. Metzinger, "Die Substitutionstheorie und das alttestamentliche Opfer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Lv. 17:11," Biblica 21 (1940), p. 271; quoted in ibid, p. 246-7.

instrumental meaning."<sup>42</sup> In addition to the philological problems, the beth essentiae interpretation does nothing to resolve the theological difficulties created also by the instrumental view. According to both interpretations:

It is in vs. 11c where we finally discover the reason for the expiatory power of the blood: it is life, not Yahweh! We are here extremely close to the realm of magic. The expiatory process, which supposedly has its origin in Yahweh,<sup>43</sup> is capable of self-fulfillment through the life in the blood.

Not only does this contradict what the rest of the Old Testament says about atonement as a gift and a work of Yahweh, but also "outside Lev. 17:11 nowhere is the expiatory power of the sacrifice, or of the blood, assigned to its life."<sup>44</sup>

In addition, according to both of these interpretations, verse 11c basically repeats verse 11a and verse 11b by telling us that "blood is life" and that "blood atones." But we already know that from those first two clauses. Clearly verse 11c wants to tell us something more, i.e., how the blood atones. The above interpretations fail to recognize this, and leave us with a redundant, almost non-sensical, reading of Lev. 17:11.

That leaves as the final grammatical possibility the rendering of ב as beth pretii, which expresses the idea of price: "For the blood makes atonement according to the value of life." This understanding of ב is supported grammatically by the following facts: it is a

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<sup>42</sup>Rodriguez, p. 247.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 248.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



variation of the beth instrumenti<sup>45</sup> and so it fits very well with the verb כפר; it is frequently used in governing the noun נפש (e.g. Num. 16:30 [MT 17:3]; Deut. 19:21; 2 Sam. 14:7; 23:17); it is often used in connection with כפר and related terms.<sup>46</sup> The only question concerns נפש: whose "life" is being spoken of here? Grammatical considerations weigh heavily against the interpretation that נפש here refers to the life of the animal. Since beth pretti is a variation of beth instrumenti, one would have to supply a pronominal suffix to get the proper sense ("the blood, according to the value of its [i.e., the animal's] life"). In similar passages, however, this suffix is supplied by the Biblical writer when that is what he had in mind (e.g. vs. 14a,b; cf. Gen. 9:4). Also, א when used with נפש in the Old Testament "always refers to human life."<sup>47</sup> If, therefore, נפש is understood as referring to human life, the translation would be as follows: "For the blood, in exchange for the person, makes atonement."<sup>48</sup>

In summarizing his exegesis of Lev. 17:11 Rodriguez calls into service a number of points which were defended earlier in his book. We cannot discuss but only mention them here. One is that in the Old Testament blood belongs to Yahweh. The blood put on the altar is given

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<sup>45</sup>Genesisius Hebrew Grammar ed. E. Kautzsch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, n.d.), p. 380; see also Rodriguez, p. 249.

<sup>46</sup>Rodriguez, p. 249. See also Ronald J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax: An Outline (University of Toronto Press, 1967), #246, as well as Gesenius' Grammar, p. 380.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, p. 250.

both by him and to him, and any expiatory value it may have has been assigned by him. Blood "is a means of grace through which God's grace reaches the sinner."<sup>49</sup> Another is that the blood in such cases has been designated as the "bearer of sin," so that "by returning the victim's blood to Yahweh through the altar the sinner is allowed to transfer his sin to the presence of the Lord, who only can control it."<sup>50</sup> Finally, then, and in the context of these sacrificial principles,

There is in Leviticus 17:11 an even greater insight that must be put into relief. Blood expiates not simply by being a vehicle through which sin is brought before Yahweh, but especially because it is accepted by Yahweh "in exchange for the person." When life as blood...returns to God the death of the creature is implied. Blood is life, but life returning to God and therefore removed from the creature. Yahweh, instead of taking back the life of the sinner, accepts in his place the blood-life<sup>51</sup> of the sacrificial victim "loaded" with the sin of the individual.

Further, since Lev. 17:11 speaks of sacrificial blood in general, "this verse could be used to explain how expiation is achieved in the bloody sacrifices."<sup>52</sup>

Yahweh in His great love for His people is willing to accept [the blood of the sacrificial victim] in place of the forfeited life of the sinner. The blood which is bearing the sin of the individual is accepted in exchange<sup>53</sup> for him. Expiation is achieved through sacrificial substitution.

There are some apparent weaknesses in Rodriguez's presentation. It must be pointed out, for example, that the Old Testament never

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p. 254-5.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, p. 255; cf. also pp. 123-142.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, p. 256.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, p. 257.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, p. 259.

speaks specifically of the blood as the "bearer" of sin; here Rodriguez goes beyond the witness of Scripture, seemingly in an over-zealous attempt to explain the "mechanics" of the expiatory event. The texts do not speak of the blood as "loaded" with the sin of the worshipper, nor do they speak of God as accepting the offering of "sin-blood" because only he can "control it." This explanation of Lev. 11 goes beyond the evidence given.

Another weakness of Rodriguez's work is his reluctance to speak of atonement in terms of "propitiation" (he always uses the term "expiation"), which occasionally results in some inconsistent argumentation. He speaks repeatedly, for example, of the sinner being "open to divine punishment,"<sup>54</sup> but in his clinching argument also says that sacrifice "does not have the purpose of appeasing Yahweh. It does not presuppose so much wrath but love."<sup>55</sup> Rodriguez's struggle with this seeming paradox between God's "wrath" and his "love" is apparently resolved a few sentences later: "If one wishes to speak of appeasement, one could only speak of Yahweh's prior self-appeasement."<sup>56</sup> This, of course, is the only sort of propitiation the Scriptures teach: Yahweh provides the means by which his own righteous wrath against sinful mankind is freely and graciously satisfied. It is impossible, from the standpoint of human reason or logic to eliminate or explain away this seeming contradiction between God's wrath and God's love. Apparently we are not meant to comprehend it and should therefore not attempt to

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid, p. 257.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, p. 260.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

investigate it (Ps. 131:1); it belongs to the "hidden things" of God (Is. 45:15; 55:8-9).<sup>57</sup>

On the whole, however, we find Rodriguez's work an exegetically sound and refreshingly thorough defense of the thesis that Lev. 17:11 ascribes atoning value to blood, not in the sense that blood itself contains some divine power or "life-force," but because Yahweh has ascribed atoning value to blood.<sup>58</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

Based on this work of Rodriguez (and the research of others, whose views on Lev. 17:11 and blood/sacrifice are summarized in the excursus which follows), we offer here the following summary, which represents our understanding of Lev. 17:11.

The וְ clause in verse 11a is meant to explain the prohibition against eating blood: 1) life is in the blood; 2) life belongs to Yahweh; 3) Yahweh gave the animal's blood to make atonement and not to be eaten. Verse 11b explains the significance of the blood: Yahweh

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<sup>57</sup> For a helpful discussion of what can be said in this area on the basis of the Old Testament evidence, see Paul R. Raabe, "The Two 'Faces' of Yahweh: Divine Wrath and Mercy in the Old Testament," pp. 283-310 in And Every Tongue Confess: Essays in Honor of Norman Nagel on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, edited by Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker (Chelsea, Michigan: Book Crafters, 1990).

<sup>58</sup> Incidentally, another strength of Rodriguez's work is that he pulls together a number of themes which are central to the Hebrew cultus--the "laying on of hands," the various types of sacrifice, the various sorts of blood-manipulation in each of the sacrifices--and shows, on the basis of the Old Testament evidence, how they are best viewed in the light of vicarious substitution. He also deals with several important sacrificial texts outside of Leviticus--Genesis 22, the sacrifice of Isaac; Exodus 12, the passover sacrifice; Isaiah 52-53, the fourth servant-song--and discusses their significance for the substitutional view of sacrificial atonement.

has given it to his people for the purpose of making atonement for their lives. Verse 11c (contra Milgrom and ancient versions) does not merely repeat verse 11b, nor does it repeat 11a (Metzinger and other contemporary schools). We already know that the blood atones from 11b, and that "blood is life" from 11a. 11c says more: it explains how the blood atones, שְׁפַחַת.

The שְׁפַחַת הַחַיָּה in 11a clearly refers to "the life of the animal's flesh," because according to 11b this is what "I have given you to be put upon the altar." 11a might be translated, "The blood is that which makes flesh alive;" חַיָּה here is *beth essentiae*. (We have almost the same phrase three verses later in Lev. 17:14a and c, which explicitly refer to the life of the animal.)

Verse 11b strongly emphasizes Yahweh's role as Giver and Forgiver in explaining the significance of the blood: "I have given it (the animal's blood)...to atone." This is not a matter of man's attempting to appease God, but of God graciously providing a means of atonement for man. "On the altar" establishes the specific place where atonement is to be made by means of the blood (providing a link to the blood-rite in Exodus 24:6).

The לְ in verse 11c is *beth pretii*, "in exchange for." This rendering makes the best sense both grammatically and theologically in light of both text and context. שְׁפַחַת here means "in exchange for the person;" שְׁפַחַת is used this way frequently in the Old Testament and several times in the immediate context (verses 10, 12, 13). The contrast is with verse 14a, where לְ is *beth essentiae* and שְׁפַחַת refers to the life of the animal; the suffix ("For the life of all

flesh is its blood as its life) indicates that this is animal life and not human life.

Thus Lev. 17:11 describes the means of atonement prescribed by Yahweh himself and given by him as a gift to sinful people who deserve to die. The life of a sacrificial animal is exchanged as a substitute for the life of the worshipper. Its blood, indicating life poured out in substitutionary death, is put on the altar and thus offered up to Yahweh in exchange for the forfeited life of the worshipper, who deserves to die because of his sin. The blood is a means of grace by which Yahweh, in his love, satisfies his holy anger against sinners and makes atonement for their sins.

#### Excursus on Substitutionary Atonement

In his review of literature on the subject of substitution in the Hebrew cultus,<sup>59</sup> Rodriguez indicates that prior to the twentieth century most Old Testament scholars (with notable exceptions)<sup>60</sup> accepted the substitutional view; "at the turn of the century," however, "more and more scholars became critical of this theory."<sup>61</sup> Rodriguez acknowledges that his work is somewhat motivated by the desire to give some needed balance to this field of contemporary study, since (as he believes) the Old Testament so clearly confesses the

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid, pp. 7-19.

<sup>60</sup>Among the exceptions Rodriguez lists (p. 7) Karl W. F. Bahr, Symbolik des Mosäischen Cultus (Heidelberg: J.C.B. Mohr, 1937-1939); Johann K. von Hofmann, Der Schriftbeweis (Nördlingen: C.H. Beck, 1859); Karl F. Keil, Handbuch der biblischen Archaologie (Frankfurt: Heyder & Zimmer, 1858).

<sup>61</sup>Rodriguez, p. 7.

substitutional view. We noted above that Rodriguez is not alone in his conviction that Lev. 17:11, and the sacrificial texts of the Old Testament in general, describes atonement as taking place through vicarious substitution. For the sake of completeness we offer here a brief excursus including a sampling of these supporting views.

In his commentary on Leviticus (specifically his discussion of 17:11) C.R. Eerdman says simply, "The life of a substitute must be given to make atonement... 'without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.'"<sup>62</sup> On the same verse N. P. Bratsiotis says: "The blood belongs to Yahweh and is reserved for him alone; he receives it as sacrificial blood, and in this way effects vicarious atonement for each cult participant, who otherwise would have to die because of his sin."<sup>63</sup> Also commenting on Lev. 17:11, J.E. Steinmueller says:

From this important text it follows that it is Yahweh alone a) who determines what sacrificial blood is (cf. also Lev. 17:12f); b) who specifies the ritual of sacrificial blood as a symbol of some higher truth; c) who accepts the life or sacrificial blood of an animal as a symbolic substitute for the life of a sinner and who thus acknowledges that he really deserves God's punishment for his sinful acts; d) who designates what the specific result of this sacrificial blood should be, namely, atonement; e) who indicates that not every blood flowing from the flesh effects this legal atonement, but only the blood<sup>64</sup> applied to the altar by His own selected ministers or priests.

After a survey of Old Testament sacrificial rituals L. Morris concludes: "When a sacrifice was offered we should see it as a killing of the animal in place of the worshipper and the manipulation of the blood as the ritual presentation to God of the evidence that a death

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<sup>62</sup>Eerdman, p. 81.

<sup>63</sup>N.P. Bratsiotis, "גֹּשֶׁם," TDOT 2:320.

<sup>64</sup>J.E. Steinmueller, p. 516-517.

has taken place to atone for sin."<sup>65</sup> G.L. Archer agrees: "The basic principle underlying all the blood sacrifices (zebahir) was atonement (kippur) by the substitution of an innocent life for the guilty."<sup>66</sup> G. Wenham finds the thought of substitution inherent in the very word כִּפֵּר, which (he argues) has the basic meaning "to pay a ransom."

In nonsacrificial texts kippur means to pay a ransom, so that a guilty person does not suffer the death penalty demanded by the law or God's holiness in particular situations. The ransom itself can be money, or the suffering of some other person, or even of animals who take the place of men (Num. 8:10-12).<sup>67</sup>

Wenham finds this meaning of כִּפֵּר also in Lev. 17:11:

This seems to be what Lev. 17:11 has in view. "I have given the blood to make atonement (lit. "to ransom") for your lives, for the blood makes atonement (ransoms) at the price of a life." It is this interpretation that seems to fit the burnt offering best. God in his mercy allowed sinful man to offer a ransom payment for his sins, so that he escaped the death penalty that his iniquities merit.<sup>68</sup>

Wenham's view adds support to Rodriguez's defense of a beth pretii rendering of כִּפֵּר in Lev. 17:11c (p. 181 above). Others (I. D. Kidner, R. K. Harrison, A. Noordtzij) buttress Rodriguez's arguments that Lev. 17:11 rejects the notion of blood as the bearer of supernatural "life" and that the laying on of hands has substitutionary significance in the sacrificial ritual.<sup>69</sup> Kidner writes:

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<sup>65</sup>L. Morris, *The Atonement*, p. 62.

<sup>66</sup>Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), p. 243.

<sup>67</sup>Wenham, p. 61.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>For Rodriguez's view of the "laying on of hands" see pp. 193-232 of his work.



The blood...signified not life but the violent death, or execution, of the victim. When we take this fact in conjunction with two others, first that the victim, by the imposition of the offerer's hand, stood for the offerer, and secondly that the effect of the sacrifice by itself was the securing of atonement, the simplest interpretation is that the victim bore<sup>70</sup> the judgment of God on the offerer's sin. It was his substitute.

R. K. Harrison:

Over the last century some writers have interpreted passages such as Genesis 9:4, Lev. 17:11 and Deut. 12:33 to imply that life somehow subsisted in the blood, and remained there when the animal was sacrificed. The offering of blood, therefore, was in fact an indication that life had been released in order to be offered to God. By contrast, the extent to which blood was linked with death in the Old Testament has led other writers to think of blood as meaning life given up in death. In view of the consistent Old Testament tradition that sin was a most serious matter in God's sight, and merited the most drastic punishment, it is difficult to see how the slain sacrifices could be interpreted in any other than penal terms, with the animal acting as a substitute for the sinner. As though that were insufficient, the sacrificial procedures mention the death of the victim frequently, while remaining silent about its life. Shed blood constituted visible evidence that life had indeed been offered up in sacrifice. In order to set in proper perspective the notion of life subsisting in the blood, it is worthy of note that the correct translation of Lev. 17:11 is 'the life of the flesh is the blood' [cf. Rodriguez's *beth essentiae*]. Only as atonement is linked with death, represented by shed blood, and not life set free,<sup>71</sup> would it appear to become efficacious in the covering of human sin.

A. Noordt zij offers the following summary, and although he speaks of ψ91 as "soul" it is obvious that he understands it not as some "metaphysical entity" which retained its existence apart from the body, but rather as the very "life-essence" which in death is given up to God:

It appears from Numbers 8:10,12; 27:18,23 and Deut. 34:9 that the purpose of the laying on of hands was nothing other than to transfer the spiritual qualities of the performer to the recipient

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<sup>70</sup>F. D. Kidner, Sacrifice in the Old Testament (London: Tyndale, 1951), p. 25.

<sup>71</sup>R.K. Harrison, Leviticus, p. 182.

of the act. In the assumption of office, the successor thereby was given what had constituted the official being of his predecessor. Through this act, therefore, the sacrificial animal received that which had induced the person to present it as an offering, viz., his impurity and sin. The laying on of hands in a sense made the animal into the successor of the person who presented it. It came to stand in his place, so that when the life or "soul" of the sacrificial animal was poured out, it was just as if the soul of the person who brought it departed from him and likewise died away. The idea that comes to expression is thus that of substitution (see Lev. 16:21-22; 24:14). Since the sacrificial animal was burdened with that which had aroused the Lord's anger (i.e., the resistance of His holy nature to everything that was contrary to it) and thus led the Israelite to present it as a burnt offering, the relationship of this individual to the God of the covenant was transformed. The Lord's anger made way for His favor, along with everything that accompanied this, and the presenting of the animal to which the person's sinful spiritual qualities had been transferred thus made atonement for him.<sup>72</sup>

We offer one final summary from German scholar Klaus Koch, who also reminds us that all of these Levitical prescriptions for sacrifice were first given at Sinai, and thus have their point of origin in the covenant ratified in Ex. 24:

Durch seine am Sinai erlassenen Weisungen hat JHWH in weiser Voraussicht menschlicher Sündhaftigkeit dafür gesorgt, dass ein israelitischer Sünder hinfert seine Sündensphäre am Heiligtum loswerden kann (v<sup>e</sup>hēbhî eth- 'ashāmô 'asher chāṭā', Lev. 5:7). Der Betroffene kommt mit einem seiner Haustiere, mit Rind, Schaf, Ziege oder Taube, zum Heiligtum. Dort wird durch die Darbringung in der wirksamen Gegenwart JHWHs das Tier im wörtlichen Sinne zur Sünde, d.h. die chāṭā'th-Sphäre konzentriert sich auf ihm und wird gleichsam Fleisch in einem tierischen Wesen ('al chāṭā'th wird das Tier lechāṭā'th; vgl. Lev 4,28 mit v.3). Durch Handaufstimmung, wozu gegebenenfalls ein Sündenbekenntnis tritt (Lev.5,5; Num.5,6f.), wird der Akt der Übertragung sinnfällig (Lev 16,21). Im Auftrag JHWHs schlachtet der Priester das Tier. Das dabei gewonnene Blut wird teils durch Bespritzung (nāzāh hiphil) über heilige Gegenstände (meist sind es die Altarhörner, je schwerer das Vergehen, desto näher ist jedoch das Blut an die Lade im Allerheiligsten heranzubringen, vgl. Lev 4,6;16) und durch Ausschüttung (shāphakh) an den Altarsockel zum Verschwinden gebracht. Damit ist der Tod des Sündentieres stellvertretend für den menschlichen Eigentümer vollendet. Dem Sünder wird nunmehr Vergebung zuteil (sālach). Denn sein Lebenszentrum (nephesh) ist

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<sup>72</sup>A. Noordtzij, Leviticus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 33.

entsühnt (kpr) "weg von seiner bisherigen chattā'th-Sphäre" (mēchattā'tho, Lev 4,26; 5,6. 10). Gesühnt wurde "über" ("wegen?") seiner chattā'th, in der er gesündigt hatte ('al chattā'thō 'asher chātā, Lev 4,35; 7<sup>5</sup>, 13); denn das Sündigen geschah "über der nephesh" (Num 6,11).<sup>73</sup>

Although each of the scholars cited above has their own unique ideas about sacrifice and blood and atonement in the Old Testament (each would by no means agree with the others in every detail, nor would we agree with each of these scholars in all aspects of their respective views), they all share one common conviction: each believes that in the Old Testament atonement was accomplished by Yahweh through the provision of a sacrificial offering in which the animal served as a vicarious substitute for the guilty person. The animal was killed and thus his life-blood was returned to God in exchange for the sinful man, who was thereby forgiven and enabled to receive the blessings of Yahweh's presence. Further, many of these same scholars find Leviticus 17:11 a primary text for supporting such a view of sacrificial atonement through substitutionary death.<sup>74</sup>

#### Excursus on לֶחֶם

Throughout our discussion of the covenant sacrifices and blood and of Leviticus 17:11 (with a view toward its application on the

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<sup>73</sup>We cite from the original here for the sake of clarity. See K. Koch, "לֶחֶם," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, volumes 1-6, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970-), 2:867.

<sup>74</sup>It is worth noting that a substitutionary understanding of Lev. 17:11 also accords with the LXX's rendering of that text (τὸ ἄρτον αἵμα αὐτοῦ ἀντὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξέλσσεται), which came under heavy attack in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a mistranslation and misinterpretation of the MT. See Rodriguez, pp. 11-19, 251-260.

splashing of the blood on the altar in Exodus 24:6) we have repeatedly encountered and made use of the term כַּפַּר, which we have translated "to make atonement." Because this is such a critical term within the context of Old Testament sacrificial theology and within the context of our own study, it may be helpful to clarify the meaning of this term by offering an excursus surveying its use in the Old Testament. As we go about this task, we bear in mind that this term has generated a great deal of discussion and debate, and all we can hope to accomplish here is a general overview of its major lines of movement in the Old Testament, especially in cultic-related contexts.<sup>75</sup>

### Etymology

As a cultic term כַּפַּר is used exclusively in the piel; a rare qal usage occurs in Gen. 6:14 (the building of Noah's ark) where it means "to cover with pitch." However, "the question of the etymological meaning of the Hebrew root khphr is obscure."<sup>76</sup> Milgrom gives as the etymological choices an Arabic root meaning "to cover" (cf. Gen. 6:14) and an Akkadian root meaning "to wipe." "Since a substance may either be 'rubbed on' or 'rubbed off,' the derived meanings 'wipe' and 'cover' may be complementary and not

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<sup>75</sup>Rodriguez says, for example, "the meaning of the term kpr is a very controversial one and any conclusion based on its supposed meaning is at best a very tentative one" (p. 2). "This term," he says, "should be the subject of another dissertation" (p. 6). In Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), Jacob Milgrom says: "As for the root kpr, nothing less than a monograph would do it justice." Unfortunately, he notes, "no adequate treatment is yet available" (p. 98).

<sup>76</sup>Robertson Smith, The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, is credited with this quotation (no page number given) in J. Herrmann's article on "ἱλαστικόν," TDNT 3:302.

contradictory."<sup>77</sup> Wenham reports that the theory of the Arabic root ("to cover") has lost the favor of most scholars and "has little to commend it." He suggests as a second alternative a root meaning "to pay a ransom," from the noun כִּפָּר."<sup>78</sup>

### Usage and Syntax

In his article on "Atonement in the Old Testament," J. Milgrom distinguishes between several possible meanings of כִּפָּר according to Old Testament usage and syntax. Noteworthy for our purposes is the distinction between כִּפָּר used with אֶת and a neutral object, and כִּפָּר used with בְּנֶפֶשׁ/בְּחַיִּים when the object is a person. In the former case, Milgrom convincingly demonstrates, כִּפָּר means "to purge" or "to cleanse," as in Lev. 16:14-20 where the priest uses blood to cleanse the altar and sanctuary of sin on the Day of Atonement. In the latter case, however, כִּפָּר has the meaning "to atone for" in the sense of a "ransom" or substitute offered up in the worshipper's place to atone for his sins. Leviticus 17:11 is noted by Milgrom as a key example of this idiom.<sup>79</sup>

### כִּפָּר, Sin, Holiness

Regardless of the etymology chosen for כִּפָּר, and no matter how it is used in the Old Testament, there is always implicit in the term the presupposition that there is some negative, unwelcome, unhealthy "thing" that needs to be "wiped away" or "covered" or "paid for" by

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<sup>77</sup>J. Milgrom, "Atonement in the Old Testament," IDBS, p. 78.

<sup>78</sup>Wenham, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup>J. Milgrom, pp. 78-82.

ransom. The Old Testament calls this thing "sin."<sup>80</sup> Sin has consequences, not only coram mundo but more importantly coram deo:

For the Hebrew, there was an obvious connection between an action and its consequences. Therefore chatta'th means not only the evil deed, but also the associated consequences...It is clear that chatta'th and maveth go together (Ex. 10:17). Whoever surrounds himself with chatta'th must necessarily die...Such sin not only remains invisibly associated with the sinner on earth, pregnant with disaster; it is also...visible in the sight of Yahweh (1 S. 2:17), arousing his anger (1 K. 8:46) and provoking Yahweh's personal reaction against the sinner, called paqadh, "visit, punish" (Ex. 32:34; Hos. 8:13; 9:9). Whenever chatta'th is used, there is always more involved than the consequences of the deed upon the doer; a further divine intervention is also expected.<sup>81</sup>

Atonement is necessary only because of the reality and the consequences of sin. Thus, for example, after the golden-calf apostasy, Moses says to the people: "You have sinned a great sin (חטאתם חטאת גדלה). And now I will go up to Yahweh; perhaps I can make atonement (כפר) for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). The reason given for making atonement in Lev. 16:16 is "because of the uncleanness (טמא) of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions (פשע), all their sins (חטאת)..." The term "uncleanness" shows that in the Old Testament sin also had a physical dimension; its corrupting power was somehow responsible even for the many diseases and bodily unpleasanties which afflicted man and woman.

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<sup>80</sup>The Old Testament uses a number of terms to describe "sinful" condition or behavior, each with its own nuance of meaning: רע ("iniquity"), פשע ("transgression"), אשם ("guilt"), רע ("evil"), טמא ("unclean"). By far the most common term for sin, however, is חטאת, which appears frequently as a verb and in six nominal forms. According to K. Koch, חטאת "means to commit an offense against someone with whom one stands in an institutionalized community relationship...It is noteworthy that God himself is usually the victim." K. Koch, "חטאת," TDOT 4:311.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, p. 312.

Thus in many cases such physical "uncleanness" also required atonement (see e.g., Leviticus 15, 17).

If the reality of sin explains the need for atonement, then we need to go back yet one step further to explain why sin carries with it such serious consequences. Before sin entered the world, before man ever existed, there was God, the God whom Isaiah calls (30 times) "the Holy One of Israel." Again, if man's nature after the fall of Adam is best summarized by the word "sin," then God's nature is best summarized by the word "holiness," שְׁטֵט. "'Holiness' is about as close as the Old Testament ever comes to describing God's 'nature' or aseity."<sup>82</sup> From the perspective of sinful man, "the original sense [of שְׁטֵט] is a negative one... 'Holiness' is in the first instance not what a god is, but it teaches what ought not be done to a god, that is, to come too familiarly near. 'Unapproachability' would best express it."<sup>83</sup> Anyone or anything not endowed with that same holiness is by nature endangered by the presence of the holy God. "In the holiness of God there is the deathdealing element which must destroy uncleanness."<sup>84</sup> One of the most vivid illustrations of the holiness of God and its consequences for sinful man is found in Isaiah 6 (שְׁטֵט is a major theme of the entire book):

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw Yahweh sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his

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<sup>82</sup>H. Hummel, "Justification in the Old Testament," Concordia Journal 9 (1983), p. 16.

<sup>83</sup>Geerhardus Vos, Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), p. 246.

<sup>84</sup>O. Procksch, "שְׁטֵט," TDNT 1:93.

face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh S'baath; the whole earth is filled with his glory." And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh S'baath! (verses 1-5)

In the verses which follow we come face to face with the most inexplicable and yet the most wonderful fact of Scripture. The same God whose holiness threatens to punish and destroy sinful man provides--as a free gift of grace--the means by which man can be spared and delivered.

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven. (verses 6-7)

Commenting on this pericope in Isaiah Otto Procksch says:

Atonement (כִּפּוּר) is needed; the thought of it occurs here in the setting of the holy. To be sure, atonement is always implicitly demanded where there is question of the cultic encounter of man with the holy God. But here the atonement does not come from man's side by the offering of sacrifice. It comes from God's side, God effecting it through the seraph by means of a coal from the altar used as a holy means.<sup>85</sup>

As helpful as Procksch's words are in identifying the presence of the atonement theme in the Isaiah 6 pericope and the manner in which such atonement was effected, they also betray the rather common bias that in the case of Old Testament sacrifice atonement came "from man's side," not from God's. Is such a view consistent with what the Old Testament says about sacrificial atonement? To answer this question we might begin with Exodus 19, where Israel has an encounter with Yahweh similar to that described in Isaiah 6. Here, too, the Holy One of

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid, p. 93.



Israel makes his appearance, accompanied by thundering noise and the quaking of foundations and billowing smoke (Ex. 19:16-19). Here, too, the "deathdealing" consequences of Yahweh's holiness are spelled out: no "uncleanliness" will be tolerated, and anyone or anything that touches the mountain made holy by Yahweh's presence must die (19:10-15; 21-24). Here, too, we find Isaiah's "woe is me!": "Let not God speak with us, lest we die!" (20:19).

But in the verses which immediately follow (20:21-26), we also see--as in Isaiah 6--the intervention of a solution, the provision of a means of atonement. And it comes not from man's side, but from God's: "An altar of earth you will make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and peace offerings...in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you" (verse 24). Certainly, in order to receive the blessing of this advent Moses had to carry out these simple instructions of Yahweh--he had to build the altar, he had to offer the sacrifices. But in doing these things he was not attempting to procure atonement "from his side;" he was merely doing what Yahweh had told him to do in order that the gift of Yahweh's presence and blessing might be given "from Yahweh's side"--and given to all of Israel. H. Ringgren comments on the "giftness" of Old Testament sacrifice:

In the Old Testament [sacrifices] are not regarded...as a meritorious performance by man. Rather they are a God-given institution to provide for man's right relationship to God, and for his redemption from the evil forces that threaten his...existence. Sacrifice is a divine institution to permit man to approach God and to enjoy fellowship with him.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>H. Ringgren, *Sacrifice in the Bible* (London: Lutherworth Press: 1962), pp. 39-40.

