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Reinhold Miessler

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_miessler@csel.edu

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THE LORD'S SUPPER IN PAUL AND IN MARK: A CRITIQUE
OF THE POSITION OF PROFESSOR WILLI MARXSEN

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

by

Reinhold Miessler

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Approved by:

Herbert H. Mayer
Advisor

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CHAPTER I

PROFESSOR MARXSEN'S INTERPRETATION

Introduction

With the publication of The Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem,¹ Professor Willi Marxsen has produced a provocative as well as a quite useful study. In this book he traces the development of the Lord's Supper in the Early Church, devoting special emphasis to the history of the tradition of the words of institution. He claims that from these words of institution or cultic (liturgical) formulas we learn "how and with what understanding people celebrated the Lord's Supper at the time these formulas were written down."² Of the four accounts of the words of institution, those of Paul and Mark are earliest; Matthew's account clearly developed from Mark's; Luke's account, problematic because of its textual variants, probably contains features derived from Mark as well as from Paul. With respect to their places in the history of the tradition, Paul's account is the earliest recorded followed next by that of Mark. After presenting these preliminary observations, Professor Marxsen begins his formal investigation of the Lord's Supper by comparing and contrasting the accounts recorded by Paul and Mark.

From this study he develops the following thesis: a change in the

¹Willi Marxsen, The Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem, translated by Lorenz Nieting (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 4-38.

²Ibid., p. 5.

understanding of the Lord's Supper has occurred in the transmission of the tradition from Paul to Mark; this change may be detected from the difference in the literary form of Mark's account of the words of institution which suggests thereby a difference in what is actually being interpreted in each account. In Paul's account the complete meal and the community which holds the meal are interpreted, while in Mark's account only two parts of that meal receive interpretation. The difference in the items interpreted suggests a changed understanding of the Lord's Supper.

According to Marxsen the contents of the Lord's Supper in Paul is the celebration of a complete meal by the post-Easter community. Such meals were the continuation of Jesus' fellowship meals, styled and structured after Jewish fellowship meals. Since Easter the community celebrating this meal knew and experienced the presence of Jesus at the meal and understood itself on this basis to be the eschatological community, that is, the community of the new covenant. The community's self-understanding is made clear in words at two points during the meal, namely, the words spoken at the breaking of bread and at the blessing of the cup. These two liturgical actions with their words, already familiar to the community on the basis of their use and function in Jewish fellowship meals, serve only to interpret the meal and the community. The celebrating community is the body of Christ, the new divine establishment (καινή διαθήκη); this is actualized through the celebration of the meal. The primary emphasis in this account is ecclesiological (the community is the body of Christ, the new covenant), accented by table fellowship and supported by christology. The community is what it is

by virtue of Christ's blood, that is, on the basis of his death on the cross understood as an atoning sacrifice.

In the transition to Mark's account the christological emphasis, which earlier served to support the ecclesiological, is itself developed and given primary emphasis. Because of the omission of the meal, the concept of body is transferred to the bread which is broken; analogously, the cup's content is related to the blood of Christ. Body and blood (that is, the whole man) now belong together with bread and wine. The elements make their appearance, and the presence of Jesus is then attached to this food. The meal, which originally stood in the center as the meal of the new covenant, is now robbed of its significance and thus omitted. In exact correspondence to this, terminology about "eating," which was earlier lacking in Paul, now enters into the formula. Eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ has become the essential point, while the once important meal fellowship where all sat down together as the eschatological community, the body of Christ, the new covenant, is now lost.

It is the contention of this writer that, while Marxsen's proposed development in the form and content of the Lord's Supper appears attractive, the evidence from the individual texts themselves does not suggest such a development. The tradition in Mark has not developed from the tradition preserved in Paul. Rather we possess two independent traditions, running parallel to one another, each reaching back to an earlier, more original tradition which is no longer available to us. Further, when read in their contexts and with reference to pertinent Old Testament material, Paul's account deals with more than ecclesiology

and Mark's with more than the "elements." The particular interest in the elements themselves as the body and blood of Christ does not appear to be prominent in Paul or in Mark. Such an interest is seen, however, in Ignatius and becomes increasingly heightened in the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus due to the separation of the agape meal from the Lord's Supper.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, the writer will show that the tradition of the Lord's Supper recorded in Mark does not depend upon or develop from the tradition preserved in Paul; secondly, he will suggest that a special interest focusing alone upon the elements occurs after the traditions of Paul and Mark were recorded.