The book of Leviticus presents the same view of sacrifice and sacrificial atonement. Here, too, the demand for holiness is explicit: "You shall be holy even as I, Yahweh, your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Here, too, is the "lest you die" (cf. Lev. 8:35), the deadly consequence of approaching God in an "unholy" state or manner (cf. Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu). Yet here, too, is the provision of atonement, made available through sacrifice to deliver man from the consequences of his sin. Leviticus 16, which is presented as a commentary on the death of Nadab and Abihu (chapter 10), speaks of כַּפֵּר more frequently (15 times) than any other chapter in Leviticus, more than any other book in the Old Testament. Yahweh is obviously deeply concerned that what happened to Nadab and Abihu does not happen again. His desire is not to destroy but to save! So he emphasizes again and again the need to have atonement made before entering the "holy place" of Yahweh's appearance (16:1-3).

Yahweh's conduct toward the sinner is primarily motivated by the desire to remove the sphere of calamity from the sinner. God's will for the Israelite is salvation and well-being. This purpose is accomplished through rites meant to kpr or slh ["forgive"] (Ex. 32:30; 34:9; 1 K. 8:34,36,50; Jer. 36:3; 2 Ch. 6:25,27). By their means, he causes chatta'th to pass by the sinner ('abhar, 2 S. 12:13; 24:10) or to turn aside from him (sur, Ex. 10:17).<sup>87</sup>

As we have already discussed in the text of the paper (and will discuss further), the "atonement" or "forgiveness" which Koch mentions above was accomplished primarily by means of the sacrificial blood.

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<sup>87</sup>K. Koch, p. 313.

קָרַבַּן, Expiation, Propitiation

In his article on the Old Testament background of the Greek word *ἱλασμομα* (i.e., the term קָרַבַּן), J. Herrmann supplies a helpful summary which pulls together many of themes discussed above in relation to קָרַבַּן:

When we assemble all the material on cultic expiation in P, it is easy to discern a single religious concern. In the community of Yahweh nothing which needs to be expiated is to be left unexpiated. Through cultic ordinances Yahweh Himself has provided for the possibility of expiating what needs to be expiated. Within the community, the disturbed relationship between God and the community can always be restored, both on a small scale and on a great, by the fulfillment of the laws of expiation which Yahweh Himself has given.

Anything affected by sin or uncleanness needs expiation. It cannot stand before the holy God. The destructive reaction of God, with its mortal threat, is provoked against that which needs expiation and is not expiation. Expiation is effected supremely by sprinkling or marking with the blood of animals. Yahweh has provided and ordained blood as a means of atonement. The material has shown us again and again that the life of man is threatened if expiation is not made, and<sup>88</sup> that it is preserved if forgiveness is secured through expiation.

These words from Herrmann give reason to touch on another debate related to the study of קָרַבַּן, viz. the question of "expiation" vs. "propitiation." When the two terms are used contrastively (they are not infrequently used synonymously), the former is normally meant to express the "cleansing" or "purging" or removal of sin/guilt/uncleanness from the sinner, while the latter ordinarily has reference to the appeasing or satisfying of a righteously wrathful and justly judgmental God. Some scholars feel very comfortable with atonement as

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<sup>88</sup>J. Herrmann, p. 310.

"expiation" but reject any "propitiatory" interpretation of כפר.<sup>89</sup> So, for example, C.L. Mitton writes: "Sacrifice...should probably be interpreted as an endeavor to expiate sin (i.e., remove the barrier it has raised against God) rather than to appease the anger of God toward man."<sup>90</sup> In view of our above survey of the biblical evidence, however, it should be clear that expiation and propitiation go hand in hand; they cannot be separated, and they cannot be set in opposition. The need for "expiation" is explained only by the reality of God's holiness, and by the wrath and judgment which must inevitably fall upon the sinner. If the reality of God's wrath is denied or its severity toned down, "expiation" (in the narrow sense) also becomes meaningless, a mere "concept." L. Morris puts it this way:

Unless we give a real content to the wrath of God, unless we hold that men really deserve to have God visit upon them the painful consequences of their wrongdoing, we empty God's forgiveness of its meaning. For if there is no ill desert, God ought to overlook sin. We can think of forgiveness as something real only when we hold that sin has betrayed us into a situation where we deserve to have God inflict upon us the most serious consequences. There is no room for grace<sup>91</sup> if there is no suggestion of dire consequences merited by sin.

We can only justifiably "give a real content to the wrath of God," of course, if we are given this "content" by Scripture itself; and the evidence of Scripture is clear and abundant on this point.

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<sup>89</sup>H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), mentions C. H. Dodd and S. R. Driver as examples of "evangelical" scholars who try to eliminate "propitiation" from Biblical thought (p. 85). We will encounter others along the way.

<sup>90</sup>C. L. Mitton, "Atonement" IDB 1:310.

<sup>91</sup>Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross [hereafter Apostolic Preaching] (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 3rd edition, 1965), pp. 212-213.

Time and again we hear of the wrath of God, the consequences of sin, the threat of mortal danger for sinners who enter into his holy presence. The Biblical evidence for the essential unity of expiation and propitiation is summarized succinctly in Psalm 85:2-3:

Thou didst forgive the iniquity of thy people; thou didst pardon  
all their sin;  
Thou didst withdraw all thy wrath; thou didst turn from thy hot  
anger.

God "turns from his anger" and "forgives sinners"; this is "atonement," both expiation and propitiation.

There is, of course, a perverse, pagan idea of propitiation in which man, by his own gifts, works or dealings, tries to placate the wrath of a capricious and/or reciprocative deity. Although Israel's history reveals that under pagan influences she did, at times, become prey to such views of sacrifice, this is never the picture of propitiation given by the Old Testament itself. "Yahweh is not propitiated by man's merit, as in paganism, but by his own substitutionary designation of the sacrifices as a means of satisfying his wrath."<sup>92</sup> Perhaps the reason some scholars feel so uncomfortable with "propitiation" is that they interpret Old Testament sacrifice more in the light of pagan parallels than in the light of Biblical theology. When sacrifice is seen as the Old Testament portrays it, as above all gift of God, then there can be no question of a propitiation which is demanded and actually achieved "from man's side," by means of his own works, gifts, or efforts. Thus "'propitiation' must be included in the concept and translation of k-ph-r as well as

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<sup>92</sup>Hummel, "Justification in the Old Testament," p. 17.

'expiation.'" When viewed in the light of Old Testament theology, "'expiation' and 'propitiation' become virtual synonyms, but both are likely to be misunderstood without the corrective emphasis supplied by the other."<sup>93</sup>

Pagan propitiation, incidentally, worked with the idea that sacrifice functioned in a "magical" way, ex opera operato. Thus sacrifice was really an attempt to "control" or "manipulate" the gods by humanly-devised means which were "guaranteed" to work by virtue of the work itself. There are harsh and plenteous warnings in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16-17; Is. 1:11-17, etc.) against such pagan ideas. Yahweh could not be "manipulated" by man and his own devisings. Sacrifice was a gift of Yahweh, and benefitted his people only as they recognized its character as gift. The receiving of this gift presupposed a realization on the part of man of his utter dependence on Yahweh for grace, his need to be given to. This is what the Bible elsewhere calls "repentance." No sacrifice at all would be better than a sacrifice offered without a recognition of its character as gift, without a recognition of the grace of the Giver, without a recognition of the sin of the one to whom such grace was freely given:

For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (Ps. 51:16-17)

Rightly viewed as gift and means of grace for broken-hearted sinners, however, the sacrifices which Yahweh had given truly effected atonement--expiation, propitiation, forgiveness, cleansing. The term

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<sup>93</sup>Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh, p. 85.

"forgiveness" (נָסַח) is used repeatedly in Leviticus as a synonym of כַּפַּר, or at least as a correlative (Lev. 4:20,26,31,35; 5:10,13,16,18; 6:7; 19:22; etc.). The cleansing aspect of כַּפַּר was referred to earlier (above pp. 189-190). If the stated purpose of sacrifice and sacrificial blood was to atone, forgive, cleanse, then the stated result of such atonement was "sanctification" or "consecration" (וְקִדְּשׁ-vocabulary). Through the sacrificial blood which Yahweh himself had "given" and appointed to be used upon the altar, priests and people alike were "sanctified," reckoned as "holy" by Yahweh, and thus enabled to enter into his holy presence. The demand, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am Yahweh your God" (Lev. 20:7) was thus satisfied by Yahweh himself: "I am Yahweh who sanctifies you" (Lev. 20:8). Yahweh demanded holiness and Yahweh provided holiness by means of atonement through the sacrificial blood (cf. also Lev. 8:10-30; 21:8,15,23; 22:9,16). Declared holy by this means, the people were made ready by Yahweh himself to stand in his glorious presence. "This is the thing [viz., the offering of sacrifices and of blood] which Yahweh has appointed (צִוָּה) for you to do; then the glory of Yahweh (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) will appear among you" (Lev. 9:6). If "holiness" is the word for God's essential "nature," then "glory" (כְּבוֹד) is the word for his "real presence" among his people; glory is holiness revealed.<sup>94</sup> Yahweh's greatest desire is to reveal himself in glory to his people, to make his "real presence" manifest among them, to communicate the blessings of that glory-presence to them, to dwell continuously in their midst in the tabernacle/temple.

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<sup>94</sup>See Hummel, "Justification in the Old Testament," p. 16.

There [at the door of the tent of meeting] I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; and I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; for I am Yahweh their God. (Ex. 29:43-46)

This desire and promise Yahweh fulfilled through the gift of atonement, and the gift of atonement he gave in the blood upon the altar (Lev. 17:11).

#### Application of Lev. 17:11 to Exodus 24:6

On the basis of the data from the text of Lev. 17:11 and other sacrificial texts, it seems justifiable to apply these findings to the blood rite of Ex. 24:5. Even those who would argue that the words of Lev. 17:11 cannot be applied to sacrificial blood in general are obliged by the text to acknowledge that these words at least have reference to the blood of the burnt offerings and peace offerings, since both these sacrifices are explicitly mentioned in this context. It is just these sacrifices--the עֹלֹת and the שְׁלָמִים--which were designated by Yahweh to ratify the covenant at Sinai, and the blood rite of Ex. 24:5 is identical with that regularly prescribed for these offerings in the book of Leviticus. By splashing the sacrificial blood on the altar in Ex. 24:5, therefore, Moses (as divinely appointed mediator between Yahweh and the people) effected atonement for the worshippers, in this case the whole people of Israel. This atonement was accomplished (on the basis of Yahweh's own word and gracious will) by vicarious substitution; the sacrificial animals were killed in exchange for the people who deserved to die because of their sin and



uncleanness. That the people were, in fact, sinful and unclean and thus unfit and unable to enter safely into Yahweh's holy presence was powerfully demonstrated to them by the events of Exodus 19. Now, through substitutionary sacrifice, their sins are atoned for and Yahweh's wrath is satisfied. The blood splashed upon the altar, far from containing some inherent "life-force," is sure and visible evidence that a substitutionary death has taken place and that atonement has been secured. Life-blood has been shed, it is poured out on the altar and offered up to God in exchange for the lives of the people he has chosen to save. Sacrificial victims have died so that God's people may live. Satisfaction has been made. Atonement has been secured. Sins have been forgiven. Wrath has given way to grace. Death has resulted in life.

The blood is both proof and means of this grace and this life. It is proof that the people deserved to die, proof that a substitute has died in their place, and proof that Yahweh has accepted its blood in exchange for their lives. But it is also means of grace, since not just the "accepting" of the blood is from Yahweh, but also the giving of the blood: "For the life of the flesh is its blood; and I have given ( ךִּנְיִן ) it to you upon the altar to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood, in exchange for the life, which makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11). By means of the blood, Yahweh has accomplished and guaranteed the life and salvation of his people.

Thus saved and forgiven, the people are qualified--by the gift and work of Yahweh, not by their gift or work--to enter into Yahweh's presence, to dwell in Yahweh's presence, to receive all the blessings

that flow from the coming of Yahweh to dwell among his people. For this purpose the gift of atonement was given, as Yahweh chooses to illustrate by calling the representatives of Israel to worship him on the mountain, and revealing himself to them in a unique and glorious way (verses 9-11 of Exodus 24). With the mention of Ex. 24:9-11, however, we are getting ahead of ourselves, since we have yet to consider the second blood rite of the covenant ratification, the unparalleled קָרַח-rite of Ex. 24:8. To that text and event we now turn.

### Blood on the People

#### The Confession of Faith

Following the altar-splashing of 24:6, with all of its above-discussed implications, Moses "took the book of the covenant and preached aloud (קָרַח) into the ears of the people; and they responded, 'All that Yahweh has spoken we will do and we will obey" (verse 7). The contents and significance of the "book of the covenant" (the סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית of Yahweh) and the nature and context of the response of the people were discussed above (pp. 112-138); everything that was said there applies also here. At the heart of the book of the covenant is a word of divine election and redemption. If, as most scholars hold, the contents of the book of the covenant begin with what is recorded for us in Exodus 20, then the first words out of Moses' mouth after the blood rite of verse 6 were these: "[Thus says Yahweh:] I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (20:1). The first word of the book of the covenant is a word

of gracious choice and gracious deliverance; everything else flows from this, and is sure to be misunderstood apart from it. The words which follow (20:2-17; most probably also chapters 21-23) describe the new life which the newly redeemed and newly forgiven (cf. 24:6!) people of Yahweh are given to live, and can now live. These same words will also serve as a constant reminder of their need for atonement and forgiveness, and so will call them back constantly to their covenant-God, who in his unfailing mercy provides for them a way (cf. Leviticus) to be given atonement and forgiveness on an ongoing basis. Thus, in the light of Yahweh's gracious redemption and forgiveness, even the "law-content" of the book of the covenant will be seen as a gift of grace. Moved by the gracious power of this word and this blood, both gifts from Yahweh, the people make their acclamation, their confession, their affirmation. The covenant does not stand or fall on the basis of this acclamation; it is Yahweh's covenant, and it stands or falls on the basis of his words, his actions, his gifts. Therefore it will stand (cf. Lev. 26:40-45; Psalm 78, etc.). The confession of the people shows that they want it to stand now for them. That confession will often waver; it will at times turn into a lip-confession only; it will at times apparently be silenced altogether. The covenant is not thereby destroyed. Yet Yahweh delights in sincere confession, and if this confession is sincere (only Yahweh can judge) it is further testimony to the effectiveness of Yahweh's means of grace, and as such magnifies his name and glory. In no way, therefore, does verse 7 lessen or contradict the grace that is manifested in the blood rite of

verse 6. It is gracious word upon gracious blood, and now, with verse 8, gracious blood once again.

#### Uniqueness of this Event

This blood is the same blood, of course: it is the "one blood" of the peace offerings and burnt offerings which Moses divided earlier for purely practical reasons, reasons which come to light in the blood rites of verses 6 and 8. Verse 8 says, "Moses took the blood and splashed it on the people and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words.'" We noted earlier with help from S. Aalen (p. 157 above) the "Einmaligkeit" of this event in the Old Testament. Nowhere else in the entire Old Testament do we read of sacrificial blood being "splashed" or "thrown" (פָּרַט) on anyone, much less in this sort of "indiscriminate" manner.<sup>95</sup> Because there are no true parallels to

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<sup>95</sup> Here again (as with the dividing of the blood) one of the most interesting ways to illustrate the uniqueness of this event is to see what the rabbis had to say about it. This evidence has been collected by Strack (v. I, pp. 990-992) and Billerbeck, and is taken up by several other scholars such as Gustaf Dalman (Gustaf Dalman, Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels, translated by Paul Levertoff [New York: MacMillan, 1929], pp. 165-170) and Sverre Aalen (p. 149-150). Aalen summarizes the "Unbehagen" which the rabbis felt generally regarding this text. First, he says, the text itself (Ex. 24:8) was passed over completely more often than not: "was seinem Platz in der alttestamentlichen Heilsgeschichte nicht gerecht zu werden scheint." Second, the "blood of the covenant" is almost universally interpreted as the blood of circumcision, "worin man eine deutliche Abwertung des Textes sehen kann." Third, the rabbis are offended at the role of the "young men" in the text (v. 5); in this connection Aalen refers to the interpretation of Targum Onkelos which we noted earlier (p. 143 above). Fourth, the "sprinkling" (Besprengung) of the people is often completely removed from the text. Thus, according to Strack-Billerbeck, both Targum Onkelos and Targum Jerusalem I "übersetzt nicht: 'Mose schwenkte das Blut auf das Volk,' sondern: 'Mose nahm das Blut and sprengte es auf den Altar, um für das Volk Sühnung zu schaffen.'" It is worth noting, however, that the Judaistic scholars

what happens here, whatever is said must be said suggestively and not dogmatically or authoritatively. Here even more than with verse 6 it is easier to critique the views of others than to offer an alternative view. Nevertheless, some evaluation of representative views of this text is in order. As with verse 6, interpretations of verse 8 fall into two major categories: those which derive their cogency mainly from religionsgeschichtliche evidence and those which are built primarily on evidence from the Old Testament itself.

#### Various Interpretations (and Evaluation)

##### Self-Imprecation

Of those interpretations which rely mainly on historical parallels, there are two main schools of thought. The first and less frequently attested may claim as its foremost contemporary spokesman Ernst Kutsch,<sup>96</sup> who offers his view of this text in an article called

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do here show that they understood this event in terms of expiation/propitiation (Sühnung). What they could not bear was the idea that the atoning blood actually came into physical contact with the people. Finally, according to Aalen, the rabbis (like many contemporary critical scholars!) severed the meal of vv. 9-11 from the covenant ratification of vv. 3-8 as if there were no connection between the two. Aalen concludes:

Wie man sieht, wollen die Targumisten weder vom Besprengen des Volkes noch vom Opfermahl bei der Bundesstiftung in Exod. xxiv etwas wissen. Die direkte Berührung mit der heiligen Opfermaterie, die in diesen Akten einbeschlossen war, war ihnen zu viel, denn eine solche Berührung widerstrebt dem Wesen der jüdischen Opferanschauung.

<sup>96</sup>See fn. 19 of chapter 2, above.

"Das Sog. 'Bundesblut' in Ex. xxiv.8 und Sach. ix.11."<sup>97</sup> Kutsch finds analogies to the blood rite of v. 8 primarily in ancient Arabic literature, specifically in descriptions of rituals in which "covenanting" parties dip their hands in the blood of a sacrificial victim.<sup>98</sup> As an especially vivid example of such a rite, however, which Kutsch sees as intimately connected with the swearing of a sacred oath, he cites the following passage from Aeschylus's The Seven Against Thebes:

Denn sieben Männer, Feldherrn, wilden Kampfesmut,  
Den Stier zum Opfer schlachtend in den dunklen Schild,  
Und dann mit Stierblut jeder netzend seine Hand,  
Bei Ares, bei Enyo, bei des Schreckens Gott,  
Dem blutgen Phobos, schwuren sie den Fall der Stadt,  
Sie wollten Kadmos' Feste tilgen mit Gewalt,  
Oder sterbend selbst, mit Blut begiessen unser Land.<sup>99</sup>

According to Kutsch there are clear parallels between what is going on here and in Ex. 24:8. In both cases the parties to the covenant place themselves under solemn oath; in both passages the blood of sacrificial victims is placed into containers and then makes contact with the body. The only differences Kutsch discerns is that in the Aeschylus passage the warriors impose the solemn oath upon themselves (he calls this a Selbstverpflichtung), while in Exodus the obligation is placed upon the people by Yahweh through Moses (a Fremdverpflichtung). In both cases, however, the penalty for breaking the oath is that the blood of the guilty person be shed in the same way

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<sup>97</sup>E. Kutsch, "Das Sog. 'Bundesblut' in Ex. 24:8 und Sach. 9:11," Vetus Testamentum 23 (1973), pp. 25-30. See also Kutsch's book Verheissung und Gesetz (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), pp. 85-95.

<sup>98</sup>Kutsch, "Das Sog. 'Bundesblut,'" pp. 26-27.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

as the covenant-blood of the sacrificial victim (which sealed the oath) was shed. The rites are therefore self-imprecatory. The pledging parties call down a moral curse upon themselves if they should ever break their oath. In Exodus 24, says Kutsch, Israel alone--and not Yahweh--is placed under this oath by compulsion from Yahweh. The blood splashed upon them in verse 8 foreshadows their awful fate if they should fail to live up to the solemn oath, which for Kutsch is really the proprium of this covenant: "All that Yahweh has spoken, we will do and we will obey" (verse 7).<sup>100</sup>

Wenn in Ex. xxiv 8 in solchem Zusammenhang das auf das Volk gesprengte Blut als dam habb<sup>e</sup>rit bezeichnet wird, so ist b<sup>e</sup>rit hier wie sonst im Sinne von "Verpflichtung" verstanden, die Wendung meint also: "Blut der Verpflichtung."<sup>101</sup>

While Kutsch's interpretation of Ex. 24:8 is relatively unique, there are others who follow this line of thinking. B. Childs, for example, says:

On the one hand, the blood dashed on the altar in place of a sacrifice speaks of God's gracious forgiveness in accepting this as an offering. On the other hand, the blood scattered on the people binds them in a blood oath.<sup>102</sup>

First comes the "Gospel" in verse 6; then comes the "Law" in verse 8. Similarly A.C. Gaebelien describes the sealing of this covenant in almost fateful terms:

Twice the people make the promise to keep the covenant, not realizing what they were doing. Then the blood was sprinkled upon the altar, upon the book of the covenant (Heb. ix:19), and on the people. In this way the covenant was ratified. This sprinkling of

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid, p. 28-29.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>102</sup>B. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 506.

the blood here has not the meaning of atonement. It rather stands for the penalty of the broken covenant. The blood standing for life given, was a solemn warning that the penalty of disobedience would be death.<sup>103</sup>

In other words, far from being a blessing of God and a gift of his grace, the Sinai covenant was a threat and curse which could be escaped only by perfect obedience. It is noteworthy that one of the few rabbinical scholars to confront this text directly ends up with the same damning interpretation:

Wenn ein König seine Legionen schwören läßt, so laßt er sie nur beim Schwerte schwören, um damit zu sagen, daß, wenn einer die Vereinbarungen übertritt, das Schwert auf seinen Hals kommen soll.<sup>104</sup>

There are several major flaws in this imprecatory interpretation of Ex. 24:8. First, it ignores the abundant evidence in the book of Exodus which speaks of Yahweh's purpose in delivering Israel from Egypt as to bless and not to curse. In Kutsch's (et al.) view, Yahweh "redeemed" Israel from the cruel "taskmasters" of Egypt (cf. 3:7), only to play the role of an even crueler taskmaster, who demanded even stricter obedience and threatened even harsher punishment. This simply does not accord with the evidence of the book, which constantly describes Yahweh's purposes in terms of giving and blessing, not demanding and cursing (cf. 3:8; 6:2-9; 19:3-6, etc.). Second, this view--and Kutsch's interpretation of נִרְבַּח in general--places an

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<sup>103</sup>A. C. Gaebelein, The Annotated Bible, vol. I: The Pentateuch (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope," 1913), p. 157-158. See also F. C. Cook, The Holy Bible According to the Authorized Version with an Explanation and Critical Commentary, p. 356, who mentions (without specific reference) the nineteenth-century scholars K. C. W. F. Bähr, A. W. Knobel and M. M. Kalisch as adhering to a view similar to Kutsch's based on ancient historio-religious "parallels."

<sup>104</sup>Rabbi Jicchaq; see H. Strack, 1:991.



inordinate emphasis on the role of "oath," in this case the oath of the people (see the discussion on pp. 127ff. above). No attention at all is paid to the many "oaths" of Yahweh throughout the book, the promises that he will redeem them from Egypt, be their God, make them his people, bring them into the promised land, form them into a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, deliver them from their future enemies, etc. Further, Kutsch's assumption that Yahweh "forced" this oath on Israel has no basis in the text. As we discussed earlier, their response appears to be purely spontaneous, and, as McCarthy has shown, cannot properly be called an "oath" at all in terms of ancient near eastern covenant-form parallels (p. 132 above). Also, this "profession of faith" is made earlier, before the blood-rite, in response to the preached Word of Yahweh. Finally (and understandably, since Kutsch's interpretation is based solely on secular "parallels"), Kutsch nor those who share his view offer any evidence from the Old Testament in which sacrificial blood is used in an imprecatory manner. Thus E.W. Nicholson assesses Kutsch's view as follows:

As for Kutsch's suggestion, there is likewise no evidence whatsoever in the Old Testament of self-imprecation rites by means of blood, and it is surely inadmissible to have to go so far afield as Aeschylus in order to understand a ritual in ancient Israel. One might add that the context in each case is strikingly different: in the one case that of preparation for war, in the other the meeting between a people and its God for quite another purpose. Sound method requires that we attempt in the first instance to understand the ritual described in Exod. xxiv. 3ff. on the basis of what we know from elsewhere in the Old Testament concerning the use and significance of blood in Israel's cult.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>E. W. Nicholson, "The Covenant Ritual in Exodus 24:3-8," Vetus Testamentum 32:1 (1982), pp. 82-83.

Communio Sacramentalis

The second major interpretation of Ex. 24:8 which--admittedly or not--derives from religio-historical "parallels," is much more widespread. It might, in fact, be called the "standard" interpretation of this verse, and sometimes of the blood rite (and the covenant ratification) as a whole. E.W. Nicholson, who ultimately rejects this view, summarizes it as follows:

There has been general agreement on the significance of the blood rite described in this passage. Particular importance has been attached to the division of the blood into two halves (v. 6), one half being thrown against the altar, the other half upon the people (v. 8). By this means a communio sacramentalis was created between the two partners of the covenant, Yahweh and Israel...<sup>106</sup>

Some find this meaning in verse 8 alone; others find it in the blood rite as a whole (verses 6-8). But all who share this view agree that in this rite Yahweh and Israel became "blood-brothers," and that this "binding together" of partners by common consent is at the heart of the ratification and the Sinai covenant itself. This view may be traced back to the work of several late nineteenth-century scholars, foremost among them W. Robertson Smith, H. C. Trumbull, and J. Wellhausen.<sup>107</sup> Smith serves well as spokesman for this school of thought in his summary of Semitic sacrifice in general:

We may now take it as made out that, throughout the Semitic field, the fundamental idea of sacrifice is not that of a sacred tribute, but of communion between the god and his worshippers by joint participation in the living flesh and blood of a sacred victim. We see, however, that in the more advanced forms of the ritual this idea becomes attenuated and tends to disappear...When men cease to eat raw or living flesh, the blood...comes to be regarded as the vehicle of life and the true res sacramenti. And the nature of the

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>107</sup>See fn. 13 above.

sacrifice as a sacramental act is still further disguised when--for reasons that will by and by appear more clearly--the sacramental blood is no longer drunk by the worshippers but only sprinkled on their persons...<sup>108</sup>

Smith then applies this view specifically to Ex. 24:6-8, while at the same time rejecting the "imprecatory" view for which Kutsch was here chosen as spokesman:

The Hebrew phrase krth bryth, "to make (literally, to cut) a covenant," is generally derived from the peculiar form of sacrifice mentioned in Gen. xv, Jer. xxxiv. 18, where the victim is cut in twain and the parties pass between the victims; and this rite again is explained as a symbolic form of imprecation, as if those who swore to one another prayed that, if they proved unfaithful, they might be similarly cut in pieces. But this does not explain the characteristic feature in the ceremony--the passing between the pieces; and, on the other hand, we see from Ex. xxiv. 8, "this is the blood of the covenant which Jehovah hath cut with you," that the dividing of the sacrifice and the application of the blood to both parties go together. The sacrifice presumably was divided into two parts (as in Ex. 1.c. the blood is divided into two parts), when both parties joined in eating it; and when it ceased to be eaten, the parties stood between the pieces, as a symbol that they were taken within the mystical life of the victim.<sup>109</sup>

As indicated above and in the following citations from D. J. McCarthy and R. J. Daly, Smith's idea of blood as the "bearer of life" plays a key role in the "communio" interpretations of Ex. 24:8. McCarthy:

These sacrifices [in Ex. 24] are not an adjunct to but constituent of the covenant: they bring it about. This is emphasized in the ceremony in which the blood from the sacrifice is sprinkled on the altar and the people. Blood, of course, was for the Hebrews the seat and sign of life and as such was reserved to God. Here Yahweh and the people share in some sort the same blood and hence the same life; they are members of one family. There is an analogy to the treaty tradition in all this. The treaty produced brotherhood and peaceful union too.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>W.R. Smith, pp. 345-6.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid, p. 144.

<sup>110</sup>D. J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, p. 163.

R. J. Daly writes:

Blood is life and therefore belongs to God, the Lord of life. There is indeed no text which specifically associates this idea with the covenant sacrifice [the shlmm of Ex. 24]; but since it is an idea which is associated with blood throughout the OT, we must assume that the idea is also present here...Blood has the power to establish a blood relationship between the two partners who join each other in a covenant. This idea is an Old Testament and an old Semitic commonplace, and it is obviously one<sup>111</sup> of the major ideas behind the Covenant Sacrifice of Exod. 24:3-8.

Similarly F. C. Cook speaks of a "sacramental union between the Lord and his people;"<sup>112</sup> S. R. Driver says that here "Jehovah and the people are symbolically joined together by the sacrificial blood;"<sup>113</sup> Martin Noth suggests that "the blood of the communal sacrifice applied to the partners in the covenant joins them together;"<sup>114</sup> and G.H. Davies says that in the blood ritual "the contracting parties are organically related and become united. This is the sacramental at-one-ment of the covenant relationship."<sup>115</sup>

Frequency of attestation, however, does not necessarily infer that a particular point of view is accurate or well supported by evidence. In this case several shortcomings may be noted. First, such a view normally takes for granted the idea that in the Old Testament blood has a supernatural quality as the essential "bearer of life." It

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<sup>111</sup>R. J. Daly, Christian Sacrifice (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 1978), p. 93.

<sup>112</sup>F. C. Cook, p. 356.

<sup>113</sup>S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge, 1911), p. 253.

<sup>114</sup>M. Noth, Exodus, translated by J. S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 198.

<sup>115</sup>G. H. Davies, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 194.

is by virtue of this "life-force" that the parties are joined together in a "sacramental union." As we have already discussed, however (pp. 163ff.), no such view of blood can be demonstrated on the basis of Old Testament evidence. This idea stems either from a mistranslation and misinterpretation of passages such as Lev. 17:11 (cf. Gen 9:4; Deut. 12:23) or from alleged ancient near eastern parallels. In the latter case, however, one must deal with the formidable evidence which McCarthy has gathered in defense of the thesis that no such view of blood existed in the ancient near east.<sup>116</sup> Second, this interpretation takes for granted the sealing of a covenant between "contracting partners." In the ancient near east, "brotherhood rites" were performed between equals (individuals, groups or nations), not between, for example, king and vassal. The Old Testament hardly pictures Yahweh and Israel as "partners" entering into covenant on "equal terms." In the Old Testament, as Th. C. Vriezen reminds us, "God is always the subject in concluding the covenant, and afterwards he is always said to have 'concluded' (karath), 'established' (heqim), 'founded' (sim), or 'given' (nathan) the Covenant!"<sup>117</sup> Finally, it is simply not true to say, as Daly does (above, p. 212), that the idea of "brotherhood" by blood rite is "an Old Testament...commonplace." On the contrary, as E.W. Nicholson argues, there is no thought of it anywhere in the Old Testament:

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<sup>116</sup> Apart, McCarthy would say, from the Old Testament itself; see p. 167 above.

<sup>117</sup> Th. C. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 141.

It does not seem to me to be correct to understand [Ex. 24:8] on the analogy of the relationship or friendship or "brotherhood" created between unrelated groups or individuals by means of the blood of sacrificial victims, as described in ancient Arabic literature. The Old Testament itself affords no evidence of such a use of blood for creating friendships or "brotherhood" between individuals or groups. For example, David referred to Jonathan as his "brother" (2 Sam. i.26), but the covenant which they made with each other makes no mention of any blood ritual (1 Sam. xviii.3f.). More significant, however, is the fact that wherever the Old Testament speaks of kinship, it does so with the terminology of "flesh and bone" but never with that of blood (cf. Gen. xxix 14, xxxvii 27; Judg. ix 2; 2 Sam. v 1, xix 12,13; Neh. v 5). Evidently, ancient Israel did not think of kinship in terms of blood-relationship, and this renders it improbable that the sacrificial blood in Exod. xxiv 3ff. was conceived as effecting a sort of covenantal "kinship" between Yahweh and the Israelites.<sup>118</sup>

This brings us back to an earlier statement by Nicholson:

Sound method requires that we attempt in the first instance to understand the ritual described in Exod. xxiv. 3ff. on the basis of what we know elsewhere in the Old Testament concerning the use and significance of blood in Israel's cult.<sup>119</sup>

Unfortunately (from a human point of view), the Old Testament does not always provide us with as much information as we would like to have concerning the precise meaning of the various sacrificial rituals. In this case, however, there is evidence which validates an attempt to suggest some possible conclusions. While there are no exact parallels to the blood rite of Ex. 24:8, there are two other sacrificial rituals in the Old Testament which involve the application of blood to body and clothing. Since these would seem the most logical starting point for seeking to understand the blood rite of Ex. 24:8, it is surprising that so few exegetes or commentators refer to these passages in this connection.

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<sup>118</sup>E. W. Nicholson, p. 82.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid, pp. 82-83. We will offer Nicholson's view in the following section.

## Old Testament Evidence

Levitical Rites of Cleansing

We consider first the rite described in Leviticus 14, particularly verses 1-7. Chapters 13-14 are devoted to guidelines concerning the treatment of those with various skin diseases (the traditional term "leprosy" has been determined to be too specific a translation in view of the context). Chapter 14 deals especially with regulations for the ritual "cleansing" of someone who has been healed of his afflictions. The primary ritual involves two "clean" birds, one of which is killed and the other set free.

He [the priest] shall take the living bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet stuff and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water; and he shall sprinkle it (חִזַּק) seven times upon him who is to be cleansed (הַמִּטְהָר) of the serious skin disease (הַצִּרְעָת); then he shall declare him clean (טָהַר), and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. (14:6-7)

Some might argue that the specificity of the context here and the disparity in ritual from Ex. 24:8 (the use of birds; the lack of an altar and other standard sacrificial elements) make this passage inapplicable to the Exodus text. There is, however, an important similarity--the "sprinkling" (here חִזַּק, however, not שָׂרַק) of blood directly upon the human body. The rarity of this occurrence in the Old Testament adds weight to the argument that this text may be useful in elucidating the blood rite of Ex. 24:8.

In the text from Leviticus the operative theological term is טָהַר, a common cultic term which in the qal means "to be clean,

pure," and in the piel means "to cleanse" or "to declare clean."<sup>120</sup> Clearly the blood plays a key role here in "cleansing"--at least in a "cultic" (i.e., "coram Deo") sense--the person who had previously been regarded as unclean because of his disease.

David P. Wright explains:

The basic meaning of these [bird] rites is, with little reservation, clear. Blood, a common ritual detergent in Priestly ritual, obtained from the slaughtered bird is used to remove sara<sup>c</sup> at impurity from the healed person...As the blood-water mixture is sprinkled on the object of purification, the impurity is transferred to the live bird...The transfer of impurity to the live bird in the ritual for purification from sara<sup>c</sup> at impurity leaves the person...pure.

The dispatch of the bird into the open country completes the purification...by removing the impurity...from the community generally.<sup>121</sup>

L. Morris, one of the few scholars to recognize and at least make use of the similarity between this rite and Ex. 24:8, comments:

The sprinkling of the blood clearly had a purifying effect, for it was immediately followed by the priest's pronouncing the man clean. It is true that the cleansing here is from uncleanness rather than from sin, but in view of the close connection between the two in

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<sup>120</sup>Gesenius' Lexicon, p. cccviii.

<sup>121</sup>David P. Wright, The Disposal of Impurity, SBL Dissertation Series 101 (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1987), pp. 78-79. See also Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday, edited by Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), p. 400. Frymer-Kensky, however, offers a different interpretation of the freed bird, which he sees as symbolic of the leper's being "set free from his brush with death." See also C. F. Keil-F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 385; A. Noordtziĳ, Leviticus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 145; G. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 208-9; Harrison, Leviticus (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1980), p. 149; D. J. Davies, "An Interpretation of Sacrifice in Leviticus," ZAW 89 (1977), p. 397.



the Old Testament the use of blood for such a purpose must be held to be significant.<sup>122</sup>

The "close connection" Morris mentions between "sin" and "uncleanness" seems to be regarded as a generally recognized fact among those who study Israel's cult.<sup>123</sup> Hummel, for example, commenting on the term "טמא," "unclean," says:

Since the underlying problem is simply sin in its deepest dimensions, both objective and subjective, both ethical and ritual, the "purification" must ultimately be related again to the covenant, that is to God's declaratory verdict of "justified." In this connection we find that verdict reflected in the "declaratory formulae" of the priests, pronouncing one clean.<sup>124</sup>

In this connection it is also worth noting that the term כפר appears throughout the book of Leviticus in contexts where its expressed purpose is to "cleanse" from sin and "uncleanness." It is used this way repeatedly in the very chapter in which the text under discussion occurs (Lev. 14:19,20,21,29,53). Lev. 16:30, furthermore, gives this description of the great "Day of Atonement":

On this day shall atonement (כפר) be made for you, to cleanse (טהר) you; from all your sins (הטאתיכם),<sup>125</sup> you shall be clean (הטהרתו) before Yahweh (יהוה).

Regarding application to Ex. 24:8, it is especially interesting that in Ex. 19 the term "sin" is never used to describe the state which

<sup>122</sup>L. Morris, Apostolic Preaching, p. 76.

<sup>123</sup>See, in addition to the information provided in the text of the paper and the references cited in fn. 121, J. Milgrom, "Atonement in the OT," IDBS, pp. 78-82; also K. Koch, p. 311.

<sup>124</sup>Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), p. 82.

<sup>125</sup>The similarity between the bird-rite(s) and the purification rites for Day of Atonement is discussed by David P. Wright, pp. 78-84. See also Frymer-Kensky, p. 406.

prevented the people from ascending to Yahweh and which endangered their very lives in his presence. Instead that state is described in terms of "uncleanness" (Ex. 19:10,14,15). True, the very term טמא ("unclean") is not used in this context, but the people are told to "wash their clothes" and to abstain from sexual intercourse (19:10,14,15), prescriptions which in Leviticus are regularly associated with attaining or maintaining a state of ritual cleanness or purity.<sup>126</sup> In Exodus 19, however, this "purity" is achieved by washing with water, which seems to have had limited and temporary cleansing value.<sup>127</sup> In Ex. 24:8, however (if application from Leviticus 14 is allowed), the people are cleansed by the sacrificial blood which Yahweh had given to them upon the altar to make atonement for them (cf. Lev. 17:11). This blood, as in the cleansing of one who was afflicted with a (potentially deadly) skin disease, is sprinkled (splashed) directly on their bodies and clothes, a most vivid declaration that they are now "cleansed," "purified," or in Hummel's words, "justified." They are now qualified to stand before Yahweh and to serve, live and worship in his presence (Ex. 24:9-11).

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<sup>126</sup>In regard to "bathing" or "washing," see Lev. 8:6; 14:8-9; 15:16; 16:14,24; 22:6, etc. In regard to uncleanness associated with sexual intercourse see Lev. 15, *passim*. For a discussion of these rituals and the underlying theology, see Frymer-Kensky, pp. 404-410; also Wenham, in connection with this topic and passages cited above.

<sup>127</sup>C. L. Mitton, p. 543. Repeated washing with water did play a role in the regular priestly ritual (cf. Ex. 30:17ff.; Lev. 16:4) and in various cleansing rituals (Lev. 14:8-9, 15). See Wenham, p. 139, 208, 219.

Priestly Ordination/Consecration

The second passage which bears comparing to Ex. 24:8 is found in Leviticus 8, which describes in detail the "ordination" of Aaron and his sons for their official priestly ministry in the tabernacle. By way of reemphasizing the link between Exodus and Leviticus, it should be noted that the original prescriptions for this event are given by Yahweh to Moses in Exodus 29; the contents of the two chapters match nearly word for word. The service of "ordination" centers in the offering of three sacrifices: a sin offering, a burnt offering and a "ram of ordination" (אֵי שֶׁהָאֵלֹהִים). Following the slaughter (but before the offering) of this ram, Moses takes some of its blood and dabs it (נָתַךְ) on the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons. Interestingly, this same rite is performed in Leviticus 14 upon the man cleansed of his skin disease, only in Leviticus 14 the "dabbing" rite takes place after the "sprinkling" rite (Lev. 14:14). In Leviticus 8 the order is reversed; after the ram of ordination is sacrificed the following takes place:

Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it (זָרַךְ) upon Aaron and his garments, and also upon Aaron's sons and his sons' garments; so he consecrated (שִׁבְחָה) Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him (8:30).

If the key theological term in Lev. 14:6-7 was קָדַשׁ, the key word here is שִׁבְחָה, "sanctify" or "consecrate," "to make holy" or "pronounce holy."<sup>128</sup> Just as in Leviticus 14 the unclean person was, by virtue of the blood-sprinkling, regarded as clean and declared to be

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<sup>128</sup>Gesenius' Lexicon, p. 914.

so, here Aaron and his sons, by virtue of this blood-sprinkling (again, וְזָבַח), are now regarded (by Yahweh) as holy and declared to be so. By virtue of this real and declarative holiness they are prepared and enabled by Yahweh to minister in the tabernacle (the chosen dwelling-place of Yahweh's holy name and his glory) on behalf of the people.

Here, too, parallels with Exodus 19 (which sets the stage for the events of chapter 24) readily suggest themselves. First, the term וְזָבַח is used repeatedly in the chapter (19:10,14,22,23), but here it is a matter of the people and the "priests" (19:22) "consecrating" themselves (verse 22) or being consecrated by Moses (verse 14) in an unspecified manner. As mentioned earlier, it appears that here "consecration" was achieved by simply washing with water (verse 14). In Ex. 24:8, however (if application may be made), as in Lev. 8:30, "consecration" or "sanctification" is made by the sprinkling/splashing of sacrificial blood, the blood of Yahweh's covenant, which was given by Yahweh upon the altar to make atonement. In Exodus 24, however, contact with the blood is not reserved for Moses or the "priests" or even Israel's elders. The blood is splashed on the people as a whole. It is very tempting to connect this rite with the beautiful and gracious promise of Ex. 19:5-6, especially with the words underlined below:

...You shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...

E.W. Nicholson's interpretation of Ex. 24:8 (albeit clouded by literary-critical presuppositions) is, in fact, based on this connection:

Exodus xix.6a states that Israel as God's covenant people will be to him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." If Exodus xix.3b-8 as a whole is an anticipatory summary and interpretation of the nature and basis of the covenant, it may be suggested that the statement in xix.6a was intended by its author as an interpretation of xxiv.3-8; the author of xix.3b-8 understood Israel's status among the nations in a similar way to that of the author of Isa. lxi.6 ("you shall be named the priests of the Lord") and saw Exodus xxiv.3ff. as a record of Israel's consecration...after the analogy of the consecration of priests. Thus, what is set out in programmatic manner in Exodus xix.3b-8 is finally completed in xxiv.3-8.<sup>129</sup>

Just as the blood rite of Lev. 8:30 "set apart as holy" Aaron and his sons and marked their "ordination" as priests of Yahweh, the blood rite of Ex. 24:8 "sanctified" all of Israel, marked them as a "kingdom of priests," caused them to be regarded as a "holy nation" in Yahweh's sight, enabled them to be subject to the glory of his presence and receive the blessings thereof (24:9-11). In a thorough study of the phrase "מַמְלַכְתּוֹת פְּהַרִים" in Ex. 19:6 R.B.Y. Scott suggests that the best of several possible interpretive translations is: "A kingdom set apart and possessing collectively, alone among all peoples, the right to approach the altar of Yahweh."<sup>130</sup> He says that this phrase is to be understood "in the light of the many references to the ritual sanctification of the priesthood;" Exodus 29 (the prescriptive parallel of Lev. 8) is cited as an example.<sup>131</sup> We are suggesting that

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<sup>129</sup>E. W. Nicholson, pp. 83-84. Nicholson places too much emphasis on the vow of the people and not enough on the (blood-) rite of consecration, but he sees what many ignore, the clear connection between Exodus 19:3-8 and Exodus 24:3-8.

<sup>130</sup>R. B. Y. Scott, "A Kingdom of Priests (Exodus xix 6)," Oudtestamentische Studiën [hereafter OTS] 8, edited by P.A.H. deBoer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1950), pp. 213-219.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid, p. 218.

Ex. 24:8 may well be the locus classicus for the "ritual sanctification" of Yahweh's "kingdom of priests," Israel. If so, this too Yahweh accomplished by means of sacrificial, substitutional blood--the blood of the covenant.

#### Summary and Conclusions

Although not much scholarly support is available to buttress the suggestions offered above, there is one well-known Old Testament scholar who connects Ex. 24:6-8 with both of the passages we have discussed. In his commentary on Leviticus, G. Wenham offers this summary, which may well serve as our own.

According to Leviticus, then, sacrificial blood is necessary to cleanse and sanctify. Sacrifice can undo the effects of sin and human infirmity. Sin and disease lead to profanation of the holy and pollution of the clean...contact between the holy and unclean results in death. Sacrifice, by cleansing the unclean, makes such contact possible. The holy God can meet with sinful man. Many of the rituals described in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers illustrate this point. For example, at the ordination of Aaron, blood of the ordination ram was smeared on Aaron and his sons and the rest was thrown on the altar (Lev. 8:22-24). A similar procedure was followed when the covenant was sealed with the elders of Israel:...half the sacrificial blood was thrown over them and the rest over the altar (Exod. 24:6-8). Through ordination Aaron was sanctified to the priesthood. Through the covenant Israel was made a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:6). The priesthood of Israel meant that the nation was in a unique relationship to God, able to draw near to him and mediate his presence to the world. It is tempting to regard the rituals prescribed for the "leper" (Lev. 14) as a recapitulation of the process by which Israel had been made holy. As a result of disease he had become unclean and excluded from the covenant community. After his healing, hyssop was used to sprinkle blood over him (14:6-7). The second stage in resanctifying a "leper" involved a real sacrifice and further blood smearing. Similar rites accompanied the ordination of Aaron and the ratification of the Sinai covenant (cf. Lev. 8:22-24 and Exod. 24:6-8). At Sinai the whole nation had become holy.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Wenham, pp. 26-27.

As in the blood-splashing of the altar in verse 6 atonement was made for the whole people of Israel, so also, we would suggest (with Wenham), in the blood-splashing of the people in verse 8 the complementary--and in a sense, even synonymous--gifts of cleansing and consecration/sanctification as priests are given to the whole people of Israel, along with all the additional blessings located in those great and gracious gifts of the covenant blood.

#### The Unity of the Blood Rites

On the basis of the text's own separation of verses 6 and 8, we have treated these two blood rites separately and have sought to understand the meaning of each as elucidated by related Old Testament evidence. This separation, however, must not be pressed. In the text it has a liturgical purpose. In our paper it has served an organizational purpose. There are, in fact, two blood rites in Exodus 24; there are not, however, two "types" of blood or two "grades" of blood. In verse 6 and verse 8 it is the same blood. In this we agree with Keil-Delitzsch:

As the only reason for dividing the sacrificial blood was that the blood sprinkled upon the altar could not be taken off again and sprinkled upon the people, the two halves of the blood are to be regarded as one blood, which was first of all sprinkled upon the altar and then upon the people.<sup>133</sup>

We recall that in the blood-sprinkling of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:30) the blood actually was taken from the altar and then sprinkled upon the participants. This presented no great practical problem in Leviticus 8 because only three (or possibly five?) people were

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<sup>133</sup>Keil-Delitzsch, p. 158.

involved. For the purposes of the blood rite in Ex. 24:8, however, the blood had to be separated and put into basins. It was a purely practical consideration.

We would also caution against pressing the theological distinction between the two blood rites. We have suggested that in the blood-altar rite of verse 6 atonement was made for the people, and in verse 8 (if our comparisons are valid) cleansing and sanctification are effected by splashing the sacrificial blood upon the people. One cannot read the book of Leviticus, however, without noticing that these terms--שָׁדַק, קָדַשׁ, כִּפּוּר--have a broad range of meaning. When they are taken in their broadest senses, each single term can nearly, if not wholly, encompass all the others. The term כִּפּוּר, for example, is usually translated "expiation" (the purging of sin or guilt) or "propitiation" (the satisfying of divine wrath). Frequently, however, it reaches into related semantic fields. The stated purpose of כִּפּוּר in some texts is to "cleanse" (קָדַשׁ; see Lev. 12:7; 14:19,30,34, etc.); in others its purpose is to "sanctify," "make holy" (שָׁדַק; see Lev. 8:34); in still other texts it goes hand in hand with סָלַח, "forgive" (Lev. 4:20,26,31; 12:7,8; 19:22, etc.). So J. Herrmann says of כִּפּוּר: "It seems to be used interchangeably with these words, though it naturally preserves its distinctive meaning, and the other words are not exact equivalents."<sup>134</sup> Each term, then, has its own "sermon" to preach; each has its own gift to give. But perhaps it is correct to say that in each of these "sermons" the central message is the same; only the style, the emphasis, the manner of delivery is

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<sup>134</sup>J. Herrmann, p. 306.



different. And when each gift is opened, that which is given is really the same, differing only by way of delivery or packaging. So it is, we would suggest, with the blood of verse 6 and of verse 8. It is the same blood; it is essentially the same gift: atonement, expiation, propitiation, cleansing, sanctification, forgiveness. "Salvation." "Gospel." Individually and together, all these terms proclaim the message that Yahweh has dealt with the problem of sin which necessarily separates God from sinners and places sinners under wrath and the curse of death. They all proclaim the message, in Exodus 24, that Yahweh, through the provision of a sacrificial substitute, has soothed his own wrath, purged his people from their blood-guiltiness, and delivered them from the curse of death. The Gospel proclaimed in these various words is given in the covenant blood. It is given in the blood splashed upon the altar. It is given in the blood splashed upon the people. If it is the same gift, it might be asked, then why is it necessary for it to be given twice, in two different ways? It is the nature of God to give, and it is not the concern of man to ask why he gives the way he does. So in Exodus 24 no reasons are given. Only the gifts are given, and the people of Israel are directed to the means in, with and under which those gifts may be found.

The "Words of Institution" of the Sinai Covenant:

Summary and Conclusions

Moses directs the people to this means when he says in verse 8b, "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words." Childs rightly calls these the

"performative words" of the ratification service.<sup>135</sup> They are the "words of institution" of the Sinai covenant, and so it is not without reason that Jesus made use of them when he instituted the "new covenant" in his blood. Not only do these words bring to a climatic conclusion the ratificatory events which took place at the base of the mountain, they also summarize, in a nutshell, everything that is important about the Sinai covenant. We will use them, therefore, to summarize what we have learned about the covenant sacrifices and blood in Exodus 24.

הִנֵּה, which introduces the clause, is a deictic interjection whose primary function is described by C.J. Labuschagne as "to call attention to something, e.g. to the presence of an object or person."<sup>136</sup> When it introduces a phrase or clause (as here) it points to and emphasizes the word(s) it immediately precedes.<sup>137</sup> Here this is דַּם-הַבְּרִית. With הִנֵּה Moses (speaking for Yahweh) points his finger to דַּם-הַבְּרִית that the people might turn their eyes to it and focus on it. "Look! The blood of the covenant..." may be the best translation. O.T. Lambdin suggests that הִנֵּה also "emphasizes the immediacy, the here-and-now-ness of the situation."<sup>138</sup> Not all blood at all times and in all places is דַּם-הַבְּרִית. But here and now,

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<sup>135</sup>Childs, p. 505.

<sup>136</sup>C. J. Labuschagne, "The Particles hn and hnh," OTS 18, ed. A. S. Van der Woude (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 4. Cf. also Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, n.d.), par. 105b.

<sup>137</sup>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, par. 147b. Also TWOT, 1:221.

<sup>138</sup>T. O. Lambdin, Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (New York: Scribner, 1971), p. 168.

says Moses, this blood is דַּם-הַבְּרִית. Here and now דְּבַר-הַבְּרִית is given.<sup>139</sup>

There are a number of elements in the covenant ratification which, according to Yahweh's plan, are essential: the role of Moses as covenant mediator; the covenant words ("book of the covenant"); the covenant sacrifices; the covenant meal (which we will discuss momentarily, verses 9-11). Yet it can still be said that if in this pericope (verses 1-11) a single element is highlighted or emphasized, that element is the covenant blood. Moses confirms this when in speaking the "performative words" he points not to himself, not to the book of the covenant, not to the top of Mt. Sinai where Yahweh has chosen to make his glorious appearance, but to the covenant blood. What is emphasized here, we have argued, continues to be emphasized throughout the book of Leviticus, which comes as a sequel to the covenant-events of Exodus and grounds the covenant in the daily, ongoing worship life of the people. In Leviticus, too, the main thing is the blood; everything else leads to it or flows from it. "For the life of the flesh is the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for you; for it is the blood, in exchange for

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<sup>139</sup>Gesenius suggests (*Grammar*, par. 147b) that when a substantive follows הַזֶּה it then "includes the meaning of a demonstrative pronoun and the copula." In this case the most accurate translation would be, "This is the blood of the covenant." While this ought not be pressed, it does provide an interesting and noteworthy grammatical link to Jesus' words of institution for the Lord's Supper. Although the following may be due more to New Testament influences than to Hebrew grammar, it is also worth noting that while the LXX chose the interjection Ἰσοῦ, the Vulgate has "Hic est sanguis foederis." These bits of data simply support the grammatical link between Ex. 24:8 and the New Testament words of institution, "τοῦτο ἔστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης" (Mk. 14:24).

the life, which makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11). There are not "two bloods" in Exodus 24; there is one blood, which was first splashed upon the altar and then splashed upon the people. By pointing to the blood splashed upon the altar Moses points to the fact that though Israel, because of her sin and uncleanness, deserves to die at the hands of a holy and righteous God; yet Yahweh, in his grace and mercy, has provided for a sacrificial substitute to die in their place. The blood is evidence that life has been poured out in death and it becomes a means of grace when it is given back to God on the altar to make atonement for the people. The blood has been "given" by Yahweh, "for you"--"to make atonement for you." By means of the blood God's wrath is satisfied and man's sin is forgiven and purged. By pointing to the blood splashed upon the people Moses points to the fact that this same atoning blood cleanses them from all of sin's impurities and grants them a new birth and a new life. Further, it consecrates or "ordains" them as "priests" of Yahweh, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Yet finally all of these gifts of the blood--atonement, cleansing, consecration--merge and become as one. The problem is sin, and sin here is taken away, removed, purged, forgiven. To those seeking such forgiveness--and with it, life and salvation<sup>140</sup>--Moses points to the blood.

He calls it, further, דַּם-הַבְּרִית, "the blood of the covenant." The least we can say about this construction is that it

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<sup>140</sup>Cf. Martin Luther's Kleiner Katechismus, "Das Sakrament des Altars," Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche [BKS] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 520.

closely connects the two terms and even makes them interdependent.<sup>141</sup> Without the blood there is no covenant; outside of the covenant there is no atoning, cleansing, sanctifying blood. The most daring suggestion would be to take the two as appositives, "This is the blood, i.e., the covenant." The covenant is the blood! A more reasonable suggestion would be to explain the genitival construction as epexegetical, explaining "the purpose for which something is intended."<sup>142</sup> The purpose of the blood is the "making" or "ratifying" of the covenant. Since this covenant has a history (cf. Ex. 2:24; 6:3, etc.), the term "ratification" fits best. That which has long been reckoned and determined by God (ratus) is now put into effect (facio) with Israel as a nation. It is the blood which puts the covenant into effect. The covenant is ratified by blood--sacrificial, substitutionary blood; atoning, cleansing, consecratory blood. All the covenant promises ("I will deliver you . . . I will redeem you...I will take you for my people . . . I will be your God . . . I will bring you into the land I swore to give . . . I will give it to you [Ex. 6:6-8] . . . you shall be my own possession . . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" [Ex. 19:5-6]) find their "yes" in this blood.

As it is Yahweh who has "given" this blood (cf. Lev. 17:11), so also this is the covenant "which Yahweh has made (literally, "cut," קָטַע) with you." "Cut a covenant" is a common Hebrew idiom which, according to Speiser, had its origin in a ceremony such as the one

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<sup>141</sup>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, par. 891.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid, par. 128q.

depicted in Genesis 15, where the division of sacrificial animals is an integral part of the covenant ritual.<sup>143</sup> However, that may be, the important thing here, as always, is the primary actor: Yahweh. Throughout the book of Exodus it is always his covenant, which he "cuts," makes, does, gives. From this fact it is clear that Israel is passive recipient of the gift of the covenant, while the words "with you" (עִמָּךָ) indicate that Israel is also made a participant in and beneficiary of the covenant by Yahweh's grace. Through the covenant, Yahweh brings Israel into proper relationship with himself.

The covenant is ratified, finally, "in accordance with all these words." It is highly unlikely that the term כֹּל-הַדְּבָרִים should have reference to the "words" of the people (cf. verses 3,7); whenever כֹּל modifies דְּבָרִים in Exodus 19-24 it designates the words of Yahweh. The covenant is not ratified "in accordance with all of your [i.e., Israel's] words," it is ratified in accordance with, on the basis of (כֹּל) all of "these" (Yahweh's) words, i.e., the words Moses preached and read twice in the rite of ratification, both דְּבָרִים and אֲשֶׁר-אָמַר. This is further evidence against the common suggestion that the most important "words" of the Sinai covenant are the "oath-words" spoken by the people. Those who argue this way are in disagreement with the "performative words" of the Sinai covenant, which point to the words of Yahweh as the words on which the Sinai covenant is based. These words, as we have discussed and repeatedly noted, are first of all words of divine grace, divine promise, divine deliverance,

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<sup>143</sup>Ephraim Avigdor Speiser, Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 112.

divine election and redemption. Therefore there is no tension between the "words" and the "blood." Both are gracious gifts of Yahweh. Both play an essential role in the covenant ratification and in the ongoing life of God's people.

"This is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has (now) made/ratified with you in accordance with all these words." With the speaking of these words the ratificatory events at the foot of the mountain come to a close. But if, as we have argued from the start, verses 1-11 form a literary and theological unit, then it is premature to say verse 8 marks the end of the covenant ratification. There is another event yet to come, an event that was introduced already in verse 1 when Yahweh said "Come up...and worship!" This, too, is an integral part of the covenant ratification, and is a glorious illustration of the "life and salvation" which are given in and flow from the covenant blood.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE COVENANT THEOPHANY AND MEAL

"Look! The blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex. 24:8b). These words directing the people to the covenant blood, spoken by Moses, bring to a close the ratification events which took place at the foot of Mt. Sinai. If, however, verses 1-11 are received as a literary and theological unit, we find that another set of events follows upon and flows from those recorded in verses 3-8. Verses 9-11 read:

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel, and under his feet as it were a paved work of lapis lazuli, as the very heaven in clarity. Yet against the chosen ones of the children of Israel he did not stretch forth his hand; but they saw God, and they ate and drank.

In an article on the exegesis of this passage Th. C. Vriezen cites the words of G.H. Davies, who describes Ex. 24:9-11 as containing "some of the most astonishing and inexplicable verses of the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup> The discussion of Ex. 24:9-11 which follows here confirms the truth of Davies' observation, yet also seeks to discover whatever explication of these "inexplicable" verses may be given by the text itself.

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<sup>1</sup>G. H. Davies, *Exodus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 193. Cited by Th. C. Vriezen, "The Exegesis of Exodus xxiv 9-11," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 17, A. S. Van Der Woude, Groningen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), p. 101. All references to Vriezen in this chapter refer to this article.



Preliminary Concerns

Literary-Critical Matters

First, however, a few preliminary matters may be in order. Immediately following his citation of Davies, Vriezen makes his own observation about this passage. "From the very outset," he says, "it confronts us with great difficulties in nearly all sectors of the O.T. study, literary-critical, traditio-historical, historico-religious as well as theological."<sup>2</sup> The main literary-critical problem (from which originate the traditio-historical and historico-religious difficulties) is given expression by Martin Noth:

In this section [24:1-11] two different literary strata may easily be distinguished. In vv. 1f. and 9-11 the covenant is made on the mountain, in vv. 3-8 on the other hand at the foot of the mountain. Verses 1f. contain the introduction to the passage 9-11; these passages, which obviously belong together, are separated by the narrative vv. 3-8. We are thus given in this chapter two versions of the account of the making of the covenant which, while dealing with the same subject, are widely different in their individual details.<sup>3</sup>

The assignment of sources, however, is a disputed matter. E. W. Nicholson says:

Most commentators have argued that [vv. 9-11] belong to the Pentateuchal sources J and E, but there has been no agreement on which of these two sources each passage is to be assigned to, some attributing verses 1-2, 9-11 to E and verses 3-8 to J, others advocating the reverse of this, regarding the former as J and the latter as E.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Vriezen, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>M. Noth, Exodus (London, SCM Press, 1959), p. 194.

<sup>4</sup>E. W. Nicholson, "The Interpretation of Exodus xxiv 9-11," Vetus Testamentum 24 (1974), p. 78-79. All references to Nicholson in this chapter are to this article.

It is not our intention here to reproduce or even recapitulate the discussion of literary-critical problems which was offered earlier in this study (pp. 82-91 above).<sup>5</sup> We only wish to point out by way of reminder that verses 3-8 and 9-11 are typically divorced from each other in critical work on this pericope, and that this separation of the sections has achieved very little consensus among critical scholars as to the origin and interpretation of the two passages. There is nothing in the text itself that requires such separation. R. A. Cole says: "Verses 9-11 continue the anecdote of verses 1,2, but there is no need, because of this, with some editors to see verses 9-11 as an alternate account of the covenant-making already described." "The reason for climbing the mountain on this occasion, to judge from verse 1, was purely worship."<sup>6</sup> If, as Cole asserts, the sections belong together, then when they are isolated from each other it becomes difficult to discern the message of each and of the pericope as a whole. Only when the text is read as it is given does the reader receive in full what the text has to give. This should become increasingly evident as verses 9-11 of Exodus 24 lead us further into study.

#### Theological Concerns

Vriezen (p. 233 above) also refers to "theological problems" presented by this text; these will be our main concern. The foremost

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<sup>5</sup>Thorough summaries are provided in Vriezen, pp. 100-106, *et passim*; Nicholson, pp. 77-80; and Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 27-35.

<sup>6</sup>R. A. Cole, Exodus (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 186.

of these "problems" is the explicit, twice-repeated statement that those present on the mountain actually "saw the God of Israel." The LXX, which is known for its tendency to tone down passages in the MT which seem too "shocking" or "disrespectful" of God, makes some noteworthy emendations. Verse 10 is translated by the LXX as "καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ ἐστήκεν ὁ θεὸς : "and they saw the place where God stood." (The words underlined are not in the MT.) God is not seen, only the place where he stood. Similarly in v. 11b the words וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת-כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה are rendered "καὶ ὤφθησαν ἐν τῷ τόπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ: they appeared in the place of God." Verse 11a is translated "καὶ τῶν ἐπελέκτων τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ οὐδεὶς ἕλειψεν οὐδὲ εἶς : nobody was missing (perished)," evidently in order to avoid the expression "the hand of God." Targums Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathon, Neophyti I and the Fragment Targum "interpret each of the two statements as meaning that the Israelite on the mountain saw 'the Glory' of God."<sup>7</sup>

The "shocking" and offensive character of these verses also produces a reaction from many of the Jewish exegetes.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on Numbers 3:4 (the death of Nadab and Abihu) Numbers Rabbah 11:25 records that Rabbi Phineas took the שָׂרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל of Ex. 24:11 to refer specifically to Nadab and Abihu, indicating that their fate was sealed (i.e., God did not "stretch out his hand against them" at that

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<sup>7</sup>Nicholson, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup>The summary provided here is based on information given by Nicholson, p. 89-90.

moment, but he soon would!).<sup>9</sup> It also records this saying of Rabbi Hoshaia:

Were provisions taken up with them to Mount Sinai, as is implied by the text, "And they beheld God, and did eat and drink?" Certainly not; but it teaches that they fixed gloating eyes upon the Divine Presence, as one that stares at a person and at the same time goes on eating and drinking.<sup>10</sup>

"Of medieval Jewish exegetes Rashi...probably following the tradition attributed in Numbers Rabbah to Rabbi Joshua of Siknin and Rabbi Levi, understands the text to mean that Nadab and Abihu as well as the seventy elders 'stared and peeped' at God and thereby incurred the penalty of death," which, however, was postponed until after the erection of the tabernacle in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Num. 3:4) and in the case of the elders, until the murmuring at Taberah (Num. 11:1ff.).<sup>11</sup>

In defense of LXX, the Jewish versions, and the rabbis, Ex. 24:9-11 does present a real theological problem for the serious reader of Scripture. It is axiomatic in the Old Testament that "man shall not see God (or God's "face") and live" (Ex. 33:20; cf. Gen 32:30; Is. 6:5; Judges 6:22-23; 13:22).<sup>12</sup> Ex. 24:9-11, along with Is. 6:1 and Ezekiel

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<sup>9</sup>Midrash Rabbah, translated under the editorship of Rabbi H. Freedman and M. Simon: Numbers, translated by J. J. Slotki, vol. I, London, 1939. Cited in Nicholson, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Cited without reference in Nicholson, p. 90.

<sup>12</sup>Terence E. Fretheim reminds us that "Scripture does not say God cannot be seen; rather, it assumes God can be seen, but one cannot live if this happens. The issue is always a matter of life, not visibility." (The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984], pp. 91-92). Fretheim goes on to say, however, that apparently "God is capable of allowing God to be seen by certain individuals who live to tell about the experience,"

1-3, contains the most explicit statement in the Old Testament regarding the "seeing" of God; yet here there are no apparent ill effects. Just the opposite, in fact, seems to be true! The men ate and drank and worshipped in God's very presence. Since the text itself (verses 9-11) offers no apparent explanation for this seeming contradiction, the LXX and the rabbis provide their own.

As we are engaged by this final section of Ex. 24:1-11, then, one of our concerns will be to ask if the text itself (verses 1-11) suggests an explanation of how this gracious theophany was made possible. Another concern will be the relationship of verses 3-8 to verses 9-11. These two concerns may be seen as interdependent. Finally, we will make it a point to emphasize the eschatological flavor of these verses, since this is relevant for our eventual application of Ex. 24:1-11 to the Lord's Supper and its eschatology.

#### Worship on the Mountain

There is no grammatical break between verse 8 of the pericope and verse 9. Verse 9 begins with the waw-consecutive verb וַיָּשׁוּב: "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up." Here, then, for the first time, we read of an answer to the "call to worship" recorded in verse 1. Several points of emphasis may be derived from this brief verse. First, Nicholson is correct in noting a distinct shift of focus from Moses to "Israel" or "the elders of Israel" as a whole.

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citing Exodus 24:9-11 as an example. One of our primary concerns here is on what basis (according to the text) God "allows" himself to be seen in this instance without the usual (mortal) consequences.

The traditions preserved in this chapter place great emphasis on Moses and his role as mediator between God and Israel. In Exodus xxiv 9-11, by contrast, no such emphasis is to be found. Here Moses appears alongside others, as apparently nothing more than one of the 'leaders of Israel' (verse 11a), and he sees nothing and does nothing that the others do not see and do. Indeed, he does not even appear in this tradition as primus inter pares, for although his name is mentioned alongside the anonymous seventy elders, others are likewise mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

It is true that in verses 12 ff. and in the rest of the book of Exodus Moses resumes his leadership role, and we do not mean to imply that he forsakes that role here. Still, as Nicholson rightly observes, that role is not emphasized in these verses. In the presence of the God of Israel ("coram Deo"), verses 9-11 suggest, there is no distinguishing between "priest" and "people," "leader" and "follower." There is only God and Israel, "He" and "they." Also worth reemphasizing in this connection is the "representative" role of this delegation, a point that was discussed earlier (cf. above, p. 107). C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, for example, speak of "the Israelites" ascending the mountain to worship Yahweh, and then add: "of course, not the whole of the people, for that would have been impracticable on physical grounds, but the nation in the persons of its representatives, viz. the seventy elders, with Aaron and his two eldest sons."<sup>14</sup> The significance of this "mass" ascent is best seen in the light of the restrictive and threatening atmosphere of chapter 19.

Finally, we would suggest that even apart from verses 10-11 the ascent to worship in verse 9 gives this section an eschatological tenor

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>14</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 158-159.

that is well attested in both Old and New Testaments. The psalmists, for example, speak repeatedly of worshipping at Yahweh's "holy hill," and quite often the context is clearly eschatological, i.e., is colored by a "looking forward" to the day when Israel's enemies will be no more, and pure, unhindered worship will be possible (cf. Ps. 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 43:3; 68:1; 87:1; 99:1). Though the "holy hill" in these contexts almost always refers to "Zion," it is also evident that David and the psalmists looked back to Sinai for the origin of such worship (cf. Ps. 68:1; 78:52, et passim; 77:22). The psalmist's picture of Zion seems to be framed by the Exodus 24 ratification of the Sinai covenant when he writes in Psalm 50:

The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from  
the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Our of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.  
Our God comes, he does not keep silence, before him is a devouring  
fire, round about him a mighty tempest.  
He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge  
his people:  
"Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by  
sacrifice!"  
The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!  
(vv. 1-6, RSV)

But it is through the mouth of Isaiah that the theme of eschatological "mountain worship" is given most full and colorful expression. Already in the second chapter of Isaiah we find this description of worship in the "latter days":

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."...He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword

against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Is. 2:2-4, RSV)

The well-known passage in Isaiah 11 which depicts so beautifully the day when "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb" and "the sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp" ends with the words:

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (11:9)

Isaiah 24:21-23 depicts the "negative" side of "the day of Yahweh," but the words "before his elders" also recall the occurrence of Ex. 24:9-11 and identify it as a type of the eschatological day of Yahweh on Mt. Zion:

On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders he will manifest his glory.

Isaiah 27:12-13 returns to the "positive" image of that day:

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Finally, Isaiah 56 specifically mentions "covenant" along with "burnt offerings and sacrifices" in connection with its description of end-time worship on Yahweh's "holy mountain":

I will give [my sons and daughters] an everlasting name which shall not be cut off. And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to his servants, everyone who keeps the sabbath...and holds fast my covenant--these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their



sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (vv. 5b-7)<sup>15</sup>

Since Ex. 24:9-11 is the first recorded instance of Israel's being gathered and called by Yahweh for worship on his "holy mountain" (here, of course, "Sinai" rather than "Zion"), it appears that this event may be viewed as the Old Testament model or "type" for all subsequent "worship on Yahweh's holy mountain," whether historical or eschatological.

In connection with our discussion of verse 9 as the answer to verse 1's "call to worship" it may also be appropriate to mention (once again) the pervasiveness of the theme of worship in the last book of Scripture, Revelation. The term *προσκυβέν* occurs in this book

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<sup>15</sup>Some might argue that the term "eschatological" is used rather freely in describing the above passages; "Messianic," it might be suggested, would be a more accurate designation. But often in the Old Testament, and particularly in the prophets, the distinction between "the Messiah's day" and "the day of Yahweh" is blurred and perhaps even intentionally veiled. The very question of "eschatology" in the Old Testament is a complex one. J. P. M. Van der Ploeg, for example, has called the term "eschatology" "badly coined" and "counterfeited." He suggests that we need a new word to characterize the expectation connected with the hope of the coming of a new era, because "the new era is the time without an end, [therefore] it can never rightly be called 'the end.'" ("Eschatology in the Old Testament," OTS 17, p. 98.) In the same way, even in the New Testament it is often difficult to distinguish between "realized eschatology" (as it has come to be called) and "futuristic eschatology." We are not able to enter into those debates here. Using the term in its literal sense as a designation for those subjects in Scripture which have to do with the "last things" or the "end times," we must be content to point out the eschatological themes and motifs in the passages above (judgment/salvation; "gathering together" of dispersed Israel--and the "nations"; paradisaic "new age" in which war, hatred, hunger have been eliminated; the crushing of Israel's enemies with a resulting era of undisturbed and everlasting peace under the visible reign of Yahweh) and the theme which ties them all together, end-time worship on Yahweh's "holy mountain." See Donald E. Gowan, Eschatology in the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), for a fuller elaboration of this theme.

nearly twice as often as in any other New Testament book.<sup>16</sup> Echoes of the exodus occurrence may be heard in several passages which speak of the "elders" worshipping before the throne (4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4), and in chapter 15, where the victorious saints worship by singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb:"

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed. (Rev. 15:3-4; cf. Exodus 15)

#### The Covenant Theophany

The eschatological character of this event is even more evident in the verses which follow. Verse 10 begins by stating simply and unequivocally: וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "And they saw the God of Israel." רָאוּ "is the common word for seeing with the eyes."<sup>17</sup> Later in v. 11b the term חָזוּ is used to describe their "seeing" God; this word comes to be more "specialized" and "technical" in its usage, and is found most frequently in descriptions of "prophetic revelation."<sup>18</sup> It is safe to say, however, that the two words are used here as synonyms; perhaps the use of both terms seeks to communicate the ultimately indescribable nature of what was actually seen.

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<sup>16</sup>Though it also refers in some contexts to "false worship," e.g. "worship of the beast," cf. Rev. 9:20, 13:4, 13:12,15.

<sup>17</sup>TWOT 2:823.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred Jepsen, "חָזוּ," TDOT 4:280-290, passim.

## The "Who" of the Theophany

The name for God used here is one of the things that leads critics to the dividing of sources; the name "Yahweh" is not given, but "אלהי ישראל." The terms אלהים and יהוה are, however, used interchangeably throughout the book of Exodus, and apart from the critical presupposition that two names must mean two sources this presents no "problem"; only, perhaps, a change of emphasis. Some scholars suggest that the name "Yahweh" in the Old Testament has a more "personal" sense (as the name which was revealed directly and exclusively to Moses and the Israelites, Ex. 3:14), while "Elohim" is more of a "generic" term for "God."<sup>19</sup> That distinction must not be pressed, however; in this passage the term "Elohim" takes on a very "personal" sense: the God of Israel. Ringgren comments that the use of this title

...suggests a rather clear picture of God's role; he actively intervenes in behalf of his people, he is continually present in the midst of his people, and thus has a rather intimate and active relationship with them.<sup>20</sup>

In this context, God's "intimate activity" on behalf of Israel is the making of a covenant with them by means of blood, a covenant which grafts them into the "line of blessing" which had its origins in God's gracious dealings with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Keil and Delitzsch comment: "This title is very appropriately given to Yahweh here, because He, the God of the fathers, had become in truth the God

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<sup>19</sup>See H. Hummel, The Word Becoming Flesh (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), p. 70, 460; H. Ringgren; "אלהים", TDOT 1:276-279.

<sup>20</sup>H. Ringgren, p. 277-278.

of Israel through the covenant just made.<sup>21</sup> At the same time this title looks also to the future, because strictly speaking there is yet no "nation Israel." Implicit in this very name of God ("the God of Israel") is the assurance that he will fulfill his promise (Ex. 6:8; 19:5-6) by bringing his people into the promised land and making a nation of them, a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation." Through the eyes of the seventy on the mountain, "all Israel" sees the "God of Israel" who has promised this and will bring it to pass.

#### The "What" of the Theophany

It is true that after having begun with the bold statement, "they saw the God Israel," verse 10 goes on to describe only that which was "under his feet." The fact that God's "feet" are mentioned here (and in verse 11, his "hand") suggests that we may be dealing here with what Fretheim calls "God in Human Form." In fact, says Fretheim,

It is probable that all theophanies were in human form, though it is perhaps more true to the evidence to say that there are no theophanies which are incompatible with an appearance in human form. Many appearances are very explicit in this regard (e.g., Genesis 18); others are more allusive (e.g., Exod. 24:10-11), while still others contain only an appearance<sup>22</sup> and a speaking anthropomorphic reference (e.g., Num. 14:10-11).

What did the elders of Israel see on Mt. Sinai? Did they "see God" or did they see "God in human form?" If the latter, did they see his entire form or only certain "extremities" such as God's "feet" and "hands"? In this case, what did these look like?

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<sup>21</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, p. 159.

<sup>22</sup>T. Fretheim, p. 93.

No explicit description is given; we are directed away from God to what is "under his feet," and the description offered here only heightens the uncertainty regarding the details of this theophany. They saw, under God's feet, הַסֵּפִיר וְכַעֲצָם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר כַּאֲעִשָׂה לְבָנֹת, "as it were a paved work of lapis lazuli, as the very heaven for clarity." The first term, כַּאֲעִשָׂה, is another hint at the indescribability of this heavenly sight. Even the "platform" under God's feet surpasses earthly parallels: it is "sort of like," "something like," לְבָנֹת הַסֵּפִיר. The word לְבָנֹת (construct singular of לְבָנָה) is an ordinary Hebrew word for "brick" or "burnt tile," the white and chalky clay of which bricks were made.<sup>23</sup> Thus "brick-work," "pavement," "stone-slab" suggest themselves as possible translations. Although one hesitates to press this connection, לְבָנָה is the same term for the "bricks" with which the Israelites labored in construction under the oppression of the "Pharaoh who knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1,8,14; chapter 5, passim). A vivid and colorful contrast, therefore, is tempting: from brick-making as oppressed bond-slaves of the tyrant Pharaoh to gazing upon the heavenly bricks which form the throne-platform of the Redeemer- and Covenant-God Yahweh!

The material of this platform is also given, סֵפִיר, often translated "sapphire" but probably more accurately rendered as "lapis lazuli." Vriezen says: "The pavement resembles a work of lapis lazuli, the so highly appreciated stone, used many times in the whole

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<sup>23</sup>Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1877), p. ccccxix; W. L. Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1971), p. 172.

ancient Near East for the building of sanctuaries and palaces."<sup>24</sup> The stone is "an opaque, blue precious stone speckled with gold...the specks are pyrite, which assumes a golden yellow character when polished."<sup>25</sup>

It is also informative to trace the use of this word through the Old Testament. In Isaiah 54:11 the word is used to describe the beauty of the eschatological "city of the saints": "I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your pinnacles of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your wall of precious stones." Ezekiel uses the word several times, once in a protological-eschatological portrayal of the paradisaal Garden of Eden, which is pictured as beautified by precious gems and stones, among them lapis lazuli (28:13). In Ezekiel 1:26 and 10:1 the word appears in the context of several theophanic "visions" which were given to this prophet. Here it is used to describe a throne "on the firmament, over the heads of the cherubim" (10:1); "and seated above the likeness of a throne was the likeness as it were of a human form" (1:26). After a further uncertain description of this "human form" in verse 27, Ezekiel summarizes what he saw as "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh" (1:28b). Lapis lazuli is also mentioned in Exodus as one of the stones on the breastplate of the high-priestly garments,

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<sup>24</sup>Vriezen, p. 109; cf. also Nicholson, p. 92.

<sup>25</sup>J. Bolman, De edelsteenen uit den Bijbel gezien in het licht der hedehdaagsche edelsteenkunde, (Amsterdam, n.p. 1938), cited in W. H. Gispen, Exodus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 239-270. Bolman notes that sapphire was unknown in Egypt around 1400 B. C. Lapis lazuli was used by the Egyptians for manufacturing royal ornaments, and the large size of the crystals led to use in the ancient near east for building palace pillars and furniture.

which were divinely designed to reflect and illustrate the holiness and glory of God in his heavenly dwelling (cf. Ex. 28:18; 39:11). Finally, the Greek equivalent of זָפִיר (σάπφειρος) is used in Revelation 21:19 as one of the precious stones making up the foundation of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The quality or appearance of this paved work of lapis lazuli is further described by the words כַּעֲצֵם הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר, "like unto heaven in clarity/purity/brightness." What is first striking about this description in light of our present study is the use of the term טָהָר, a major cultic term for ritual "purity" which we encountered earlier in our study of Leviticus 14 (pp. 215 ff. above). After being sprinkled with blood, the previously "unclean" person is "pronounced clean" (טָהָר, Lev. 14:7). Similarly the word is used throughout Ex. 25-31, e.g., to describe the state of ritual purity required of both objects and persons which/who would enter into God's presence in the tabernacle. The ark, the mercy seat, the table, the vessels, the lampstand, the candlestick, the priestly garments all had to be made of "pure" (טָהָר) materials, usually gold. The incense offered in the holy places had to be "pure" and holy. Although טָהָר here may well carry a different nuance of meaning (see below), a connection certainly suggests itself: only those who have been "cleansed" and "purified" are qualified to enter into the presence of Yahweh, who dwells in perfect "purity" (cf. Ps. 24:4). The angels in heaven, further, are "robed in pure (καθαρός) bring linen," and the heavenly city is of "pure" (καθαρός) gold (cf. Rev. 15:6; 21:8,21). Most commentators suggest that in this context, however, the

meaning "clearness" fits better; Ugaritic, says B. Childs, confirms this interpretation.<sup>26</sup> Vriezen says that the word רָהַר here "hints at the deep blue of the cloudless heaven."<sup>27</sup> The cultic background of the word רָהַר, however, should not be forgotten or lightly dismissed.

#### The Eschatological Implications

If the terminology used in describing this theophany has eschatological overtones, then it should further be said that the very fact of "seeing God" may be termed an "eschatological event," inasmuch as this privilege is normally held by Scripture to be reserved for the life and the world "hereafter." G. Kittel says:

Earthly and therefore unclean human eyes cannot see the holy God without perishing (Is. 6:5). Seeing God is an eschatological event which takes place when Yahweh comes to Zion and men are no longer of unclean lips (Is. 60:1ff.; Job 19:26f.).<sup>28</sup>

This fact is given its clearest expression in the New Testament. St. Paul says: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face-to-face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor. 13:12). St. John says, "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). In the last chapter of Revelation we are told that when they worship God and the Lamb in heaven the saints "shall see his face" (22:4). Yet even in the Old Testament there is at least a

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<sup>26</sup>B. Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), p. 498, cites C. H. Gordon's Ugaritic Textbook (Rome, n.p. 1965), under רָהַר, glossary # 1032. Cf. also Beyerlin, p. 29-30.

<sup>27</sup>Vriezen, p. 109.

<sup>28</sup>R. Kittel, "ἁκούς," TDNT 1:218.



hint of that hope of a future life which will include a face-to-face encounter with the Savior-God. David says: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form" (Psalm 17:15). In his torment Job confesses:

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. (19:26)<sup>29</sup>

Quite a number of modern commentators recognize and comment on the eschatological overtones of the visio Dei in Ex. 24:9-11; we limit ourselves here to a quotation from Ernst Wendland, who says:

Again we are reminded of those beautiful pictures in the book of Revelation, when that great multitude of the redeemed that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language will be standing before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb, when "they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:4-5).<sup>30</sup>

After the discussion above regarding some typical rabbinical reactions to the theophany of Ex. 24:9-11 (see p. 235. above) it is noteworthy that one does, on occasion, encounter in the rabbinical literature quite a different interpretation, one that sees this experience as a foretaste of heavenly pleasure and glory. So, for example, Numbers Rabbah records the saying of Rabbi Johanan who said that "the pleasure derived from gazing at the Divine Splendour was real nourishment; as it

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<sup>29</sup>We are aware of the textual difficulties and the great debate in the interpretation of this verse; here we can only direct the reader to the commentaries. See, e.g., E. Dhorma, A Commentary on the Book of Job, translated by H. Knight (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984), p. 284-285; G. H. A. von Ewald, Commentary on the Book of Job, translated by J. F. Smith (London/Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1882), p. 208-209.

<sup>30</sup>E. Wendland, Exodus (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1978), p. 163-164.

is written: 'In the light of the king's countenance is life (Prov. xvi.15)'.<sup>31</sup> Similarly the Talmud records that a favorite saying of Rab was: "[The future world is not like this world.] In the future world there is no eating nor drinking nor propagation nor business nor jealousy nor hatred nor composition, but the righteous sit with crowns on their heads feasting on the brightness of the divine presence, as it says, 'And they beheld God, and did eat and drink' [Ex. 24:11]."<sup>32</sup>

#### The "How" of the Theophany

These insights from ancient and modern commentators into the eschatology implicit in this theophany, however, lead us back to an original question: how was such a thing possible? We recall Kittel's statement (p. 248 above) that "human eyes cannot see the holy God without perishing." How is it, then, that this group of worshippers "saw the God of Israel" and lived?

There have been various attempts to answer this question. One answer is that Scripture simply contradicts itself. In some theological circles or traditions it was regarded as impossible to see God and live, in others it was not. Thus in commenting on the sharp contrast between the portrayal of Yahweh in Exodus 19 and the description of God in Ex. 24:9-11 Vriezen concludes that here "something breaks through of an original basic disparity in the

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<sup>31</sup>Midrash Rabbah: Numbers; cited in Nicholson, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>Babli Berakoth 17a, translated by M. Simon (London, 1948), in The Babylonian Talmud, translated and edited under the editorship of I. Epstein (London, n.p. 1948). Cited in Nicholson, p. 90.

representation of El and Yahweh."<sup>33</sup> The problem is therefore solved by postulating two disparate theologies and sources, resulting in the portrayal of two different "Gods."

Others attempt to solve the problem by running the way of the LXX and "toning down" the words of this text to make them say something less than they actually say. W. H. Gispin, for example, says:

The manner in which this God revealed Himself shows...the enormous distance between Him and even the elite of His people. They did not see the Lord Himself; they looked up to a blue "pavement," clear as the sky itself.<sup>34</sup>

While one cannot argue with Gispin's observation that this text surely reveals the "majesty" of God, Gispin's emphasis on God's remoteness as opposed to his nearness threatens to distort the picture given. The emphasis in the text is not on God's "hiding" himself but on his revealing himself. Furthermore, when Gispin flatly says "They did not see the Lord," he speaks in the face of the twice-repeated statement: "They saw the God of Israel...They saw God" (verse 10a; 11b). This repetition, in fact, seems to be given almost in anticipation of future readers who would seek to evade the straightforwardness of the text's report. Still--as we discussed above--a tension clearly remains between their "seeing God" and their seeing "his feet" and the "platform" "under his feet," which itself defies description. We are cautioned by the text itself to avoid both extremes: qualification of what is reported and speculation about what is not reported.

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<sup>33</sup>Vriezen, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup>W. H. Gispin, p. 240.

Still others attempt to explain the text by suggesting, with some of the Jewish versions (see p. 235 above), that what was seen was not God himself but "only" his "glory." Thus S.R. Driver says:

The idea appears to be that they saw the Divine glory, not directly, but as they looked up at it from below<sup>35</sup> through what seemed to be a transparent blue sapphire pavement...

It is difficult to criticize the suggestion that what was seen was "the glory of God," since very often in the Old Testament it is nearly impossible to distinguish between God himself and his "glory." Von Rad calls קִבְדוֹ God's "self-manifestation;" it is simply the word which designates God's "revelation" of "himself."<sup>36</sup> For this very reason, however, the suggestion of Driver--which is a common one among commentators--does little to solve the problem. Yahweh's "glory" is just as threatening in the Old Testament as he is. Just a few verses after this pericope when Moses ascends the mountain alone, the קִבְדוֹ of Yahweh appears as "a devouring fire" to the Israelites below. When Nadab and Abihu are "devoured" by fire coming forth "from the presence of Yahweh," this is described by Yahweh himself as a means by which he will be "glorified" (Lev. 10:1-3). Obviously Yahweh's "glory" is potentially no less destructive than Yahweh himself, and so interpreting Ex. 24:9-11 as a gazing upon his glory brings us no closer to answering the question of how such a thing was made possible.

It might be appropriate to note at this point that there is in the text itself an awareness of the "inexplicable" nature of the events

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<sup>35</sup>S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1911), p. 254.

<sup>36</sup>G. Von Rad, "קִבְדוֹ in the OT," TDNT 2:238.

it describes. The writer of these verses is obviously just as dumbstruck as its readers, for he says: "Yet against the chosen ones (גִּבּוֹרֵי צִדְדִים)<sup>37</sup> of the children of Israel he did not stretch for his hand (וַיִּשְׁטֹחַ אֶת יָדוֹ)" (v. 11a). In Exodus, as throughout the Old Testament, "the hand of God" can have positive or negative connotations. Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt, for example, "with a strong hand" (Ex. 13:14,16). According to the psalmists, God's hand has fashioned us (119:73), and that same hand upholds (37:24), delivers (31:15), and leads (139:10) the believer. When God's hand is "stretched out," however, (אֶשְׁטַח, as in Ex. 24:11; also אֶשְׁטַח, Is. 5:25ff.; 31:3; Ex. 7:5, etc.) the phrase nearly always has a negative, destructive meaning. In Ex. 3:20 God says: "I will stretch out (אֶשְׁטַח) my hand and smite Egypt with all the wonders I will do in it." In Ex. 9:15 Yahweh sends this message to Pharaoh through Moses: "For by now I could have stretched forth (אֶשְׁטַח) my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth." In Job 1:11 Satan dares God to "stretch out" (אֶשְׁטַח) his hand and destroy all that Job possesses. Examples could be multiplied.<sup>38</sup> This "stretching out" of God's hand can ultimately mean good news, of course, when it is against Israel's enemies that

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<sup>37</sup>This word is a hapax, and as such its derivation and meaning are debated. It is usually translated "nobles," and held to go back to an Arabic root meaning "to be firmly rooted." Whatever the derivation, it clearly refers here to the select group chosen by Yahweh to ascend the mountain and worship. We have therefore followed the LXX's ἐπιλεκτός and translated "chosen ones." See Vriezen, p. 110; Childs, p. 499.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh," Vetus Testamentum 21 (1971), pp. 241-244.

such action takes place. Yet the simple sense of the phrase is nearly always negative, and takes on an especially woeful and horrific sense when the object of God's wrath is his own people: "Therefore the anger of Yahweh burned against his people, and he stretched out (נָטַח) his hand against them and smote them" (Isaiah 5:25).

There are, of course, a variety of specific causes given in the record of Scripture as explanations for Yahweh's "stretching out" his hand in wrath and judgment. All of these can finally be traced, however, to one ultimate source: Yahweh's holiness.<sup>39</sup> When it comes to the question of holiness, says Procksch, "everything derives from the basic statement in Lv. 19:2: 'Ye shall be holy because holy am I, Yahweh-God.' Yahweh's holiness demands the holiness of His people as a condition of intercourse."<sup>40</sup> Man, however, is not holy; he is "sinful and unclean." This explains why "man shall not see me [Yahweh] and live" (Ex. 33:20; cf. also Gen. 32:30; Gen. 16:13). Isaiah is not play-acting when in the presence of the Holy God Yahweh he says: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sebaoth!" (6:5). Isaiah was well aware that "in the holiness of God there is the death-dealing element which must destroy uncleanness."<sup>41</sup> Not only specific sinful acts but man's very nature, which is "sinful and unclean," make it impossible for him to see God and live.

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<sup>39</sup>In addition to the brief discussion below cf. also pp. 189ff. above.

<sup>40</sup>O. Procksch, "ἁγῶς," TDNT 1:92.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 93.

How, then, is the theophany in Ex. 24:9-11 to be explained? It should first be noted that Ex. 24:9-11 is not the only "problem case" of this kind in the Old Testament; there are several passages which describe occurrences of a similar nature. In each case, however, there is some explanation provided by the text or context which supplies a possible answer for what appears to be a contradictory and "inexplicable" event. In Gen. 16:13, for example, Hagar exclaims: "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" On the basis of the context, it may be seen as though the first part of Hagar's question would have to be answered negatively; it is repeatedly stated that she saw not God, but "an angel of Yahweh" (אלֹהֵי יְהוָה; see verses 7,9,10,11). In the same context, however, (verses 20, 13a) this אלֹהֵי יְהוָה addresses Hagar as God himself, speaking in first personal singular about what "I" (God) will do. If this אלֹהֵי יְהוָה was actually God, it is evident from the descriptions given that he appeared to Hagar in some "human form." Thus "incarnated," "covered" with the form of human flesh, the divine אלֹהֵי יְהוָה visited Hagar without harming her with his holiness. The same appears to be true in Genesis 32, where Jacob says: "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved" (verse 30). Though the phrase אלֹהֵי יְהוָה is not used here, Jacob's visitor is called a "man" (אִישׁ, 32:24,25) and obviously also has human form. Here, again, God has "covered" himself with the appearance of human flesh, and thus his glory was apparently concealed for the sake of Jacob's safety and protection.

A different kind of "covering" takes place in Ex. 33:18-23, where Moses asks to be shown Yahweh's "glory." Yahweh fulfills his request, but with several protective measures:

"I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, 'Yahweh';...But you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live." And Yahweh said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." (verses 19-23)

Thus Moses' "seeing" of Yahweh's glory is qualified fourfold; first, he is hidden by Yahweh in a cleft of the rock; second, Yahweh covers him with his hand; third, Yahweh "passes by" Moses before removing his hand; fourth, Moses is then only allowed to see, from a distance, the "backside" of Yahweh. Here, too, then we see the visio Dei accompanied by a "covering" and "protecting"; without these, Yahweh says (verse 20), the result would have been certain death.

The theophanies granted to several of the prophets (Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:19; Ezekiel 1:26-29; Daniel 7:9,13) lack the explicitness of the Exodus 24 occurrence. Since to the prophets God normally speaks in "visions and dreams" (See Num. 12:6), it seems likely that such is also the case in these examples. In Daniel this is plainly expressed (see 7:1, passim); in Micaiah's case it is implied. (Cf. 1 Kings 22:19--Micaiah clearly uses the term "see" here loosely, figuratively; it is also implied that he did not actually see with his eyes what he describes in verses 19ff., but received the account as a revelation from Yahweh, verses 14,19.) As for Ezekiel, he is extremely careful not to overstate the clarity of his "vision"; his description of it is replete with qualifying terms ("likeness of"; "in appearance like"; "as



it were"). The appearance of a "physical" form is also involved here; the one envisioned has "the likeness as it were of a human form" (1:26). When Ezekiel finally summarizes what he had seen, he describes it as "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh" (1:27).

The Old Testament text that is perhaps most comparable to Ex. 24:9-11 in its explicit portrayal and description of man actually "seeing" God himself is Isaiah 6, which we discussed earlier--and not coincidentally-- in connection with our discussion of the term פּוֹר (see pp. 191ff. above). As in the text of Ex. 24:9-11, so also here the text says plainly (Isaiah speaking): "I saw the Lord" (אֶת־יְהוָה רָאִיתִי, verse 1). Here too, as in Exodus 24, there is a description of the theophany which is limited to what is "under" or "around" the Lord (verses 1-4). And here, in agreement with the axiom laid down by Yahweh in Ex. 33:20, there is the real threat of death and destruction, for "unclean" man has laid eyes on holy God (verse 5). As we discussed earlier (pp. 191ff. above), however, the text also provides a clear explanation of how Isaiah survived this direct theophany. An angel takes a coal from the altar, and touches it to Isaiah's lips, saying: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is forgiven" (verse 7). "Atonement is needed...[and] it comes from God's side,...God Himself effecting it through the seraph by means of a coal from the altar used as a holy means."<sup>42</sup> Isaiah is enabled to "see God and live" only by virtue of the atonement/cleansing/ forgiveness provided by Yahweh himself. This atonement, provided by means of a "burning coal" from the altar touched

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

to Isaiah's lips, delivered Isaiah from the prospect of sure death and qualified him--in the eyes of Yahweh--to stand before the thrice-holy God.

So it is, we would suggest, with the theophany of Ex. 24:9-11. There is an explanation for it, and that explanation is provided by the previous verses and summed up in verse 8: "This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you." Like Isaiah, the group of worshippers which in Ex. 24:9 went up onto the mountain where Yahweh had chosen to dwell could not have stood in the presence of that holy God without some sort of protection or covering from God himself. They first needed atonement, forgiveness, cleansing, consecration. In Isaiah, this was provided by Yahweh himself by means of a holy coal touched to the lips. In Exodus, atonement/cleansing/sanctification is also provided by Yahweh himself, but here it is by means of the covenant blood which was first splashed upon the altar and then upon the people. It is only by virtue of this blood-covering that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders--representing all of Israel--are enabled and qualified by Yahweh himself to go up Mount Sinai and "see the God of Israel." This theophany, with all of its eschatological overtones, is simply another gift flowing from the blood of the covenant. Without the blood-covering they could never see God and live. With the blood-covering they go up in safety, see God, and enjoy the benefits of his holy presence. This then also explains the contrast between chapters 19 and 24 which seems to disturb so many commentators, ancient and modern alike. It is the same God; it is the same people; the difference is here the blood of the covenant.

Through that blood given upon the altar in exchange for the life of Israel, through that substitutionary sacrificial death and blood, Yahweh's wrath is satisfied and his anger gives way to mercy and goodness.

In Exodus 19:12, Yahweh commands Moses to "set bounds for the people all around the mountain." Not only are the people forbidden to go up on the mountain, but anyone who so much as touches its border "must surely be put to death." As soon as Moses gets to the top of the mountain in Exodus 19:20, Yahweh commends him to go back down to "warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to gaze (נא), and many of them perish" (verse 21). Even after Moses "reminds" Yahweh of the boundaries which have been set, Yahweh insists that he return to the foot of the mountain to warn the people against trying to get a glimpse of Yahweh, "lest he break forth against them." Now, and only now, in Exodus 24:9-11, can the borders around the mountain be removed. Now, and only now, are the representatives of Israel bold to ascend the mountain. And when they do, it appears as if it were a different God: no thunder, no lightning, no quaking, no smoke, no fire, no warnings; instead a gracious, welcoming God and a glorious glimpse into the very beauty of heaven itself. The blood makes all the difference.

It is for this reason that the separation of verses 3-8 from verses 9-11 is so serious a matter. The latter verses cannot be understood apart from the former. Apart from the blood, the theophany of verses 9-11 really is inexplicable. There are commentators who recognize this, and who emphasize the theological link between the covenant blood of vv. 3-8 and the covenant theophany of verses 9-11.

J.P. Lange, for example, calls the description of the theophany in verses 9-11 "wonderfully beautiful, sublime." He goes on to say:

In it we see the significance of the sprinkling of the blood further carried out...a communion of the Israelites, in the persons of their noblest representatives, with Jehovah...<sup>43</sup>

Another nineteenth-century commentator, J.G. Murphy, makes these observations:

The blood has...two functions to fulfill--first to make reconciliation, and then by its application to determine the parties reconciled. Its offering on the altar conditionates the covenant; its application to the people makes them parties to the covenant. It is the one blood that accomplishes the pacification. Hence Moses sprinkles the reserved portion of the atoning blood on the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made."...The ascent to a certain point in the mountain side, to which reference was made in the very first verse, is now accomplished. To what point they ascended would be a very unprofitable inquiry. It is incomparably more important to mark the fact that now, when the covenant has received its solemn and final sanction, the people have access to God. Hence by their representatives they enter into the presence of God...As he was the God of Abraham when alone, the God of Jacob when the head of a family, so now he is the God of Israel as a people in covenant with him.<sup>44</sup>

Commenting later on the phrase, "yet against the chosen ones of Israel he did not stretch forth his hand," Murphy says: "He did not consume them with the fire of his holiness, because they had now...entered into a covenant of peace with him through the blood of atonement. They were therefore favored with the vision of the Almighty."<sup>45</sup> Though we find ourselves in disagreement with some of the details of Keil and

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<sup>43</sup>J. P. Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, v. 2: Exodus and Leviticus, translated by C. M. Mead, edited by Phillip Schaff (New York: Scribner, 1876), p. 101.

<sup>44</sup>J. G. Murphy, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus (New York: I. K. Funk, 1881), p. 173-174.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p. 174.

Delitzsch's interpretation of the blood rite in Ex. 24:6-8, we agree completely with their assessment that "through their consecration with the blood of the covenant, the Israelites were qualified to ascend the mountain, and there behold the God of Israel and celebrate the covenant meal."<sup>46</sup> The key to what happens on the top of the mountain is to be found in what happens first at the bottom of the mountain. Without what happened at the bottom there would be no happening on the top. That is why Moses, in his "performative words" of v. 8, directs the people not to the mountain-top and the heavens above, but to the very earthly, physical, visible blood of the covenant. It is as if to say: "Keep your eyes on the blood!" For it is the blood that ratifies the covenant, and it is in and through the blood that all the covenant gifts of grace--centering in atonement--are given.

#### The Covenant Meal

The words of Keil and Delitzsch above remind us, however, that there is one more worship event which takes place alongside the theophany on the mountain, and that is the covenant meal. Verse 11b reads, "And they saw (וַיַּרְאוּ) God; and they ate and drank." We discussed briefly the word וַיַּרְאוּ above (p. 243); it seems to function here as a synonym for וַיֵּשְׂבוּ, simply a reiteration of the reality of this heavenly scene. The most discussed and debated question surrounding the concluding words of this pericope is if and/or in what sense the "eating and drinking" mentioned here can be called a "covenant meal." Here, as previously, literary- and source-critical

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<sup>46</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, p. 158-159.

presuppositions and conclusions frequently come into play in scholarly discussions of this question; and yet also, as previously, there is little critical consensus concerning the question.

#### The Nature of the Meal

Of those who hold that this "meal" has no covenant significance at all, E.W. Nicholson is one of the leading spokesmen. He says:

The case for understanding the tradition as being concerned for the making of a covenant is very weak. As for the reference to the eating and drinking, the context in which it here occurs requires nothing more than an understanding of it in terms of the eating and drinking before God referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Deut. xii 7; xiv 26; xxvii 7; 1 Chr. xxix 22; and Exod. xviii 12...). In texts such as these the cultic activity of eating and drinking appears as a means of worshipping and rejoicing in God's presence and it seems to me that given the uniquely privileged experience of those on the mountain which is described in this passage the same interpretation of the phrase 'they ate and drank' is the obvious one. This interpretation is surely more plausible than the understanding of the phrase in terms of the making of a covenant of which there is not the slightest hint elsewhere in the passage. Accordingly we might with considerable justification paraphrase the final clause in Exod. xxiv 9-11 as 'They saw God and rejoiced' or quite simply 'They saw God and worshipped.'<sup>47</sup>

To cite another commentator who would agree fundamentally with Nicholson's assessment, G.H. Davies says:

Commentators claim that the meal is the ratification of the covenant, but of this the text says nothing. The two fundamental activities of worship and of everyday life--eating and drinking--are here associated. We cannot be sure that it was<sup>48</sup> a sacrificial meal, let alone a covenant meal while God looked on.

Quite the opposite point of view has been taken by, for example, Th. C. Vriezen. Of the phrase "they ate and drank" he says: "With this [sic?] few significant words the tradition ends: they form the

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<sup>47</sup>Nicholson, p. 93-94.

<sup>48</sup>G. H. Davies, p. 193.

climax. More than once it has struck me that the last words or the last verse of a biblical narrative hint at the essential point of the story."<sup>49</sup> While for Nicholson the emphasis and climax of verses 9-11 is the theophany, for Vriezen it is the meal, which he also takes as a covenant meal: "If this [i.e., the statement quoted above] holds true also in this case, then the opinion that our text contains a tradition of the making of the covenant fully independent from the preceding verses is supported greatly."<sup>50</sup> Vriezen cites a number of ancient near eastern parallels in which meals--especially meals involving leaders or elders as representatives of a community or confederation--served to seal covenants.<sup>51</sup> Martin Noth shares the opinion of Vriezen:

Once again the men are said to 'behold God' and then in a mysterious way to 'eat' and 'drink'. In this context this can only refer to a covenant meal which takes place, just as among men too a common meal can form an effective and valid seal on the making of a covenant (cf. Gen. 31:46,54). It is not said and cannot be said here of course that both partners share in the covenant meal. The fact that God lets the representatives of Israel hold a meal in his presence on the mountain indicates the making of the covenant between God and his people.<sup>52</sup>

Despite their obvious disagreements, the scholars quoted above have this in common: they all agree that verses 3-8 and 9-11 are and must be two independent theological traditions. Nicholson and Davies view the tradition in verses 9-11 as mainly a "theophanic" tradition, and so attach little importance to the "meal" tagged on at the end. Vriezen and Noth view the tradition as a "covenant meal" tradition

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<sup>49</sup>Vriezen, p. 114.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, pp. 111-113.

<sup>52</sup>Noth, p. 196.

which is paralleled both in the Old Testament and in the ancient Near East in general. What is noteworthy is that (even in the opinion of many critical scholars) once the decision is made to work with the pericope in its "given" form, there is almost unanimous agreement that verse 11b refers to meal which is connected to the covenant-making events of the previous verses. As we discussed above (pp. 148ff.), the most distinctive feature of the מִנְחָה sacrifices--which are offered in Ex. 24:5--is that they were always followed by a sacrificial meal in which the meat of the sacrifices was shared by priests and laymen alike. It seems, therefore, a defensible conclusion (if the pericope is accepted in its given form) that this is the meal referred to in Ex. 24:11. So Beyerlin, who disputes the original unity of the pericope, in working with the "final form" is able to say:

Undoubtedly, there is something special about this meal: it is for this purpose clearly that the God of Israel orders the representatives of his people to ascend the mountain (v. 1a, 9), and subsequently the meal takes place in God's presence (v. 10, 11b). This can hardly mean anything but a covenant-meal here. Also in favour of this view is the fact that the tradition represented by vv. 9-11 has been placed immediately after the account of the covenant in Exod. xxiv. 3-8 when the various traditions were combined. Obviously those who transmitted this tradition regarded the making of the covenant and the sacrificial offering in xxiv. 3-8 as the self-evident and essential presupposition of the account in xxiv. 9-11...Everything points to Exod. xxiv. 11b involving a sacrificial meal in which the covenant between the God of Israel and his people was realised and made effective.<sup>53</sup>

We would not go so far as to say with Beyerlin that the covenant was "realised and made effective" by means of this meal; the emphasis in the making of the covenant, as we have argued all along, is on the sacrificial blood. The "words of institution" of the Sinai covenant

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<sup>53</sup>Beyerlin, p. 33. [Emphasis Beyerlin's]



are words about the blood, not about the meal: "Look, the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you." It is the blood which ratifies the covenant at Sinai, the blood which "realised and made effective" the covenant which Yahweh made with Israel. We do agree, however, that when the pericope is taken as a literary unit--as we have been treating it--the link between the סלח of verse 5 and the meal of verse 11 seems rather obvious. It is not surprising, then, that the great majority of commentators who work with the passage as a literary unit also make this observation. Keil and Delitzsch,<sup>54</sup> F. C. Cook,<sup>55</sup> S. R. Driver,<sup>56</sup> W. H. Gispin,<sup>57</sup> H. L. Ellison,<sup>58</sup> R. A. Cole<sup>59</sup> and B. Childs<sup>60</sup> are some of those who take the position that the meal of verse 11 was a "sacrificial meal" which concluded the sacrifice of the peace offerings in verse 5 and thus has definite "covenant" connections. Cole argues with those who see in verses 9-11 an "alternate form" of the covenant-making by means of a shared meal:

It is true that a shared meal (especially if involving salt) was a common way of sealing a covenant, from biblical times till modern days. However it is also true that any form of worship which involved the sacrifice of 'peace offerings' (verse 5) would be naturally followed by a sacrificial feast. What else would be done

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<sup>54</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, p. 160.

<sup>55</sup>F. C. Cook, The Holy Bible . . . with Critical Commentary, Vol. I-Part 1, Genesis-Exodus (London: John Murray, 1877), p. 356.

<sup>56</sup>S. R. Driver, p. 254.

<sup>57</sup>W. H. Gispin, p. 240.

<sup>58</sup>H. L. Ellison, Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), p. 136.

<sup>59</sup>R. A. Cole, p. 186.

<sup>60</sup>B. Childs, p. 500.

with the meat? Any 'burnt offerings' would have been of course totally consumed in the sacrificial fires as an offering to God: but the phrase 'ate and drank' (verse 11) probably refers to 'peace offerings' which usually followed 'burnt offerings.'<sup>61</sup>

Cole's assessment, we believe, is a sound one, even including the qualification "probably" which must remain because of the silence of the text. The suggestion is there, and the connection seems "obvious," but we have gone too far if we insist on speaking axiomatically here. Finally the text simply says "they ate and drank"; it does not say what they ate and drank. We find it very likely that the "what" of the eating was the meat of the peace offerings of verse 5; this has at least as much cogency, if not more, as any other proposal. If this is true we have an additional link between verses 3-8 and verses 9-11, one that ties these sections together even more tightly under the unifying theme of "covenant." Even if this were just a "common meal," however, it would be given an "uncommon" character by the setting in which it occurred; and even if verses 3-8 and 9-11 were not "tied together" by the "covenant meal," they would still be tied together by the covenant God who is the primary Actor in this pericope from beginning to end. We hesitate, in fact, to build too much of an argument on the "fact" of the sacrificial meal in verse 11, since this "fact" is not explicated by the text and thus ultimately remains open to question. Therefore we stick to the "probably" of Cole (above), and seek at the same time to heed Moses' words of direction in verse 8 and focus on what we can be sure of: the covenant blood.

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<sup>61</sup>R. A. Cole, p. 186.

### The Eschatological Nature of the Meal

A final observation, however, about this meal (which, we suggest, can still be called a "covenant meal" regardless of its connection with the peace offerings of verse 5, for like the theophany it too is a gift flowing from the covenant blood). Whether or not the words "they ate and drank" make reference to a sacrificial meal, it may still be said that in this context they add a whole new dimension to the eschatological character of these verses and the events they describe. In the context of theophanic, mountain-top worship, the fact of a meal shared by worshippers in the presence of the gracious and glorious God places Ex. 24:9-11 in that line of Scriptural passages which hint at or clearly speak of an end-time, eschatological banquet which will be enjoyed by his people, his Israel in the everlasting day of the new heaven and the new earth. This is recognized by, among others, Keil and Delitzsch, who offer the following summary of the book of Exodus based on the final words of 24:11:

"They saw God, and did eat and drink," i.e. they celebrated thus near to Him the sacrificial meal of the peace-offerings, which had been sacrificed at the conclusion of the covenant, and received in this covenant meal a foretaste of the precious and glorious gifts with which God would endow and refresh His redeemed people in His kingdom. As the promise in chap. xix.5,6, with which God opened the way for the covenant at Sinai, set clearly before the nation that had been rescued from Egypt the ultimate goal of its divine calling; so this termination of the ceremony was intended to give to the nation, in the persons of its representatives, a tangible pledge of the glory of the goal that was set before it. The sight of the God of Israel was a foretaste of the blessedness of the sight of God in eternity, and the covenant meal upon the mountain before the face of God was a type of the marriage supper of the Lamb, to which the Lord will call, and at which He will present His perfected Church in the day of the full revelation of His glory (Rev. xix. 7-9).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, p. 160.

While Keil and Delitzsch draw a line from Ex. 24:9-11 directly to the "marriage feast of the Lamb" mentioned in Rev. 19:7-9, it should be noted that there are also Old Testament references to or descriptions of that eschatological banquet. In distinction from the historically-rooted events of Ex. 24:9-11, most of these other examples are prophetic portrayals of the eschatological era.

As with the examples of "eschatological worship" offered earlier (cf. pp. 237-242 above), some of these descriptions of eschatological feasting are more properly designated as "Messianic," as in the well-known prophecies of Ezekiel and Micah which picture the coming Messiah as a Shepherd who will "stand and feed his flock" (Ezek. 34:23-24; Micah 5:2-4). Other references to feasting in joy and abundance are contained within more general descriptions of the Messianic and/or eschatological era. Thus Joel prophesies about a day when Yahweh himself will send "grain, wine and oil, and you will be satisfied" (2:19), a day when the land itself will rejoice "for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full yield" (2:22). Abundant rain, says Joel, will fall down upon Zion: "The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil" (2:24).

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame (2:26-27).

Isaiah's reference to a day when food would be available freely and in abundance seems also to refer to the age of the eschaton, since it was

put to use by the writer of the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 21:6; 22:17):

"Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price...Hearken diligently unto me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness (Is. 55:1-2).

This eschatological prophecy is uttered by Zechariah:

On that day the Lord their God will save them, for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine upon his land. Yea, how good and how fair it shall be! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the maidens (9:16-17).

It is worth mentioning (but difficult to evaluate because of the "stream of consciousness" style of many of Zechariah's oracles) that this description of Messianic/eschatological feasting is given just after the only other Old Testament reference to "the blood of the covenant," Zech. 9:11: "As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your captives free from the waterless pit." While it is beyond our purpose here to examine this text exegetically, it is clear that for Zechariah, as in Exodus 24, the future ("eschatological") blessing of deliverance from the "pit" of suffering and captivity is based upon the "blood of [Yahweh's] covenant" with the Israelites.

Isaiah 65 contains one of the most vivid descriptions in all of Scripture of the "new heavens and the new earth" (verse 17), the "New Jerusalem" in which there will be no more weeping but only rejoicing (verses 18-19), no more death for the righteous but only life (verse 20). This, too, will be a time of feasting: "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit" (verse 21). Even "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together," and "the

lion shall eat straw like the ox" (verse 25). Significant is that Isaiah sets all of this in a "holy mountain" context: "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, says Yahweh" (verse 25b). But by far the most explicit description of the eschatological banquet in the Old Testament--and perhaps in Scripture as a whole--comes earlier in the book of Isaiah, in chapter 25. These words are certainly some of the most beautiful in all of Scripture:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation (vv. 6-9).

Delitzsch says on this passage that "the image is suggested as in Psalm xxii. 27 ff., by the meals after the sacrifices of Shelamin."<sup>63</sup> He says further:

What is thus pictured is the full enjoyment of blessedness in the perfected kingdom of God...The feast, although upon earth, is yet upon earth become heaven, for the wall of partition between God and the world has fallen, death is no more, and every tear is wiped away forever...The annihilation of death, however, is not of itself the perfecting of blessedness. There are sufferings which even extort the sigh for death as deliverance. All these sufferings, too, the last ground of which is sin, are swept away by Jahve...Wherever there is a tear upon any face, Jahve wipes it away; and along with the tear, the sin which is its cause. Of course this refers to the ecclesia triumphans. The world has been judged, and what in it was capable of salvation has been saved. The earth is a holy abode of blessed men. The new Jerusalem is indeed Jahve's throne, but the whole earth is Jahve's glorious kingdom. The prophet stands here with his spiritual insight on the

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<sup>63</sup>Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, translated from the third edition by Rev. James Denney, v. I (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.), p. 408.

same spot as Paul in 1 Cor. xv.28, and John on the last page of the Apocalypse.<sup>64</sup>

If we are willing with Delitzsch to give Isaiah here a place on that spot from which both John and Paul beheld the glories of heaven, surely we must also make room on that spot for "the chosen ones of the children of Israel" in Ex. 24:9-11. For Isaiah received a glimpse of this eschatological meal by prophetic revelation, while the elders of Israel actually shared in a foretaste of it: "They saw God, and they ate and drank" (verse 11b).

#### Summary and Conclusion

All of what is given as described in verses 9-11 is a gift based upon and flowing from the covenant blood. The covenant blood makes possible the worship on the mountain, along with the covenant theophany and the covenant meal. All are gifts of the covenant, but it is the gift of the blood offered up to God on the altar and then splashed on the people for atonement, cleansing and consecration that is the heart of the covenant. This blood is the gift on which all other gifts of the covenant depend. It is the gift in and through which all other gifts of the covenant are given. Even the words of the covenant, which also speak of Yahweh's gracious election and deliverance and promise for Israel's future, cannot be imagined as standing apart from or independent of the covenant blood. The words are given "in accordance with" the blood which ratifies, seals and guarantees the covenant.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid, pp. 409-411. For further development of the connection between Is. 25:6-9 and Exodus 24:9-11 (and the eschatological implications of that connection) see Peter Welten, Die Vernichtung des Todes und die Königsherrschaft Gottes, Theologische Zeitschrift 38:3 (May/June 1982).

And in the blood are given all the covenant blessings of Yahweh for his Israel's life on earth, and in heaven.

Half of the blood of the sacrifices was put into basins, with the other half the altar was sprinkled, thus making reconciliation with God...the other half of the blood, by which reconciliation had been made [was] sprinkled on the people with the words: "Behold the blood of the covenant which Jehovah hath made with you upon all these words."

As a nation Israel was now reconciled and set apart unto God--both having been accomplished by the "blood of sprinkling." Thereby they became prepared for that fellowship with Him which was symbolised in the sacrificial meal that followed. There God, in pledge of His favour, fed His people upon the sacrifices which He had accepted. The sacrificial meal meant the fellowship of acceptance; its joy was that of the consciousness of that fact. And now Moses and Aaron, and his two sons (the future priests), along with seventy of the elders of Israel, went up into the mount "and did eat and drink" at that sacrificial meal, in the seen presence of the God of Israel--not indeed under any outward form, but with heaven's own brightness underneath the Shechinah. Thus "to see God, and to eat and drink," was a foretaste and a pledge of the perfect blessedness in beholding Him hereafter. It was also a symbol and a type of what shall be realised when, as the Alleluia of the "great multitude" proclaims the reign of the "Lord God omnipotent," the gladsome, joyous bride of the Lamb now made ready for the marriage, and adorned with bridal garments, hears the welcome sound summoning her to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 6-9).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>E. W. Edersheim, The Exodus and the Wanderings in the Wilderness (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1876), pp. 120-121.



PART III

THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY IN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Part I of this paper began by raising the question of the nature of the connection between the Lord's Supper and Eschatology. There followed a survey of various approaches to the Lord's Supper, in which it became evident that one's view of the Lord's Supper's eschatology is determined by one's view of the Lord's Supper itself. What was seen by various theologians as the proprium of the Lord's Supper was also seen as the center of and the key to the Lord's Supper's eschatology. Turning then to the texts of the New Testament, we saw that the key to the core of the Lord's Supper is in fact given by that which is very often downplayed, "re-interpreted," or ignored: the Verba of the Lord at the Last Supper, the words which he spoke of the bread and the cup, "This is my body . . . this is my blood of the covenant." It is these words, we argued, which convey the proprium of the Lord's Supper: the body and blood of our Lord, which he gave (and still gives) to his disciples to eat and to drink.

On this basis, we inquired about the possibility of developing an approach to the Lord's Supper's eschatology which flows from this proprium through the Verba of the Lord himself. It was this inquiry which led us to Exodus 24:8 and the words of Moses which Jesus quotes and applies to himself at the Last Supper, "This is my blood of the covenant." The eschatological implications of the extraordinary event in Exodus 24:9-11 held promise for offering insight into the connection between "the blood of the covenant" and its eschatology, both at Sinai and at the Last Supper (and so also for us today in the Lord's Supper). In Part Two, then, we engaged in an exegetical study of Exodus 24:1-11, with a focus on "the blood of the covenant" and the

events on the mountain which followed its use in the making of the Sinai covenant.

In this final part of the paper we will offer conclusions based on the research of Parts I and II. What did we learn from our study of Exodus 24:1-11 about the connection between the blood of the covenant and eschatology? What ramifications does the identification of that connection have for the Lord's Supper's eschatology? How does this view of the Lord's Supper's eschatology compare or contrast with the views of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology surveyed in Part I? Of what significance is a proper understanding of the Lord's Supper's eschatology for the life of Christ's church "in these last days" (Hebrews 1:2)? These are the questions which call for discussion in this third and final part of the paper.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY: ONLY THROUGH THE BLOOD

#### Exodus 24

If anything is clear from Exodus 24:1-11 about the connection between "the blood of the covenant" and "the last things," it is that the promise and certainty of the latter flow fully and freely from the gift of the former. As we discussed in Part II, in Exodus 19 Mount Sinai was a place of terror, warning, and wrath. By Yahweh's own orders, boundaries were set around the border of the mountain as warnings to the people; whoever attempted to ascend the mountain was to be put to death. Even touching the mountain was a capital offense, both for man and beast. God's "promise" to come down "in the sight of all the people" and to speak to them himself was much more a threat than a "promise." The events of the third day (see Ex. 19:16) were marked by thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, quaking and trumpet blasts, so that all the people trembled with fear. Exodus 19 is characterized by repeated warnings from Yahweh that the people not be allowed to "break through to the Lord and gaze," lest the Lord "break out against them," causing them to perish. When Yahweh does speak in Exodus 20, the people tremble with fear, stand afar off, and plead with Moses to serve as their mediator: "but let not God speak to us, lest we die." Whatever eschatology is "realized" and/or foreshadowed in Exodus 19-20 is an eschatology of judgment and fear. God speaks,

and the people tremble; God warns and threatens; the danger of death is real and imminent for anyone who might presume to draw near to the Lord or dare to "gaze" upon his holy presence. In many ways Exodus 19-20 is like a picture of God's final judgment against sinners, when his appearing and speaking will be characterized by dread and terror for unclean sinners who are not worthy or able to stand in his holy presence and live (cf. Rev. 1:7; 14:9-11; 20:7-15, etc.).

The contrast with Exodus 24:9-11 is unmistakable and incredible. There are no boundaries here, no warnings or threats. There is no thunder and lightning, no trumpet blasts, no smoke and fire. In Exodus 24:9, the people who earlier were trembling with fear and trying to hide themselves from Yahweh now approach Yahweh boldly through their representatives, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel. At Yahweh's own gracious invitation (24:1), these representatives of Israel ascend the mountain without dread or fear, and see the God of Israel, who earlier had strictly forbidden them to "gaze" upon him, on penalty of death. On this occasion Yahweh does not "stretch out his hand against" his people, the same people who previously were in danger of being destroyed. Israel's representatives now worship God on the mountain, see him with their own eyes, and eat and drink before him. Here, too, there are clear eschatological implications: worship on the mountain, typical of end-time worship on the heavenly Mount Zion; "seeing God" on the mountain, a glimpse of the future "visio Dei"; eating and drinking with God, a foretaste of the eschatological Messianic banquet. The eschatology realized and

foreshadowed in Exodus 24:9-11, however, is characterized instead by grace (sinners drawing near to God), salvation ("he did not stretch out his hand against them"), and heavenly glory ("they beheld God" in heavenly splendor). There is no hint whatsoever of judgment, fear, or wrath in these verses. Here the God of all grace and glory visits his people in grace and gives them a foresight and a foretaste of the future grace to come at the eschatological consummation of his covenant with them.

What explains the contrast? This, too, is unmistakable if the text is received as it is given. The striking and stunning contrast between Exodus 19-20 and Exodus 24:9-11 is explained only and wholly by Exodus 24:3-8, and especially by the blood of the covenant which makes and seals God's covenant with Israel at Sinai in accordance with his word. The difference is not explained by two different "Gods" or two different "Israels" or by some "change" in God or Israel. The text suggests nothing of the sort. The difference is the blood: the Israel that climbs the mountain (through its representatives) in Exodus 24 is a "bloodied" Israel, bloodied with the blood of the covenant, which was first splashed on the altar and then splashed directly on the people. Covered<sup>1</sup> with this blood, the blood which Yahweh had provided and appointed to establish his covenant with his people, Israel ascends Mount Sinai to receive a taste of "heaven on earth." This is a foretaste of the grace and glory which is and which will be, now and

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<sup>1</sup>This word recalls the possible etymology of רָצַח : see p. 188 above.

forever, for all who belong to Yahweh and who treasure the gift of his covenant.

Time and again in our study of Exodus 24 we were led by the text to recognize the centrality of the blood in the making of the Sinai covenant. We were pointed ahead to the blood already in chapter 20 (verses 24-26), where, following the terrifying events on the mountain and the pleading of the people for a mediator, Yahweh gives instructions for the building of the altar--the primary purpose of which is the offering of blood.<sup>2</sup> Animals are slaughtered in Exodus 24:5, and sacrifices are offered; but the primary focus is on the blood, which Moses splashes on the altar and then on the people, saying: "Look! The blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you!" (Ex. 24:8).

The covenant is made by the blood "in accordance with all these words," i.e. the words of Yahweh spoken in chapters 19-23 and "preached" by Moses (twice!) in Exodus 24. We discussed the nature of these words in some detail earlier in the paper (pp. 112-138), and will return to that theme again momentarily. It should be clear from that previous discussion that by emphasizing here the centrality of the blood it is in no way our intention to de-emphasize the word of Yahweh without which also the covenant at Sinai was not ratified. The word and the blood go together in the making of the Sinai covenant, as we were led to confess at various points throughout our study in Part II. They are not at odds with each other, nor do they "compete" for the "first place" in the text. In a way somewhat parallel to the words of

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<sup>2</sup>See pages 151-154 above.

institution of the Lord's Supper, the words of Yahweh at Sinai stand behind and beside the blood as Yahweh gives the gift of the covenant. "Book of the covenant" and "Blood of the covenant" are partnership means of grace at Sinai. Both--together--are essential in making of the covenant as it is described in Exodus 24.<sup>3</sup>

Having said this, it is still true (as we also repeatedly observed<sup>4</sup>) that in Exodus 24:8 Moses directs the people of Israel to the blood as that which makes, effects, seals and ratifies Yahweh's covenant with Israel. The covenant is made "in accordance with" Yahweh's word, but by means of the blood. Only when the blood has done what Yahweh gave it to do does Israel go up the mountain to receive a foretaste of the future gifts made present and certain through the blood. The eschatology of the "old" covenant, the Sinai covenant, is therefore based on and centered in the blood of the covenant; that much is sure, whatever more we may or may not say on the basis of the text. Verses 9-11 of Exodus 24 can be understood and explained only in light of verses 3-8 and the blood of the covenant which effected the covenant. Only through and with this blood are the gifts of the covenant given, both present and future.

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<sup>3</sup>In Hebrews 9:19, the book of the covenant is described as being sprinkled with the blood of the covenant along with the people, bringing "book" and "blood" together in a way that goes even further than what is explicated in Exodus 24. This text (Hebrews 9:15-22) pleads for further study in connection with the evidence presented in Part II.

<sup>4</sup>See especially pp. 225-231 above.



### The Lord's Supper

On the basis of Jesus' quotation of Exodus 24:8 at the Last Supper, what has been said above about the eschatology flowing from the ("old") Sinai covenant may be applied to the eschatology flowing from the ("new") covenant of the Lord's Supper. Whatever else Exodus 24 may teach us about the Lord's Supper, it at least teaches us this: as the eschatology at Sinai was given only on the basis of and through the blood of the covenant, so also the eschatology of the Lord's Supper is given only on the basis of and through the blood of the covenant. As Exodus 24:9-11 cannot be explained or properly understood apart from Exodus 24:6-8, neither can Mark 14:25 (cf. Matthew 26:29) be understood apart from Mark 14:24 (cf. Matthew 26:28). The same may be said about the eschatological references in Luke (22:16,18,24-30) and in Paul (1 Cor. 11:26). Based on the evidence of Exodus 24, we are led to conclude that all the eschatological gifts of the (old and new) covenant flow from the blood which effected the (old and new) covenant. Both at Sinai and at the Last Supper, everything depends on the blood.

This has been recognized by some to some extent, as the following citations may illustrate. When these have been weighed we may then inquire whether and in what sense this study enables us to say something more and more clearly than they (see below, p. 327). While not touching upon the eschatological connections in the Lord's Supper, Werner Elert does recognize the essential connection between the covenant and the blood which we are emphasizing here:

When the words read in the synoptic writings, "This is My blood of the covenant," the reference of course is to the wine in the cup. And when Paul says, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood," the meaning there too is not the cup itself but its content, that is,

the wine. The synoptic formula designates the wine as "My blood of the covenant." From this we must infer that the blood does not belong to the covenant incidentally but necessarily: the blood guarantees the covenant. The Pauline formula designates the wine as "the new covenant in My blood." The covenant is in the blood; the blood guarantees the covenant. Both formulas designate the wine as the blood of the Donor, belonging to the covenant and guaranteeing it. The material connection between wine, blood, and covenant is the same each time.<sup>5</sup>

Sverre Aalen is one of the few scholars to recognize the weightiness of Exodus 24 as background for the Lord's Supper, and the intimate connection between "the blood of the covenant" in the two texts.<sup>6</sup> We had opportunity earlier (p. 204 above) to cite Aalen's quotations and comments about the repugnance of the rabbis toward the blood rite of Exodus 24:8 because of "die direkte Berührung mit der heiligen Opfermaterie."<sup>7</sup> Aalen goes on to apply this event to Jesus' institution of the new covenant:

Was er anstrebte, war eine Heilsordnung, die Sühnebedürftigen in eine direkte Verbindung mit der sühnenden Opfermaterie brachte. Auf diese Weise wollte er die Sünder mit dem Sühnegeschehen verbinden. Dabei wurde er wahrscheinlich von dem exzeptionellen Charakter des Bundesschließungsopfers in Exod. xxiv geleitet. Denn dieses Opfer und das damit verbundene Opfermahl waren von der Intention getragen, Opfergeschehen und Volk in einer außerordentlichen Weise zusammenzuführen. Daß er sich dabei von dem Fundamentalopfer von Exod. xxiv, das in der Vergangenheit den Bund zwischen Gott und Volk errichten sollte, bestimmen ließ, kann nicht wundernehmen, denn er betrachtete ja selbst die Errichtung eines neuen Bundes als sein Ziel.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Werner Elert, The Lord's Supper Today, translated by Martin Bertram and Rudolph Norden (St. Louis; Concordia, 1973), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>Sverre Aalen, "Das Abendmahl als Opfermahl im Neuen Testament" (Novum Testamentum 6, 1963), pp. 128-152. On p. 149 Aalen asserts that in his words of the cup Jesus "clearly referred" (eindeutig erinnert) to the "covenant concluding sacrifice" of Exodus 24.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, pp. 150-151.

This new covenant which flows from and supercedes the old covenant has in common with the old (according to Aalen's research and ours) a dependency upon the blood of the covenant as that by which the covenant itself is instituted and established, and by which the gifts of the covenant are given. Despite what they have in common, however, the "old covenant" of Exodus 24 and the "new covenant" of the Lord's Supper are not merely "parallels." There is something new and unique--utterly new and unique--about the "new covenant." This is indicated first by Jesus' word "my" in the statement about the cup, and also by the words "eat" and "drink." "Drink of it, all of you;" said Jesus to his disciples: "This is my blood of the covenant." We will develop this point further in our final chapter on the "wholeness" of the Lord's Supper, but it bears mentioning here as a way of pointing ahead to the "more" which is to come. Aalen recognizes and plainly expresses this uniqueness of the Lord's Supper when he points out that in contrast to the "Bundesschließung" of Exodus 24, the "essence" (Wesen) of the Lord's Supper

. . . liegt darin, daß Essen und Trinken Teilhabe an dem Altar oder Opfergeschehen vermittelt. Dies vollzieht sich dadurch, daß der Leib und das Blut der victima auf dem Tisch der Opfermahlzeit vorhanden ist und an diesem Tisch genossen wird. Es genügt dabei nicht mit dem Gedanken, daß Jesus im Abendmahl "sich selbst" schenkt, denn der Zerfall oder die Aufteilung der victima im Tode ist in diesem Zusammenhang wesentlich.<sup>9</sup>

There is no parallel to this, not even in Exodus 24. There is of course an "eating and drinking" in Exodus 24; but there is no eating and drinking of blood, which was (as we have seen) strictly forbidden

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<sup>9</sup>Aalen, p. 151.

by Old Testament law (Lev. 17:11). The blood that is given to drink in the Lord's Supper, furthermore, is not just any blood, but the very blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who offered himself as propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world. His own blood was splattered upon the altar of the cross, and he gives it (then and now) to his disciples to eat and to drink, thereby imparting to them all the blessings of the new covenant, which was effected and guaranteed by his blood.

For now, however, we return to what the Lord's Supper has in common with the covenant at Sinai: In the Lord's Supper as in Exodus 24, there is no getting away from the blood, for the covenant, with all its gifts and blessings, is given through the blood. And as in Exodus 24, so also in the Lord's Supper, one aspect of the great gift of the covenant given in and through the blood is its eschatology.

As Exodus 24:9-11 is a type and a foretaste of the great Messianic banquet so vividly and colorfully portrayed throughout the Old Testament (see above, pp. 261-270), so also the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of that heavenly meal, the final fulfillment of the passover (Luke 22:16), when Jesus will drink the fruit of the vine with his disciples in the future kingdom of God (Luke 22:18,30; Mark 14:25; Matthew 26:29). But the certainty of that glorious heavenly meal for which every true Christian hungers is found now in the blood of the covenant, the blood of Jesus himself, which he gives us to drink in the Lord's Supper. As in Exodus 24:9-11 the representatives of Israel saw the God of Israel with their own eyes and worshipped him on the mountain, so every celebration of the Lord's Supper is a looking

forward to the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26), when we will see him as he is, with our own eyes, and worship him in the beauty of the heavenly Mount Zion (see pages 237-240 above). But the certainty of Christ's second coming is vitally connected with and dependent upon his coming now in the Lord's Supper, his advent and presence in the body and blood which he has given the faithful to eat and to drink "until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Regardless of one's understanding of John 6 and its possible application to the Lord's Supper, the resurrection of the body may also be seen as an eschatological blessing intimately connected with the Lord's Supper, since in the Lord's Supper into our own (dying) bodies are given the life-giving body and blood of our crucified and risen Lord and Savior.<sup>10</sup> How, then, can the certain hope of the resurrection of our bodies be separated from the body and blood of our Lord, given us to eat and drink in the Lord's Supper? It is not within the scope and purpose of this paper to develop these various eschatological themes as they are developed through the Scriptures (as well as by the fathers and the confessors!), although that could certainly and very profitably be done. Our point here is this: as in Exodus 24, so also in the Lord's Supper, there is no eschatology of the covenant apart from the blood of the covenant. The blood guarantees the covenant, including all of its eschatological blessings. Commenting on Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper, Hermann Sasse says:

The incarnation, the true divinity and true humanity in the one Person of the God-man, the virgin birth of Christ, his bodily

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<sup>10</sup>See BKS 1035. 34-38 and page 306 below, where this reference is quoted.

resurrection, his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, his advent in glory, our own resurrection: all these are linked to the Real Presence of his true body and blood in such a way that the denial of this Presence is either<sup>11</sup> the cause or the consequence of the denial of the other articles.

We are thus led again to Part I of this paper, and to our earlier recognition that a proper understanding of the proprium of the Lord's Supper--the body and blood of Christ--is necessary for a proper understanding of the Lord's Supper's eschatology. Exodus 24:1-11 has served to confirm and strengthen that recognition, and it has also resourced us for further discussion of the ramifications of recognizing (as well as not recognizing) the vital connection between the proprium of the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Supper's eschatology. We have already observed (in Part I) how the various approaches to the Lord's Supper surveyed earlier led us away from its proprium as given us by the words of the Lord. We have not yet had opportunity to show what specific consequences such departures necessarily have for the various understandings of the Lord's Supper's eschatology. In the following chapters, therefore, we will identify several significant characteristics of the Lord's Supper's eschatology which flow from a recognition, based on Exodus 24, of the vital connection between the real presence of Christ's blood in the Lord's Supper and the eschatological blessings attached to the Lord's Supper. In each case we will try to demonstrate how these characteristics are lacking or greatly diminished--and therefore how the Lord's Supper's eschatology is impoverished--in those approaches to the Lord's Supper and its

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<sup>11</sup>Hermann Sasse, This Is My Body (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 153.

eschatology which do not recognize the true proprium of the Lord's Supper, and which thus do not have an eschatology which flows from the blood of the covenant: the true blood of the covenant-maker, the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE "GIFTNESS" OF THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY IN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

#### Exodus 24

In giving us an eschatology which flows from the blood of the covenant, Exodus 24 gives us an eschatology which is wholly and without qualification a gift of God. We were led in this direction at the very beginning of our study of the covenant sacrifices, when we saw from Exodus 20:24 that the purpose of the altar (based on Yahweh's own description) was to serve as a place and an instrument of divine blessing. While we focused much less on the sacrifices of Exodus 24 than on the sacrificial blood, it became clear from our study of the purpose of sacrifice as explained in the book of Leviticus that sacrifice itself was viewed not as Israel's gift to God but first of all and above all God's gift to Israel. (See especially pages 140-141; 170-181; 182-199 above).

The theme of gift came through most clearly, however, in our study of the covenant blood. For an explanation of the blood splashed upon the altar, we were led to Leviticus 17:11, where the very language is that of "gift": "I [Yahweh] have given it [the blood] for you upon the altar to make atonement for your lives." We found that the text of Leviticus 17:11 supported the view that the blood-altar rite of Exodus 24:6 effected atonement for the people of Israel "as a gift from



Yahweh through the vicarious substitution of a sacrificial animal, who is slain in the place of the worshipper and whose blood is offered up to God upon the altar" in exchange for the life of the person (see page 170 above). In the excursus on substitutionary atonement and on כפר we gained deeper insight into the "giftness" of the covenant blood splashed on the altar. כפר--which was what the blood effected--means propitiation, expiation, forgiveness, "justification": all gifts (really one all-encompassing gift) of Yahweh through the blood which he himself had provided and appointed for this purpose.

As we investigated the meaning of the blood splashed on the people, we found more evidence of Yahweh's grace and gifts delivered through the covenant blood. Against those who seek to interpret the blood-rite of Exodus 24:8 in an imprecatory manner (see pages 205-208 above), the evidence from the Old Testament suggested that this blood-rite had a "cleansing" and/or "consecrating" significance, thus further confirming the gift of כפר and delivering this gift to the people in a most unique, direct, and "for you" manner. This was Yahweh's way of claiming the people as his own, declaring them a "holy people," consecrating them as a "kingdom of priests" (see pages 215-222 above). The entire blood rite thus emphasizes Yahweh's undeserved grace and love, and his determination to take for himself a people who formerly were helpless, hopeless slaves of Pharaoh.

Contrary to the opinion of a number of scholars, we did not find support from the Old Testament for the view that the "giftness" of the Sinai covenant is diminished, qualified, or called into question by the words of Yahweh which Moses "preached" to the people in Exodus 24,

or by the twice-repeated "vow" of the people. As the reader will recall (pages 112-139 above) we devoted considerable space to demonstrating the "Gospel" foundation of the words of Yahweh in Exodus 19-23, and to showing that even those words which may be called "Law" may still be called "gift," in the sense that they either lead the hearer to the "Gospel" or provide gracious direction and guidance for the hearer's willing response to the Gospel. We also recognized the "vow" of the people as a confession or acclamation of faith, a resounding "Amen!" created by the living and active Word ("Gospel") of Yahweh, which bestows what it says and creates in the hearer homology with that word. Thus the "words" of the covenant--both the words of Yahweh and the words of the people--are in complete harmony with the blood of the covenant, and share its character of Gospel and gift. This is why Moses can say: "Look! The blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exodus 24:8).

If, as we have argued, the eschatology of Exodus 24 all flows from the blood of the covenant, then it follows that this eschatology shares the same character as the blood, namely that it too is wholly gift. It is by God's grace alone, on the basis of the gift of the blood of the covenant, that Moses and the elders ascend Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:9-11 to worship God (Ex. 24:1), see him, and eat and drink in his presence. What happens on Mount Sinai is purely a gift of God, which flows from his prior gift of the blood (and the book) of the covenant. Any attempt to explain what happened on Mount Sinai on the basis of human works, worth, or achievement is contradicted by the text

and context of Exodus 24, as well as by everything that we have found to be true about the blood of the covenant on which the covenant is based.

### The Lord's Supper

What is said above about the blood at Sinai may also be said about the blood of the new covenant, with a "more" that is inherent in the fact that it is the new covenant in Christ's blood. If the blood of Exodus 24 was a gift of Yahweh, how much more the blood of the Lord's Supper, the blood of the Lord himself, the blood of him who gave himself to be slain for the sins of the whole world. If the blood at Sinai effected atonement, cleansing, and forgiveness, how much more the blood of Jesus, which he gives in his Supper for his people to drink. And if the eschatology realized and foreshadowed on Mount Sinai was a gift flowing from the covenant blood, how much more the eschatology realized and foreshadowed in the Lord's Supper, which flows from the blood of the God-man who is, who was, and who is to come (Rev. 1:8).

The giftness of the Lord's Supper's eschatology which is stated in the Lord's Supper texts is, perhaps, expressed most clearly and simply in The Small Catechism of Martin Luther, where Luther recalls the words of Jesus from Matthew 26:28, "Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Luther writes:

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

That is shown us by the words, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For

where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The central and primary gift of the blood of the covenant, both at Sinai and in the Lord's Supper, is the forgiveness of sins (see pages 189-193 above; "atonement" is "forgiveness"). Luther's great insight is that those who receive the forgiveness of sins as nothing but gift receive then also every other gift and blessing of God--past, present, and future--which Luther sums up in the words "life and salvation." If, as gift of God, sin is fully and freely forgiven, then to those thus forgiven belong also all the gifts of heaven: salvation, eternal life, resurrection from the dead, victory over hell and the devil, the certainty of seeing Christ face to face and eating and drinking with him in his kingdom. And how are we to know for certain that our sins are forgiven? From the words of Christ, "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," which he has attached to his own blood, the blood which he gives us to drink in the Lord's Supper. In the gift of the blood is the gift of forgiveness, and in the gift of forgiveness there is every further gift, including the gift of "eschatology," along with all that may contain or imply.

Werner Elert comments:

It is impossible to deny that, like the idea of justification, the forgiveness of sins received in Holy Communion has to have an eschatological culmination. "For where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation." One could let these thoughts flow into the "mystical union", as is the case in the writings of Philipp Nicolai (e.g. De omnipraesentia, 691 f.). Yet even in his writings, or rather precisely in his writings, the meaning of the "mystical union" is eternal life. Or one can recall the words of Luther: "Thus for us the sacrament is a street, a

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<sup>1</sup>A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia, 1943), p. 21. Cf. BKS, pp. 520. 32-40.

bridge, a door, a ship, and a stretcher, on which and by means of which we journey from this world into eternal life."<sup>2</sup>

Peter Brunner makes a very similar observation:

Reconciliation through the remission of sins in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that is the end-time gift of Holy Communion, which was made available to us by Jesus' suffering and death, and which opens and brings the kingdom of God to us. This forgiveness of sins, realized through Jesus' sacrificial body, bursts all bonds of sin and guilt, of death and the devil, asunder. Therefore this forgiveness, enclosed in Jesus' sacrificial death, is really the end-time gift of God's kingdom. Indeed, where this gift is, there the Spirit is which is poured forth, there the new life is which conquers death, there salvation is which extricates us from judgment and perdition and corruption of death. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there eternal life begins.<sup>3</sup>

Hermann Sasse says simply:

Here [in the Lord's Supper] is the true body and blood of the Lamb of God, given for you, present with you. Here forgiveness of sins is a reality--and, with it, life and salvation. This Sacrament is the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

With the gift of the blood comes the gift of forgiveness, and with the gift of forgiveness comes the gift of eschatology: the promise (and therefore, with God, the reality) of all the gifts yet to come. As long as the Lord's Supper's eschatology remains rooted in the blood of Christ (where there is the forgiveness of sins), it retains its true character as Gospel and gift. Whenever the Lord's Supper's eschatology is perceived or presented in such a way that it is not fully or wholly gift and Gospel, this may be traced to a failure to recognize the true proprium of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology,

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<sup>2</sup>Werner Elert, The Structure of Lutheranism, translated by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus, translated by M. H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), p. 186.

<sup>4</sup>Hermann Sasse, This Is My Body (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), pp. 328-329.

specifically the blood of the new covenant, the true blood of the Lord Jesus, through which and in which all God's gifts are given.

#### Contrasting Approaches

What is stated above may be illustrated by reference to several of the approaches to the Lord's Supper surveyed in Part I. Perhaps the most obvious example is the "Sacrifice" approach to the Lord's Supper. In this case, as we observed, the proprium of the Lord's Supper is seen as the offering up of ourselves with Christ in the Mass. The result, as in Charmot's discussion of the Lord's Supper's eschatology (see pages 24-28 above), is that the eschatology of the Lord's Supper is something we earn and achieve, or at least something to which we contribute. "By means of our offerings," says Charmot, "we constantly bring to the heavenly Jerusalem added beauty, and increase in splendor, and powerful new harmonies." "We contribute to the building of this heavenly Jerusalem by the daily oblation of our works," for in this way "we furnish Jesus Christ with the matter for His incarnation and His oblation" (page 28 above). The same emphasis on our efforts and striving was found in Charmot's observations about death as our final "Eucharistic sacrifice," and in Karl Rahner's commentary on the assistance that must be given to the souls in purgatory through the Mass (see page 29 above).

The giftness of the Lord's Supper's eschatology is also obscured in the "Eucharist" approach to the Lord's Supper. Here it is through our prayers that "we inaugurate the eternal glorification of God . . . who on the last day will make the Church the panegyria, in which all of mankind will join in the heavenly worship" (see page 32 above). The

same is true for Thurian in his anamnesis approach: in the Lord's Supper the Church "attains its Lord and the Kingdom," "by praying the Father earnestly for the return of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom" (see page 34 above). For Wilkes and Barclay (pages 35-37 above) it is not so much our praying as our "remembering" that gives the Lord's Supper its eschatological character. Jeremias' passover approach gives us an eschatology which is little different from that of Bouyer or Thurian, since for Jeremias' it is the prayers and longing of the disciples for the parousia and the consummation of the kingdom which give the Lord's Supper its "passover" eschatology (see page 12 above).

It is not inaccurate or unfair to say, in fact, that in each of the approaches to the Lord's Supper surveyed in Part I (despite their often helpful insights into the Lord's Supper's eschatology), there is a greater or lesser impoverishment of the "gift" character of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, precisely because of the departure in each case from the proprium of the Lord's Supper--or more specifically for our purposes, because of a departure from the blood of the covenant, the gift through which all other gifts are given in the Lord's Supper. This is also the case, as we observed, when eschatology itself is seen as the proprium of the Lord's Supper. By giving eschatology a centrality which it is not given in the New Testament accounts, G. Wainwright ends up with a greatly impoverished Lord's Supper in which, as in the communio approach, the only real "eschatology" is one which the church must effect and "realize" by its own efforts to achieve organizational unity and unconditional inter-communion (see pages 47-49

and pages 37-39 above). Sasse's comments in this connection are very appropriate:

The unity of the church of which the Lord speaks in John 17, for which there are no earthly parallels and which is not to be defined in any theology, is the true 'ut omnes unum sint' understood in accordance with the analogy of faith: that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (v 21). The 'world' is obviously not the sum of all men who would just happen to be living on earth on the day of the final fulfillment of this wish. It means either the full number of those whom the Father has given the Son out of the world (17:2, 6), or it means the world at its end. In accordance with the New Testament, there can be no talk of a time in the course of world history when unbelief, and sin with it, have disappeared from the world of men. While the world lasts, the una sancta and the communio sanctorum remain articles of faith.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, the church is gathered around the Lord's Table to eat his body and drink his blood, thereby becoming one with him, and participating in this way already in the oneness of the church for which Jesus prays in John 17, which will be brought to its consummation not by the church, but by the Lord himself when he comes again.

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<sup>5</sup>Herman Sasse, "Sanctorum Communio," in This Is My Body, p. 370.



### CHAPTER 3

#### THE "LOCATEDNESS" OF THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY IN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

In the last chapter we discussed the "giftness" of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, flowing from the gift of the blood of the covenant and the forgiveness located in that blood. It is precisely because this gift of forgiveness (and with it, life and salvation) is truly and specifically located that it is and remains truly gift. God's gifts would not be gifts unless he had located them in specific places where they could be found, and delivered them at specific places where they could be received. It is this theme of "rootedness" or "locatedness"--both in space and in time--which will carry the discussion of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in this chapter.

#### Exodus 24

We begin once again in Exodus 24, where this theme emerges in several ways and places. There we find the altar, which was designated by Yahweh as the specific place where he would come and deliver his blessings to the people. The making or "cutting" of the covenant happens not far off somewhere in the heavens, but it begins with the "cutting" or slaughtering of flesh-and-blood animals at a specific location (at the foot of Mount Sinai) and at a specific time ("early in the morning") in connection with the altar, the specific place of Yahweh's coming to give his gifts. Furthermore (as W. Eichrodt

reminded us; see page 101 above), what happens in Exodus 24 are concrete facts and events of history, rooted in time and space. This is how God chooses to come and deliver his gifts, so that they may be received by people at particular times and in particular places. He "incarnates" himself in the world he created and reveals himself in specific ways and places for the benefit of those whom he desires to save and bless.

Nowhere is the "locatedness" of God's gifts of the Sinai covenant more evident than in the blood of the covenant. Half of the blood is first splashed on the altar--this particular blood, on this particular altar, at this particular time. Here and now, in this particular blood, the gift of atonement is located. Particular words are spoken, at a specific time and place, and out of those words come the "Amen" of the people. The rest of the blood is then splashed on the people--this particular blood, on these particular people, at this particular time. This is concrete, physical, visible, tangible--"located" in a most vivid and unique way. The blood is "located" on their bodies and clothes. There is no need for the people to search for it or to try to "imagine" it; it is delivered to them and on them in a most direct and "locatable" way. In this very blood is the primary and all-encompassing gift of the covenant: atonement, "justification," the forgiveness of sins; and by this blood Israel is cleansed, declared holy, consecrated as a kingdom of priests. All of the gifts are given in specific places where they may be found and received: on the altar, on the people, in the blood. As if this might still be somehow missed or overlooked, Moses directs the people to this

blood in Exodus 24:8, in the "words of institution" of the Sinai covenant: "Look! The blood of the covenant!" (see pages 225-231 above). We recall Lambdin's observation about the "here-and-now-ness" of the word הנה (see page 226 above). When Moses says "Look!" he points to a specific thing, to a specific place, to the blood which at this very moment is upon the altar and the bodies of the people of Israel.

Even though Moses and the seventy have not yet begun their climb up Mount Sinai, it is accurate to say that the gifts that they receive on the mountain are theirs already in the blood. Even now they are qualified, by virtue of the blood, to see Yahweh, worship him, eat and drink before him. What is yet to come is guaranteed by and thus located in the blood. That does not diminish the significance of what is yet to come; it rather shows where to look for an explanation of these events that seem so inexplicable, and all that they imply. What exactly did the elders of Israel see on the mountain? The description is very limited and the account is markedly restrained, suggesting that him whom they saw and what they saw was beyond human description or explanation, as is the case with all eschatological realities. God somehow made himself "incarnate" or "visible" on Mt. Sinai, enabling the representatives of Israel to see him at that place on that day, but this was for Israel only a "glimpse" of the face to face encounter promised in the New Testament, "we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1). What was it like to eat and drink with/before the God of Israel made visible? No attempt is made to describe what it was like; we are told what happened: "they ate and they drank." It really happened at

a particular place at a particular time, yet it was at the same time a foretaste of that heavenly banquet which Isaiah (25:6-9) and the prophets attempt to describe (see pp. 267-271 above), and to which Jesus refers at the Last Supper. Very little can be said about the events of Exodus 24:9-11 beyond what the text itself tells us, which in terms of specific details is very little. This much, however, can be said: the eschatological gifts given and pledged to Israel on Mount Sinai were given and pledged in the blood of the covenant. The blood on the altar, the blood on their clothes and bodies, marked them as those chosen by Yahweh to receive a taste and a foretaste of the glories of heaven itself. What happened on Mount Sinai was truly "heaven on earth"--rooted and grounded in the blood of the covenant. On the mountain on that day the "far away" (both temporally and spacially) realities of heaven were brought near to Israel and made visible for them in the blood of the covenant. The "then" and "there" was made "here" and "now" in the blood of the covenant. And for the certainty and assurance that this glimpse and foretaste of heaven would someday be consummated for them in unending joy and bliss on the heavenly "Mount Sinai" (= Mount Zion) the words of Moses would continue to echo in Israel's ears: "Look! The blood of the covenant! Here and now! The blood of the covenant!"

#### The Lord's Supper

As with the theme of "gift," so also with the theme of "locatedness," what is true at Sinai is also true of the Last Supper, with a "more" implicit in the latter by the fact of Jesus' own words and presence, and by the real presence of his own body and blood

according to his words. The historical "locatedness" of the events at Sinai emphasized above is also made clear by the New Testament accounts of with the Lord's Supper. It is difficult to improve upon the following summary by Sasse, where he discusses the "parallel" between the Lord's Supper and the sacrificial meals of the pagan "mystery religions":

At one point, however, and that the most decisive point, this parallel is shattered. That a historical person at a historical time--"The Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed"--gave His disciples His body and His blood to eat and to drink is an assertion for which there is nothing comparable in the heathen cults. But on this assertion everything depends. For that action of Jesus was certainly for Paul not just the promise of something that would happen only after the Lord's resurrection and ascension, but it was the historical beginning, the institution, of the Lord's Supper. The fundamental difference that separates emerging Christianity from the mystery religions around it becomes clear precisely in the Lord's Supper. The heathen mystery cult rests on a myth. That Attis or Osiris died and rose again is myth, religious-poetic garb for a timeless truth, perhaps the truth valid always and everywhere that suffering leads to joy and death to life. It is nonsense to ask when the death of Osiris took place. This death is not a historical event, for the myth tells of things that lie beyond earthly history because they are timeless and eternal. It is quite the opposite with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These did not happen in the timelessness of myth but at a specific time in earthly history: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate . . . on the third day He rose again from the dead."

The Lord's Supper is firmly anchored in this history according to the oldest witness we have of it in the New Testament. Its historical origin is "on the night when He was betrayed."<sup>1</sup>

Not only is the Lord's Supper "firmly anchored" in history, but also the benefits of the Lord's Supper (including its eschatological benefits) are firmly "anchored," "rooted," "grounded," "located," in what the words of Jesus give us as the proprium of the Lord's Supper,

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<sup>1</sup>Hermann Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," in We Confess the Sacraments, translated by Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), pp. 82-83. Emphasis Sasse's. Hereafter "Sasse, The Lord's Supper."

his very body and blood given for us to eat and to drink. In his tremendous work on the Lord's Supper, Martin Chemnitz discusses the "locatedness" of the benefits (also the eschatological benefits) of Christ's Supper, against those who would turn us away from the body and blood to seek Christ "above," "in the heavenly places."

The adversaries teach that faith ought to turn itself away from the present celebration of the Supper and in its thoughts ascend above all heavens and there seek and embrace Christ in His majesty, although they themselves admit that they do not know in what place in heaven He is dwelling according to the mode of His true body. But the proper, simple, and natural meaning of the words of institution teaches that Christ Himself is present with us in the celebration of the Supper with both His deity and His flesh, and that He comes to us in order to lay hold on us (Phil. 3:12) and join us to Himself as intimately as possible . . . . Nor does He will that we wander around the gates of heaven uncertain in which area of heaven we ought to look for Christ in His human nature or whether we can find Him; but in the Supper He Himself is present in the external celebration and shows by visible signs where He wills to be present with His body and blood, and there we may safely seek Him and surely find Him, for there He Himself through the ministry distributes His body and blood to the communicants. These most sweet and necessary comforts will be completely snatched away from us if the substantial presence, distribution, and reception of Christ's body and blood are removed from the Supper.<sup>2</sup>

Several paragraphs later Chemnitz offers the following summary-statement, along with a noteworthy reference to the "blood of the covenant" in Exodus 24:

Surely there can be no more faithful, firm, or efficacious sign and seal of the promise and grace which have been shown and applied to us than that Christ Himself in the Supper shows to us His very body which has been given for us and His very blood which has been shed for us, not at some enormous distance, but He offers and gives it to us in so present a manner that we receive it to our very selves. For even in the Old Testament there was evidence of this uniting,

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Chemnitz, The Lord's Supper, translated by J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), pp. 187. On subsequent pages Chemnitz discusses various fruits and benefits of the Lord's Supper, including its various eschatological benefits, emphasizing repeatedly the "locatedness" of these gifts against those who would direct us elsewhere, "upward," "heavenward."

because from the same victim which had been sacrificed to God they later ate and from the blood<sup>3</sup> which had been shed before God a part was sprinkled on the people.

Chemnitz confesses wonderfully how Christ in His Supper solves the problem of "distance" between us and himself by locating himself (and with him, all the blessings of heaven) in his body and blood which he gives us to eat and to drink under bread and wine. Others, such as Peter Brunner, have offered very similar explanations as to how the problem of temporality is solved by Christ in His Supper:

What is happening now [at the Last Supper] already contains, in a hidden manner, something of what is to come. "This verse (Mark 14:25) does not only point to an eschatological event, but it also interprets an eschatological event already in progress; the introductory and concluding clauses are pervaded by it in every expression. What will one day come to pass, the perfected communion of the meal, is already being realized now; the present hour and its event thus belong to the eschatological reality of the kingdom of God. . . ." In anticipatory "remembrance," the Lord's Supper becomes a symbolic pre-gift of Jesus' nuptial meal with His bridal congregation. If the prophetic oth makes already present future eschatological events, how much more will this meal token of the Messiah become a vessel in which that which is to come is already very much present!<sup>4</sup>

Sasse grounds all of this, as perhaps Brunner fails to do as firmly as he might, in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper:

The eschatological character of the Lord's Supper may not, of course, be understood as if this Sacrament is only understood on the basis of Christian hope as a celebration in which the church brings its eschatological expectations impressively into its consciousness. Much rather the hope of the Lord's return and the coming Kingdom is so powerfully alive in this celebration because the Lord's Supper, as the celebration of Christ's real presence, already includes a fulfillment of that expectation. Whoever partakes of it already now sits at the table of the Lord, whose

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid, pp. 189-190.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus, translated by M. H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), pp. 187-188.

guest he will be one day in the kingdom of God. The same Lord, whose coming in glory one implores in the Eucharistic prayers, is already present in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus the prayer "Come, Lord Jesus" retains its eschatological meaning, but at the same time it carries the meaning expressed in an early liturgical prayer "Be present, be present, Jesus, good priest, among us, as also you will be in the midst of your disciples." . . . Thus in the Lord's Supper the boundaries of space and time are overcome: Heaven and earth become one, the incalculable interval that separates the present moment of the church from the future kingdom of God is bridged.<sup>5</sup>

We cite the same author emphasizing the same point, here from a different work:

Christ's final advent (parousia) is anticipated in the celebration of his Sacrament, because he really comes to his Church. The petition 'Come, Lord Jesus!' is already fulfilled in his Real Presence in the Sacrament. This coming of the Lord in the Real Presence makes the Lord's Day a day of unspeakable joy, a day of praise and thanksgiving. It makes the Eucharist not only an anticipation of the blessed future, but also a participation in the eternal worship in heaven, which St. John saw in the great vision he had at Patmos just at the time when the churches of Asia assembled for their divine service (Rev. 1:10; 4:1 ff). This is the reason why the Sanctus, the hymn which the seraphim and all the heavenly hosts (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8) sing in the presence of God (the epinikion, the hymn of victory, as it is called in old Greek liturgies) belongs to the eucharistic liturgy together with the Benedictus: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.' From the Early Church to the fathers of the Lutheran church, a cloud of witnesses testifies to the truth that the Lord's Supper is 'heaven on earth.'<sup>6</sup>

The Lord's Supper is heaven on earth--but only in the blood of the covenant, only as the Lord of heaven and earth really comes to his church in his own body and blood, thereby bringing to believers all the joys and blessings of heaven, and at the same time guaranteeing to them all the joys and blessings yet to come.

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<sup>5</sup>Sasse, "The Lord's Supper," pp. 92-93.

<sup>6</sup>Hermann Sasse, This Is My Body (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), pp. 325-326.



The "locatedness" (in time and space) of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the blood of the covenant may also be illustrated by reference to the connection between the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood and the resurrection of our own bodies. We refer first of all to the well-known phrase often credited to Ignatius, but which Lietzmann has shown was quoted from the Antiochene Liturgy:

pharmakon athanasias  
antidotos tou mē apothanein  
alla zēn en Iēsou Christō dia pantos.

Medicine of immortality,  
Antidote that we die not <sup>7</sup>  
But live in Jesus always.

To trace the development of this theme would take us beyond the compass of this study. What we have found, however, may be seen as also expressed when the body and blood of our Lord are spoken of as undestroyable by death and so "the medicine of immortality." This is confessed in the Lutheran Confessions and continues on in the Lutheran tradition, precisely because of the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper given for us to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins. The Large Catechism confesses the Lord's Supper as a "pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body," and as a "precious antidote" which "contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense and power against death and the devil and all

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<sup>7</sup>Ignatius, Ad. Eph. 20.2; cf. H. Lietzmann, Mass and The Lord's Supper, translated by D. H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 210; cited in Sasse, "The Lord's Supper," p. 81.

evils."<sup>8</sup> "In this sacrament," says Luther, "Christ offers us all the treasure he brought from heaven for us."<sup>9</sup> The Formula of Concord speaks of Christ's flesh as "a life-giving food." It quotes the Council of Ephesus which confessed that the flesh of Christ "has the power to give live."<sup>10</sup> Martin Chemnitz speaks of the Lord's Supper as an "ever-present antidote," and as a "remedy" which "heals all our diseases."<sup>11</sup> He says further:

Therefore in the Supper Christ offers us His own body and blood which have been exalted above all miseries into the glory of the Father. He does this in such a way that through them He joins Himself to this miserable nature of ours, so that with this most present and sure guarantee and seal He may give us the certainty that He does not wish us to remain in these miseries forever but that we shall someday be conformed to his glorious body which He offers to us<sup>12</sup> in the Supper as a seal of our own coming glorification.

The bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are

. . . the very body and blood of Christ, by which we are admitted to the heavenly fatherland, which the Lord now holds and governs, and they are the surest symbols of our own resurrection and glorification. For He offers these to us in the Supper in such a way that we receive them unto ourselves and possess them in ourselves, as Chrysostom says. But where will this most beautiful comfort be if we imagine that in the Lord's Supper our bodies

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<sup>8</sup>The Large Catechism of Martin Luther, quoted from The Book of Concord, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (hereafter Tappert) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 454.67,70. Cf. BKS 721-24-48.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 454.66. Cf. BKS 721.4-14.

<sup>10</sup>The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Art. VIII (The Person of Christ), quoted from Tappert, p. 602.59. Cf. BKS 1035.34-38: "Ita caro Christi est vivificus cibus. Et ex hoc evangelistae et apostoli dicto concilium Ephesinum pronuntiavit, carnem Christi habere vim vivificandi."

<sup>11</sup>Chemnitz, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 191.

receive only the elements of bread and wine, while the actual body and blood of Christ are distant from us as far as all heaven?<sup>13</sup>

Here, as always, we may not say more than God's Word gives us to say, and at the same time we may not say less. Sasse comments on this in his discussion of the connection between the Lord's Supper and the resurrection, and his words may also be applied to the other eschatological realities we have discussed, which are all, like the resurrection, more than we can imagine.

The resurrection is an eschatological event, and, therefore, inconceivable to human reason. The 'divine nature' of which we are partakers, according to 2 Peter 1:4: 'having escaped the corruption that is in the world,' is not a nature comparable to anything we call 'nature' in this world. As the glorified body of our Lord is not subject to the laws of physics, chemistry, or biology (in spite of Luke 24:42), in a similar way, our bodies, after they have been 'fashioned like unto his glorious body' (Phil. 3:21), will no longer obey the laws of this present nature. We can neither say how the identity of this present body with the resurrected body is to be understood, nor can we know what the future body (which will no longer belong to the realm of nature) will be like. The church cannot, therefore, form any dogma beyond the fact of the resurrection, as it is expressed in the Creeds. As the resurrection of the body and the Real Presence of the true body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper are beyond all human imagination, so we cannot know what the relationship may be between our participation in the body and blood of Christ and our resurrection.

What we can and must say is this: As the final absolution in the Last Judgment is anticipated in the absolution, and as our death and resurrection are anticipated in Baptism, so also an eschatological gift is received even now in the Lord's Supper. All of these gifts belong together. They are various aspects of one and the same salvation, which is meant for the whole man, soul and body. For, according to the anthropology of the Bible and of Luther, man does not consist of soul and body; he is soul and body. He is flesh also in the natural life of his mind and soul. Consequently, there is no redemption of the soul without redemption of the body. Each of the means of grace is meant by God to save the whole man. Therefore, it would be quite wrong to deny that the Lord's Supper has a meaning also for our mortal bodies. This is the profound insight into the mystery of God's saving grace that

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Luther expressed in the simple words of his Catechism: 'Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.'<sup>14</sup>

With the "locatedness" of the Lord's Supper's eschatology, therefore, we strive to confess the "that" and the "where" without attempting to explain the "how." In a way that is beyond our imagination, God truly makes future blessings present and distant blessings near in the true body and blood of Christ. The future remains the future (the Lord's Supper is the Messianic banquet and yet there is more to come; the resurrection of our bodies or the parousia of Christ do not, in the strict sense, occur in the Lord's Supper). At the same time, however, the future really does become present each and every time we are gathered around the Lord's Table and eat the body and drink the blood of the crucified, risen, and glorified Lord. In the body and blood of Christ we receive heaven on earth, and at the same time receive a pledge and guarantee of the consummation of heavenly realities yet to come. Each celebration of the Lord's Supper is a looking forward to the future and the glories yet to come, and at the same time it is a participation in those future events through the partaking of the body and blood of him who is past, present, and future. "Time" and "space" are no longer "problems" or "barriers" to be transcended for the one who in faith partakes of the blood of the Lord Jesus, for the Lord who is not bound by the barriers of time and space brings the gifts of past and future into the present bestowal of his body and blood. The hope that remains for believers for the consummation at Christ's parousia is still very real, precisely

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<sup>14</sup>Sasse, This Is My Body, pp. 315-316.

because that hope is revived and nourished by Christ's coming in his body and blood. The hunger that remains for the feast in the kingdom of God is also very real, precisely because that hunger is satisfied and at the same time intensified every time the believer partakes of Christ's body and drinks his blood of the covenant.

#### Contrasting Approaches

As with the gift-character of the Lord's Supper, so also its locatedness is obscured or diminished by those who fail to recognize the proprium of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology. For Cullmann, for example (as for all those who follow Lietzmann), the main thing about the Lord's Supper is not the eating of Christ's body and the drinking of his blood, but the "appearing" of the risen Christ, his "presence" and "participation" in the "fellowship meal" of the community of believers. Thus, for Cullmann, the Lord's Supper's eschatology consists in the assembling of the believers "in the joyful expectation of eating with Christ" and in discovering in such fellowship "an anticipation of His final Messianic return" (see pages 4-8 above). Though his approach to the Lord's Supper is quite different, Jeremias is left with a very similar view: the Lord's Supper is "an anticipatory gift of the kingdom," in which the disciples gather for table fellowship to look forward to and pray for the consummation of their salvation (see pages 10-12 above). The "remembering" approach of J. R. Wilkes and the "proclamation" approach of I. H. Marshall and E. Schweizer result in this same rather abstract, "heaven-gazing" view of the Lord's Supper's eschatology (pp. 34-36 and 36-37 above). Granted, of course, the Lord's Supper is an

"anticipation" of the Messianic banquet and the consummation of the kingdom. It is a "looking forward" to Christ's parousia, and as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we do hope and pray for his final coming and our final inheritance in heaven. The point we have tried to make is that the Lord's Supper is also much more than that: it is an utterly unique miracle (not just a "parable") in which God actually brings past and future into the present, and locates these blessings for us in the blood of Jesus Christ so that we may receive them as his gift by drinking his blood with our very mouths and into our very bodies.

The question of "locatedness" in time and space becomes most problematic, perhaps, for those who advocate the "sacrament" approach to the Lord's Supper. Because of the inherent duality in the term sacrament between earthly "signs" and heavenly "realities," and the tendency to speak of "levels" of reality in movement from lower to higher, the eschatology of the Lord's Supper is always in danger of becoming "detached" from the locatable means of grace and being seen as something "greater," "higher," or "more real" than what is received in the Lord's Supper itself. This is certainly true in O. Casel's "mystery" approach to the Lord's Supper, where we transcend the "boundaries" and "mesh" of time to be joined to our Lord who has transcended time. Through the Spirit we soar to heaven, where the true realities are to be found; in the body we remain captive to time, amidst signs which merely point us to greater things above (see pages 22-24 above). Though Schillebeeckx fights much harder to overcome these dualities, he does not succeed in escaping the levels and

distinctions which come with a definition of the Lord's Supper based on "sacrament" and "sign" (pp. 16-20 above). Because of his departure from the true proprium of the Lord's Supper in which all "problems" of temporality and locatedness are eliminated, Schillebeeckx is always at great pains to somehow bring "sign" and "reality" together, and to solve problems of "visibility" and "temporality" in ways that go beyond the testimony of Scripture. Schillebeeckx speaks much of eschatology, to be sure; but after he is finished, one is left not so much comforted by the assurance that these eschatological gifts are given and guaranteed in the Lord's Supper (in Christ's body and blood); rather the reader is left pondering the almost incomprehensible explanations which Schillebeeckx offers concerning how such things are possible and why they are necessary, all flowing from his definition of "sacrament" and the accompanying sacramental "laws." For Schillebeeckx, it seems, the Lord's Supper's eschatology is more a matter of philosophical speculation and "scientific" theory than it is a matter of confessing what the Scriptures say in directing the reader to the concrete means of grace where the Lord is with his gifts, and where there is always more to be given than we can imagine. With Schillebeeckx one is reminded of Luther's 'No mathematics!' to Oecolampadius at Marburg, and his constant insistence against applying philosophical definitions, laws, boundaries, and distinctions to the Lord who can do anything, and to His Supper in which he does and gives what he says he does and gives.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>See "The Marburg Colloquy" in Luther's Works (AE) volume 37, pages 45,67,75, and 50-89 passim. Cf. WA 30<sup>III</sup>, 92-159. See also, e.g.) "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper" (1528), in Luther's Works

We might mention, finally, several of the approaches surveyed in Part I which emphasized the "locatedness" of the Lord's Supper, but which directed us to locations which obscured the true nature of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology. J. Oulton, for example, "locates" the eschatology of the Lord's Supper in the individual believer, since for Oulton it is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's recognition of and appreciation for this presence, which makes the Lord's Supper meaningful and beneficial (see pages 40-43 above). Oulton, it seems, directs us to look within ourselves for the eschatological reality and benefit of the Lord's Supper, since these are dependent on one's proper reception and use of the gift of the Holy Spirit. J. Reumann, on the other hand, seeks to locate the eschatological dimension of the Lord's Supper in its meal-character. The more like a meal the Lord's Supper is, the more eschatological significance it will have for those who participate in it (see pages 43-46 above). In the "communio" approach (pages 37-40 above), and somewhat similarly in Wainright's eschatology approach, whatever "eschatology" may be ascribed to the Lord's Supper is seen as located in the community of believers, the fellowship of the faithful, so that we "realize" or effect this eschatology ourselves by our efforts to "unite" the church around the Lord's (or is it the church's?) Supper. Whenever, as in the above approaches, the Lord's Supper's eschatology is grounded or located somewhere other than where we are directed by Moses in Exodus 24 and by Jesus at the Last Supper (the blood of the covenant), the result is a serious distortion and impoverishment of the

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(AE) volume 37, pages 151-372 passim; cf. WA 26,261-509.



Lord's Supper's eschatology, which always profoundly affects its character as gift. An eschatology which is not clearly and firmly located leaves us searching and speculating rather than receiving and trusting. An eschatology of the Lord's Supper which is located elsewhere than the blood also ultimately leaves us looking within ourselves or at least within the community of believers for the reality and certainty of the "last things," rather than outside of ourselves (extra nos), to the blood of the covenant where we know for certain all God's gifts may be found and received.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE "WHOLENESS" OF THE LORD'S SUPPER'S ESCHATOLOGY IN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

In addition to the giftness and locatedness of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the blood of the covenant, another characteristic which calls for discussion in this concluding part of the paper is the wholeness of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the blood of the covenant.

#### Exodus 24

We encountered the question of wholeness and its alternative of sundry pieces at the very beginning of our study of Exodus 24 in connection with our evaluation of various critical exegetical treatments of the pericope, in which Exodus 24:1-11 was often seen as a fragmented and contradictory account of various conflicting or unrelated events. Upon straightforward examination of the text and context, however, we concluded that the Biblical evidence supports the recognition that Exodus 24:1-11 is a literary unit, a coherent whole, and that the various events which take place in the pericope are in full harmony with each other, centered as they are in the blood of the covenant. The reader is referred to the discussion in the first excursus of Part II (pp. 82-92 above) for a review of the evidence which led to that conclusion.

As the blood of the covenant is the key to perceiving the textual unity of Exodus 24:1-11, it is also the key to recognizing the theological unity of the pericope. The blood is the key to the remarkable invitation in Exodus 24:1, which seems inexplicable to many (and which is inexplicable apart from the blood). The incredible events of Exodus 24:9-11 also stand or fall with the blood. The blood is the matrix from which the events of verses 3-8 unfold and develop: everything from verse 3 forward leads to the blood, and verse 8 climaxes in Moses' directing the people to the blood by which Yahweh has made his covenant with them. Everything centers in the blood of the covenant; what precedes its use and what follows its use are both explained and held together by the blood.

The blood is, moreover (as we discussed, pages 223-225 above), one blood. It is separated in the two blood rites of Exodus 24, but it is the same blood in both instances. The evidence gathered from Leviticus also cautioned us against pressing a theological distinction between the two blood rites (see pages 222-232 above), since the gifts or blessings given by both are complementary and, in a sense, even synonymous. They are various aspects of the one great gift of "atonement" which included forgiveness, cleansing, consecration, sanctification--the Old Testament equivalent of "justification." Out of this great gift of atonement flows the eschatological gifts realized and foreshadowed in Exodus 24:9-11, so that these gifts also are, in a real sense, incorporated in the blood of the covenant. Seeing God, worshipping him on the mountain, participating in the unique covenant meal (which, no doubt, consisted of the sacrifices slaughtered at the

foot of the mountain)--these are not to be viewed as separate or "greater" gifts beyond the present or "temporary" gift of atonement, but as various aspects or dimensions of the one great gift of the forgiveness of sins which was purchased for Israel by means of the blood of the covenant, and given to them in that blood.

In this context it is appropriate to mention once again the unity in Exodus 24 between the "book of the covenant" and the "blood of the covenant," the gift of the words of Yahweh and the gift of the blood. Contrary to the conclusions of a number of scholars, we found in the text no contradiction or inconsistency between these two "propers" in the covenant-making liturgy: the covenant is made by the blood in accordance with Yahweh's word (Exodus 24:8). From that word also flows the confession of the people, those who would soon be covered with the blood. We noted the "wholeness" of their confession, flowing from the wholeness of the words and the blood. All the people with one voice together say their "Amen," and pledge faithfulness to all the words which Yahweh has spoken. From beginning to end, and in every aspect of the text, Exodus 24 emphasizes the wholeness of Yahweh's gifts in the blood of the covenant, and the wholeness of Israel's confession flowing from those gifts (see pages 135-137 above). Above all, Exodus 24 makes clear that the eschatology of the Sinai covenant may not be separated from or set in contrast to the blood of the covenant, nor perceived in such a way as detracts from the wholeness of God's gift of the covenant as it is presented in Exodus 24.

The Lord's Supper

As in Exodus 24, the wholeness of the "new covenant" in Christ's blood is assumed by and emphasized by those texts which deliver it. We noted, first of all, the harmony within and between those texts, and the fact that the various motifs (eucharist, sacrifice,, passover, eschatology, communion, etc.) fit together into a beautiful whole centered in Christ's blood of the covenant. We found no evidence in the text, for example, which supported a disruption of the wholeness of the gift of the Lord's Supper based on a distinction between "sign" and "reality." The text makes no such distinctions. Jesus says simply and plainly: "This is my body . . . This is my blood of the covenant." There is no question here whether he is speaking of his "real" body and blood, or just a "sign" of his body and blood. As in Exodus 24, the blood which effects the covenant is as "real" as can be; the word "is" disallows any setting "bread" against "body" or "wine" against "blood."

The same is true with reference to the One who speaks the words and gives his body and blood to eat and drink. To the question, "Whose body and blood do we receive in the Lord's Supper?," there is only one answer, since there is only one Lord: we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, died on a cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Those who distinguish in the Lord's Supper between the "incarnate Jesus" and the "glorified Christ," the "crucified Lord" and the "risen Lord," the "earthly Jesus" and the "heavenly Christ" (see the discussion of Schillebeeckx's approach, pages 15-21 above; also the approach of Lietzmann [et al], pages 3-9 above) do so on the basis of human logic, definitions, and

presuppositions and not on the basis of God's Word. There is no Scriptural justification for splitting up Christ, nor for splitting him up as far as his presence in the Lord's Supper is concerned.<sup>1</sup> There is only one Lord Jesus Christ--the incarnate, crucified, risen, and glorified Lord. He is the Lord truly present in the Lord's Supper in his body and blood. Werner Elert, discussing the "here-and-nowness" ("locatedness") of Christ's promise in the Lord's Supper, also touches on the theme of wholeness:

As always, faith goes hand in hand with the here-and-now promise. If the promise comes to us hic et nunc, the fulfillment also comes to us hic et nunc. If the promise is fulfilled now, it is also fulfilled here. If the exalted Christ is present now, he is also present here. Whoever interprets this differently cannot in truth speak about His presence. If Christ is here now, He is here entirely, not fractionally. If He comes to us, He does not expect us "to soar to heaven." If in the Sacrament at hand He gives us His body, we must not seek Him in distant places. That is our conception of the real presence. The gulf which separates Christologies also separates the doctrines of Holy Communion. The doctrine of Holy Communion is the test for the genuineness of our belief in the incarnation.<sup>2</sup>

As faith in Christ goes, so goes faith in Christ as he gives himself to us in his Supper. Faith in a "whole" Christ goes hand in hand with faith in a "whole" Lord's Supper. If the whole Christ (the only Christ) is truly present in his Supper in his body and blood, then he is present there with all the gifts of which he speaks, not just a fraction of them. Perhaps this is illustrated best by reference to the promise in Matthew that his blood of the covenant is given "for the forgiveness of sins." How much forgiveness is given by Christ in

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<sup>1</sup>See footnote 15 of chapter 3 above.

<sup>2</sup>Werner Elert, The Lord's Supper Today, translated by M. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1973), p. 37.

his blood? The Lord does not speak here in fractional terms. He does not say that he forgives a certain percentage of our sins. His forgiveness is given wholly, even above and beyond what those who receive may perceive as their need. In the Lord's Supper we are forgiven: wholly forgiven by the Lord who is there for us entirely in his body and blood.

"Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." With the blood of atonement at the foot of the mountain came the taste of heaven at the top of the mountain. In the blood of forgiveness in the Lord's Supper comes the foretaste, certainty and assurance of salvation in the heavenly places. There is still a "not yet," of course, but in the blood of Christ there is also a real and whole "now." Sasse puts it well when he says, "In the sacrament the future becomes present without ceasing to be future."<sup>3</sup> As "earthly Jesus" may not be set against "heavenly Christ" (as if there were two Christs), the "now" may not be set against the "not yet" in such a way as to suggest that God gives his gifts in a partial or incomplete manner. There is, in terms of our historical experience, a sequence of events, even as there was in Exodus 24. We await the consummation of our salvation, which is promised us in the Lord's Supper. But even as we wait, we have the pledge and guarantee that the gifts of the consummation are ours already in the body and blood of Christ. The whole gift of salvation is ours in the body and blood of Christ, even as the whole Christ is ours in the partaking of his body and blood.

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<sup>3</sup>Hermann Sasse, This Is My Body (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 316 (fn. 48).

"Let the Lord's Supper remain whole!"<sup>4</sup> cried Luther; his words also apply to our letting it remain whole in and with all its eschatological gifts. The "more" to come is an aspect of the whole which is given us even now in the body and blood of Christ. The certainty of that fact is what enables us to wait confidently and joyfully for what is already ours through our partaking in faith of the body and blood of our Lord.

The word "ours" in the sentence above also merits particular attention in connection with the theme of "wholeness." We have criticized the communio approach to the Lord's Supper, in which "fellowship" with each other in the "ecclesial" body of Christ is seen as the proprium of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology (see pages 37-40 above). On the other hand, the theme of "the Lord and his people" is intimately connected with the blood of the covenant--at Sinai, at the Last Supper, and on every Lord's day. We spoke of this earlier (page 316) in our summary of the wholeness theme in Exodus 24. The Lord brings a people out of Egypt in the book of Exodus. He pronounces them his people in Exodus 19, "a holy nation," "a kingdom of priests." Never is the focus on this or that individual (even Moses is always there as the representative of the nation, priest before God on behalf of the people). This is true also in Exodus 24. The people as a whole are splattered with the blood. The people as a whole hear the words of Yahweh. The people as a whole speak their "Amen." The people as a

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<sup>4</sup>Martin Luther, Katechismuspredigten (1528), Martin Luthers Werke, Weimar ed. (H. B. Nachfolger, 1910) 30.1, 55, 19(2): "Lasse das Sacrament ganz bleiben."



whole--through the representative seventy elders--ascend Mount Sinai and receive the eschatological gifts of the covenant.

So also at the last Supper, the Lord has his people, his disciples, as representatives of his church. They are there together--listening, receiving, eating and drinking. What the Lord says he says to them all together. What he gives he gives to them all together. When a dispute arises about which of them is or would be the "greatest," Jesus first rebukes them (Luke 22:24-27) and then assures them (Luke 22:28-30) that all of them together would reign with him in his kingdom. The heavenly banquet spoken of in Matthew (26:29), Mark (14:25), and Luke (22:15-16,18) is by definition a corporate event: it is pictured as a banquet, as an eating and drinking together with the Lord and with all those who have "continued with him in [his] trials" (Luke 22:28), as a being at table with the Lord in heaven by those who have partaken in common of his body and blood on earth. This is brought to its most glorious expression in the book of Revelation, where the Lord's people are most perfectly together with the Lord and with each other: a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6) made holy by Christ's blood, people "from every tribe and tongue and nation" (Rev. 6:9), worshipping the Lamb on his throne (Rev. 5:6-14), joining in the eschatological "Amen!" of the elders in heaven (Rev. 5:8,14). No "individuals" are singled out here for special notice or commendation, rather "a great multitude which no man could number" (no mathematics here!), "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues," standing together before the Lamb and crying out together in a loud

voice: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:9-10)

In the same way we are gathered together by the Lord each (sic?) Lord's Day to eat his body and to drink his blood of the covenant, to become one with the Lord and with each other through his body and his blood, to receive a foretaste of and to look forward to the consummation of our oneness which is so vividly portrayed in the passages from Revelation quoted above. In words that differ but with the same faith and hope--and above all with the same body and blood of the same Lord--we pray at every Lord's Supper on every Lord's Day as was prayed in the Didache: Lord, "let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom . . . . Remember, Lord, your Church, to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in your love, and bring it together from the four winds, now sanctified, into your kingdom which you have prepared for it; for yours are the power and the glory and for evermore. Amen. May grace come, and this world pass away. Amen. . . . Marana tha. Amen"<sup>5</sup>

#### Contrasting Approaches

The application of the theme of wholeness to those approaches to the Lord's Supper's eschatology surveyed in Part I has already been mentioned or at least hinted at in several ways and places above; we offer only a brief summary here. We made reference above to the "sacrament" approach to the Lord's Supper and to how the wholeness of

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<sup>5</sup>Didache ch. 9:4, 10:5-6; quoted from Prayers of The Eucharist--Early and Reformed, 3rd ed., translated and edited by R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming (New York: Pueblo, 1987), pp. 23-24.

the Lord's Supper, along with its eschatology, is impoverished by this approach. Werner Elert comments on the various types of "doubleness" introduced into the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a result of Augustine's adoption of this "sign/reality" concept, and we recall his statement quoted earlier that if Christ in the Lord's Supper "is here now, He is here entirely, not fractionally."<sup>6</sup> The "sacrament" approach to the Lord's Supper inevitably leaves us with a fractional Christ, a fractional Lord's Supper, and a fractional Lord's Supper's eschatology. Luther's "No mathematics" echoes here again.

In Lietzmann and Cullmann (and others; see pages 3-9 above) we encountered an undue emphasis on the risen Christ and his presence in the "fellowship" of the Lord's Supper, and the hope of recovering the spirit of joy and eschatological expectation in Christ's Supper was founded on the idea of the appearance of the risen Christ coming to "eat with" the community of believers as he did after his resurrection. This perceived duality between Christ's death and his resurrection, between the risen Christ and the crucified Christ, has sometimes led to a further distinction between a "somber observance" of the Lord's Supper which focuses on his death and a "joyful celebration" which focuses on his resurrection. The latter is seen by some (e.g. Lietzmann and those who follow him pages 3-9 above; also Reumann, pages 43-47) as the key to restoring to the Lord's Supper its true eschatological dimension. This too, however, stems from a "fractional" view of Christ and his work, and results in a fractional view of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology. Sasse rightly asks:

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<sup>6</sup>Elert, p. 37; see also pp. 33-37.

"When did the Lord's Supper ever lack the character of the Eucharist? Since when should remembering the Lord's death and joyful thanksgiving for his redemption be regarded as mutually exclusive?"<sup>7</sup> Christ's death and his resurrection belong together; the Christian rejoices in them both. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of and a participation in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as well as a remembrance of and participation in his resurrection from the dead. In the same way, the Lord's Supper is also an anticipation of and a participation in Christ's parousia, our own resurrection, and the eternal worship and feasting in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Exodus 24:9-11). All this goes flows from both Christ's death and his resurrection, by which he accomplished fully our salvation. Sasse says:

As the Sacrament of the Altar looks back to the Last Supper, so it looks forward to the Messianic meal in heaven, the wedding feast of the future, when Christ as bridegroom and the Church as his bride will be united at the 'marriage supper of the Lamb.' The Lord's Supper is, at the same time, a feast of remembrance and a feast of hope—hope in the deeper sense of the New Testament, hope for the advent of Christ in glory. In celebrating this Sacrament, the Church shows forth, proclaims, the death of the Lord 'till he come.' That is, the death of our Lord and his advent in glory belong together. This Sacrament, therefore, is the remembrance of the terrific hour when the Lamb of God was slain, and at the same time it is the joyful looking forward to the day when our redemption will be accomplished at the Supper of the Lamb.<sup>8</sup>

The harmony and unity of Christ's death, resurrection and return in glory as these relate to the Lord's Supper is also discussed by Peter Brunner, who offers continuing insight into the previous theme of temporality:

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<sup>7</sup>Herman Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," in We Confess the Sacraments, translated by Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>Sasse, This Is My Body, pp. 323-324.

Thus the Lord's Supper is also the end-time fulfillment of the Old Testament festive joy. The "remembrance" of His death and the rejoicing over their salvation with which the early congregations celebrated this Meal in their worship services do not exclude each other, as we see from Acts 2:46, but they belong together.

This joy which is no longer of this world springs from the recollection of Jesus' death, from the reception of His sacrificial body, from the communion of His body and blood. As we are received into Christ's sacrificial body, we transcend death's boundary and obtain a share in the life which was achieved through Christ's victory on the cross and came to light in His resurrection. His ekklesia-body is constituted precisely through the communion of His body and blood; and this ekklesia-body yearns for its visible reunion with its Head in glory. Only in the communion of His body is the church the "pure bride" (2 Cor. 11:2) who goes out to meet and eagerly awaits the returning Messiah, and who in such waiting may already be united with Him precisely through Holy Communion.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the rather "loose" language of "recollection" and "transcending," as well as an over-emphasis on Christ's sacrificial body (what about his risen and glorified body?), Brunner helpfully reminds us that the blessings of Christ's death, the benefits of his resurrection, and the joy and hope of his return in glory are all, as a whole, given in the Lord's Supper. They are given (as Brunner also may not say clearly and emphatically enough) in the body and blood of Christ, which are for us the Gospel--the whole Gospel, not just a "part" of the Gospel.

We concluded our survey in Part I by commenting on various ecumenical efforts to reach consensus on the Lord's Supper, referring to these efforts as a "Patchwork" approach to the Lord's Supper. This may at first seem to be too harsh a judgment, since those engaged in such efforts undoubtedly share Y. Brilioth's concern to restore

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<sup>9</sup>Peter Brunner, Worship in the Name of Jesus, translated by M. H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 189. There is much more here and on following pages related to this theme that we have necessarily left unquoted.

wholeness to the Lord's Supper by emphasizing and expressing all of its various "dimensions" in its "many-sided glory" (see pages 52-54 above). The problem, however, is that such efforts seek to "restore wholeness" to the Lord's Supper apart from a recognition of the proprium of the Lord's Supper, in which alone true wholeness can be found. Furthermore, it is not ours to "restore" but only to receive--and only then by the grace and giving of the Lord. In attempting to give due and equal consideration to the various aspects and dimensions of the Lord's Supper, this approach fails to recognize what is truly unique about the Lord's Supper, what gives it its distinctive character, that from which flows all of its various inter-related characteristics. Just as the Gospel is the center and matrix of the Scriptures, so the body and blood of Christ are the center and matrix of the Lord's Supper. The wholeness of the Lord's Supper--and its eschatology--is dependent on the Lord who gave it to us by his own words, and it is dependent on those words which make it what it is: his own body and blood. Any departure from those words and the proprium which they convey is a departure from the wholeness of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology, no matter how hard one may try to "patch together" the Lord's Supper on the basis of everything else that Scripture (or the church) may have said about it. It remains whole and complete only as long as it remains the Lord's, and it remains the Lord's only as long as we let his words determine what it is and what it gives.

Obviously the wholeness of the Lord's Supper is also closely related to its "giftness." When the gift in question is the

forgiveness of sins (along with life and salvation), a "partial" gift is really not that gift at all. As we noted above, our Lord does not give "partial" forgiveness, "partial" life, "partial" salvation. To the extent that all of the various approaches surveyed in Part I qualify the wholeness of the Lord's Supper and its eschatology, they also qualify and impoverish its giftness. If the Lord's Supper is not whole, it is not wholly gift. If the Lord's Supper's eschatology is not wholly gift, it is not wholly Gospel. If it is not wholly Gospel it is at least partly "Law," which means that we must do "something" to complete it, perfect it, or bring it to its eschatological fulfillment. The Lord's Supper is whole and it is gift only as long as it is centered and grounded in the blood of the covenant. The blood is gift, and it is whole; nothing needs to be done to "complete" or "perfect" what Christ has accomplished by his blood. "It is finished!" The gifts which flow from Christ's blood are as whole as the Lord who has earned them, and who gives and guarantees them in the blood which he gives us to drink in his Supper.

#### All, and Still More

The evidence from Exodus 24 has been gathered and weighed, and much has been thereby given to enrich our confession of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the blood of the covenant. In considering each theme (giftness, locatedness, wholeness) flowing from the blood of the covenant, we have recognized a "more" inherent in the "new covenant," in that in the Lord's Supper it is no longer only "the blood of the covenant" but "my blood of the covenant"--the true blood of ὁ κύριος

(Yahweh!) himself,<sup>10</sup> truly incarnate in his Supper according to his words. This "more" does not diminish the wholeness or giftness of the blood of the "old" covenant, but rather enriches it, since it identifies the source of that prior blood's efficacy, and reveals the key to the forgiveness, life and salvation which it contained and conveyed.

Even with that more, however--and in fact precisely because of it--it remains for us to ask whether and in what sense the blood of the new covenant contains and conveys an eschatological "more" which breaks through even the fullness of the eschatology in the blood of the "old" covenant. We touched on this earlier (page 283 above), but it calls for more explicit and thorough discussion here. Is there anything in the Lord's Supper's eschatology which cannot be accounted for by the blood of the covenant in Exodus 24 and its eschatology? Having confessed what can be confessed on the basis of Exodus 24, is there more to be said about the Lord's Supper's eschatology which has not yet been said, even by those whose insights have corroborated the conclusions offered above (see page 281 above)?

The Lord himself answers this question with his own words: "Take eat; this is my body . . . Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the covenant."

At Sinai the people of Israel were splattered with the blood of the covenant, and afterwards (through their representatives) they saw God and ate and drank. The shattering "more" of the new covenant is

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<sup>10</sup>See "κύριος" in TDNT 3:1039-1095, especially pp. 1088-1094, "Jesus as Lord."



that in the Lord's Supper the Lord brings together into one the blood of the covenant and the eating and drinking, the blood of the covenant and the "beholding God." What was separated for Israel is joined together for us by the Lord in his blood of the new covenant. What for Israel of old was two events is for us one event in Christ's blood of the new covenant. They received the blood at the bottom of the mountain, and then at the top of the mountain received the eschatological theophany and meal. The wholeness of these two events was recognized and emphasized above, but there is a "more" in the Lord's Supper which cannot be ignored, denied, or discounted. In the Lord's Supper what happened at the bottom and at the top of Mount Sinai are brought together by the Lord into one. In the Lord's Supper we eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord. We see, touch, and taste the Lord in his blood of the new covenant in a way that goes beyond even the fullness of Yahweh's gift of himself to Israel at Sinai. The elders of Israel ate and drank, and saw the Lord, having previously been covered with the blood. We eat and drink not only "with" or "before" the Lord, we eat his very body and drink his very blood, and so in the Lord's Supper all the gifts of the eschaton are given us in a way that goes beyond what was given to Israel, in our partaking of the very body and blood of the Lord of the eschaton. The Lord's Supper is the eschatological banquet in a way that it was not for the elders of Israel on Mount Sinai. What they received was whole, and wholly gift; what we receive is more, without in any way diminishing the wholeness of that prior gift. In both cases it is the Lord delivering his gifts

in his way, and with the Lord and his gifts it is always "all" and always "more."

This is true also, it must be said, of the Lord's Supper. Even with the "more" discussed above, there is still "more" to come. The Lord's Supper is the Messianic banquet--we sit at table with the Lord; we see him, touch him, and taste him when we eat his body and drink his blood. We do this, however, "until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26), until that day when the Lord returns to gather his scattered church so that together we may eat and drink with him anew in the kingdom of heaven. It is all ours now in the blood of the covenant, but there is still more to come. That is, to be sure, beyond our imagining. That is beyond our mathematics. That is the way of the Lord who does not ask us to compute or to imagine, but says: "Take, eat; this is my body. Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

## CONCLUSION

We began this paper by noting the increasing interest of recent scholarship in the connection between the Lord's Supper and Eschatology. We also observed the validity of G. Wainwright's insight that a significant reason for this renewed interest is the diminishing concern about the question of Christ's real (body and blood) presence in the Lord's Supper. From Wainwright's perspective, this earlier obsession with what he terms "ontological" questions about the Lord's Supper was a major barrier to recognizing its true eschatological nature. The removal of that barrier, he concludes, has cleared the way for a true renewal of the Lord's Supper's eschatology.

One way of summarizing our basic conclusion here might be to describe it as the opposite of Wainwright's. We have found, on the contrary, that the key to a true "renewal" of the Lord's Supper's eschatology is to be found in a renewed concern for and confession of what Scripture reveals as the true center and proprium of the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ. We were led to this conclusion not only by the texts of the New Testament and the words of Jesus, but, through his words, by the Old Testament text of Exodus 24:1-11 and the words of Moses which Jesus quoted when he instituted the "new covenant" in his blood. We agree with Hermann Sasse that "all the great facts

remission of sins, sanctorum communio, 'Come, Lord Jesus!', presuppose this Presence" and depend upon it.<sup>1</sup> Or, as was quoted earlier:

The incarnation, the true divinity and true humanity in the one Person of the God-man, the virgin birth of Christ, his bodily resurrection, his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, his advent in glory, our own resurrection: all these are linked to the Real Presence of his true body and blood in such a way that the denial of this Presence is either the cause or the consequence of the denial of the other articles.<sup>2</sup>

This fact has more than passing "theological" or "academic" significance. Like all true theology, it also has great significance for the life and survival of the church. As Sasse also observes:

The church has been able to survive the delay of the Lord's return, for which it has been praying for 19 centuries and for which it has been waiting so long, only because Sunday after Sunday is the "Day of the Lord," the day of the anticipated parousia, the day on which He comes to His congregation under the lowly forms of bread and wine and "incorporates" Himself in it anew.<sup>3</sup>

Again, from This Is My Body:

It is this Sacrament that made it possible for the church to survive what in the eyes of the world must have been the greatest disappointment, the delay of his parousia. This Sacrament has accompanied the Church throughout the centuries, and will accompany her to the end of the world, even to the Last Day when he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. This Sacrament is cibus viatorum, food for the wayfarers, as our medieval Fathers called it. This blessed bread is eaten by the Church on her way from this world to the world to come. The flesh of the true Lamb of God is eaten, as the first Passover lamb was eaten by the people of God of old: 'Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste' (Exod. 12:11). This blessed bread is the manna, the life-giving bread from heaven. As Israel was miraculously sustained in the desert by the spiritual food of the manna and the

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<sup>1</sup>Hermann Sasse, This Is My Body (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 329.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Herman Sasse, "The Lord's Supper in the New Testament," in We Confess the Sacraments, translated by Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), p. 105.

spiritual drink of the water from the rock, so the Church, on her way from 'Egypt,' the old aeon of sin and death, to the 'promised land' of the new aeon of eternal life, is sustained in the desolate desert of this world by the spiritual food and drink of the true body and blood of him who is at the same time the Passover Lamb of the New Covenant and the Bread of Life. This understanding of the Lord's Supper we find in 1 Cor. 10:1 ff and John 6. It also underlies the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Church is described as the wandering people of God on its way from this world of suffering and death to the abiding city of God (13:14), whence 'we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body' (Phil. 3:20, 21 RSV). Then, when we shall have reached the end of our pilgrimage, we shall no longer need the Sacrament, and the Lord's Supper will be replaced by 'the Supper of the Lamb.'<sup>4</sup>

What is expressed so vividly above regarding the eschatological significance of the bread we have tried to show to be also true regarding the eschatological significance of the wine as the blood of the covenant which enabled (and still enables) Israel (old and new) to continue its journey on to the heavenly Mount Zion, to the consummation of the worship, feast and theophany in which Moses and the representative seventy participated on Mount Sinai.

Where the real presence of Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper is believed and confessed, this eschatological hope is most firmly grounded and most vibrantly alive. It is expressed vividly in the hymnody<sup>5</sup> and liturgy<sup>6</sup> of the church, and in the profound yet

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<sup>4</sup>Sasse, This Is My Body, pp. 326-327.

<sup>5</sup>Even a cursory treatment of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in the hymnody of the church (ancient and modern) would take us far too far afield. To my knowledge this has not been done, however, except for the evidence Wainwright has collected in Eucharist and Eschatology, which ignores (e.g.) Lutheran hymnody altogether. Even a page-through of the hymns in "The Lord's Supper" section in the various Lutheran hymnals (old and new) will reveal a striking emphasis on the Lord's Supper's eschatology because of the primary emphasis on the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood. In The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941) see, for example, the following hymns: 305:3 ("the priceless gifts of heaven . . . freely given" in Christ's

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true body and blood; Johann Franck); 306:1-8 (Samuel Kinner recognizes the Lord's Supper as "a feast for our salvation" [v. 1], "a blessed comfort . . . when living and when dying" [v. 8]); 308:4 ("When thou shalt in thy glory come/To gather all thy people home/then let me, as thy heavenly guest/In anthems praise thee with the blest;" Emanuel Cronenwett). Here, as in H. E. Jacob's hymn "Lord Jesus Christ, We Humbly Pray" (TLH 314), there is an echo of Didache's prayer for the "final gathering" of Christ's church: "One bread, one cup, one body, we/United by our life in thee/Thy love proclaim till thou shalt come/To bring thy scattered loved ones home" (314:4). See also TLH 315 and 316, and Luther's hymn, "O Lord, We Praise Thee" (TLH 313), where the Lord's Supper's eschatology also rings through clearly in various ways. Not all of these hymns are of (confessional) Lutheran origin or authorship, but their inclusion in The Lutheran Hymnal is evidence of their confessing the proprium of the Lord's Supper, which more often than not results in their confessing also the Lord's Supper's dominical eschatology. One of the most explicit and vibrant confessions of the Lord's Supper's eschatology in Lutheran Worship [LW] (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982) is by the Scottish theologian Horatius Bonar. Here, however (as one might expect) there is little if any talk of "body and blood" even with all the vivid eschatology (LW 243: 1,2,3,5,7):

Here, O my Lord, I see you face to face;  
 Here would I touch and handle things unseen,  
 Here grasp with firmer hand eternal grace,  
 And all my weariness upon you lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God,  
 Here drink with you the royal wine of heav'n;  
 Here would I lay aside each earthly load,  
 Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiv'n.

This is the hour of banquet and of song;  
 Here is the heav'nly table spread anew;  
 Here let me feast and, feasting, still prolong  
 The brief bright hour of fellowship with you.

Mine is the sin but yours the righteousness;  
 Mine is the guilt but yours the cleansing blood;  
 Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace:  
 Your blood, your righteousness, O Lord, my God.

Feast after feast thus comes and passes by,  
 Yet, passing, points to that glad feast above,  
 Giving sweet foretaste of the festal joy,  
 The Lamb's great marriage feast of bliss and love.

simple piety of Christian people who trust their Lord's profound and simple words, and who therefore eat his body and drink his blood in faith and in hope, in the certainty of his present coming and his future coming, in the certainty of the forgiveness of sins and the life and salvation therein, in the certainty of Christ's all-sufficient death and resurrection and of their own resurrection through his life-giving body and blood.

Writing long ago, Martin Chemnitz reported, with true pastoral concern, that as a result of the departure from the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood "there is much less frequent use of the Lord's Supper among those who have embraced the doctrine of Zwingli and Calvin."<sup>7</sup> "Indeed, they publicly teach that for those who are ill or dying, who cannot come to the public gathering of the church, the use of the Lord's Supper, even when they can have it, is not necessary."<sup>8</sup> "But in our case," says Chemnitz,

. . . the more we love it, the more diligently we will defend it and the more tenaciously we will retain the proper, simple, and natural meaning of the words of Christ's last will and testament, so that these sweet consolations are not snatched away from us.

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<sup>6</sup>See pages x-xi above and the accompanying footnotes. Wainright has done a more thorough job in this area in Eucharist and Eschatology, but a gathering of the evidence in the Lutheran liturgical tradition still needs to be done.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Chemnitz, The Lord's Supper, translated by J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), pp. 193-194.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 194.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Chemnitz's reference to "Christ's last will and testament" raises another question which we have deliberately and necessarily left untreated here, that of the translation of Seid Ewigen as "testament" or "covenant" and the historical and theological issues involved in this question. For a concise introduction to this debate and its history, see John Reumann, The Supper of the Lord

In the same way, the "sweet consolations" of the Lord's Supper's eschatology remain to strengthen and encourage all those who hear and believe the Lord's words, and who heed his invitation to drink in faith his blood of the covenant "unto life everlasting,"<sup>10</sup> until that day when he comes again to gather his Israel together from the four winds" to eat and drink with him anew in the kingdom of heaven.

Sancti venite, Christi corpus sumite,  
Sanctum bibentes, quo redempti sanguinem.

Salvati Christi corpore et sanguine,  
A quo refecti laudes dicamus Deo.

Hoc sacramento corporis et sanguinis  
Omnes exuti ab inferni faucibus.

Dator salutis, Christus filius Dei,  
Mundum salvavit per crucem et sanguinem.

Pro universis immolatus Dominus  
Ipse sacerdos exstitit et hostia.

Lege praeceptum immolari hostias,  
Qua adumbrantur divina mysteria.

Lucis indultor et salvator omnium  
Praeclaram sanctis largitus est gratiam.

Accedant omnes pura mente creduli,  
Sumant aeternam salutis custodiam.

Sanctorum custos, rector quoque, Dominus,  
Vitae perennis largitor credentibus.

Caelestem panem dat esurientibus,  
De fonte vivo praebet sitientibus.

Alpha et omega ipse Christus Dominus

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(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 34-41. We have regularly translated Συνθήκη as "covenant" because of our argument that in the Lord's Supper Jesus quotes Ex. 24:8 and תְּרִיבֵי.

<sup>10</sup>See The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941), p. 29.



Venit venturus iudicare homines.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>This is one of the church's most ancient communion hymns, the author of which is unknown. The original was found in an antiphonarium written 680-691, in Bangor cloister, Down County, Ireland. Note how clearly the Lord's Supper's proprium-sourced eschatology rings through. May stanza six be seen as a reference to Exodus 24? This hymn is included in TLH (307) and LW (240), but several significant stanzas (including stanza six) are omitted, and the altered form of John M. Neale's translation in both hymnals waters down the rich eschatological flavor of the original (e.g. "Alpha and Omega" in stanza 11 is "translated" "Judge of all" in TLH and simply "Lord" in LW). The order of the stanzas has also been convoluted in TLH and LW. One of the best versions of Neale's translation for preserving the hymn's body and blood eschatology is this from Hymns Ancient and Modern (London: William Clowes, n.d.):

Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord,  
And drink the holy Blood for you outpoured.

Saved by that Body and that holy Blood,  
Thereby refreshed, we render thanks to God.

Salvation's Giver, Christ, the Only Son,  
By His dear Cross and Blood the victory won.

Offered was He for greatest and for least,  
Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest.

Victims were offered by the law of old  
Which in a type this heavenly mystery told.

He, Ransomer from death, and Light from shade,  
Now gives His holy grace His saints to aid.

Approach ye then with faithful hearts sincere,  
And take the safeguard of salvation here.

He, that in this world rules His saints and shields,  
To all believers life eternal yields;

With heavenly bread makes them that hunger whole,  
Gives living waters to the thirsting soul.

Alpha and Omega, to whom shall bow  
All nations at the Doom, is with us now. Amen.\*

\*In this as in all versions of Neale's translation, Latin stanza 3 is omitted.

See also Ruth Ellis Messenger, The Medieval Latin Hymn (Washington,

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D.C.: Capital Press, 1953), pp. 89-90; John Dahle, Library of Christian Hymns, volume I (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1924), p. 264; W. G. Polack, The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal, 3rd edition, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), p. 220.

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