A carefully detailed summary of Professor Marxsen's argument begins the paper so that the subsequent portions of the paper may be followed more easily. All Scripture quotations have been taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

A Summary of Marxsen's Argument

A rigorous comparison of Paul's account of the words of institution (1 Cor. 11:23-25) with Mark's account (Mark 14:22-24) is the place where Marxsen begins. Paul's account is deemed the older for two reasons. First the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι* in the middle of the Pauline formula suggests that the two individual actions, the bread-action and the cup-action, are thought of as separated from each other. The meal takes place between them. In Mark's account, however, the actions follow one another without the meal intervening. The impression given is that of a celebration which encompasses only these two parts, placed

together and used in reference to one another. From this observation Paul's account seems to be the older.

A further development in the tradition may be detected from the Corinthian practice of the Lord's Supper. In Corinth the Lord's Supper was celebrated in connection with a meal, most likely at the conclusion of the meal, after some had eaten their fill while others had not. Thus two stages in the tradition can be seen: the first stage is that cited by Paul, though pre-Pauline, where a meal separates the two actions; the second stage comprises the actual Corinthian practice where the two actions occur at the end of the meal "as a kind of sacramental appendix or conclusion to the ordinary meal."³ Consequently the sacramental meal has become independent of the ordinary meal; the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι*, now superfluous in the formula, has fallen away. The Marcan formula, therefore, comprises the third stage in the tradition.

The second reason for the priority of the Pauline account involves the word of interpretation spoken over the cup; here there are considerable differences between the formulas transmitted by Paul and Mark. In Paul we read *τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι*. Mark records *τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης*. Paul's emphasis is placed on the covenant, while Mark's emphasis falls on the blood. In Paul the cup (*ποτήριον*) is the (new) covenant which is then interpreted further by the blood. In Mark it is not the cup but the contents of the cup (the wine) which is meant. The contents of the cup is the blood which is then interpreted further

³Ibid., p. 6.

as the blood of the covenant. The differences are apparent and, if we observe that in both formulas the bread is related to the body (*σῶμα*), we find the Pauline formula to be incongruent. In Paul we have: bread=body/cup=covenant; in Mark we find: bread=body/contents of the cup=blood. Precisely this observation, though merely stylistic, raises the suspicion that in the Marcan formula the incongruence of the Pauline version has been harmonized. Marxsen offers a preliminary reason for this harmonization:

the meal has disappeared, and the two actions are brought together. Then, however, it becomes a matter of corresponding simply to stylistic laws (especially in the case of liturgical texts) that parallel sayings are given parallel wording. As long as the two actions were divided by the meal and kept separate, there was no compelling need for a harmonizing recasting.⁴

By itself this reason (harmonization) is not enough to explain the recasting of the Marcan formula. The shift in emphasis which appears in the formula is very likely a manifestation of a shift in meaning which has entered into the development and thus makes the meal itself superfluous.

The primary reason lies deeper. Again we note the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι*. In the earliest stage of the tradition (1 Cor. 11:23-25) the Lord's Supper was celebrated within the setting of a meal. The bread-action and the cup-action were separated by an interval of time. This point has been frequently observed, but it is important to note the consequences of it. First the two actions of the Lord's Supper must be understood separately; attention should be paid to the particular meaning of each action in its own place. Secondly

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

we must ask about the relationship of each action to the meal as a whole, for both actions were originally single components of a total meal and were embedded in it. In the exegesis of the Pauline formula the mistake of considering the two actions as two isolated acts alone having significance in relation to one another (which we derive from our own practice today and from the Marcan formula) must not be made. Although the two have become isolated in the Marcan account, we may not argue backwards from this arrangement and its meaning to find meaning and interpretation in Paul's account. Such a method would be anachronistic. Rather we must start with the two actions within the context of the unity of the meal.

Provisionally, therefore, this conclusion may be drawn: the development from the formula cited by Paul to the Marcan formulation consists in a movement from a total meal to an abridged cultic meal-celebration involving only the bread and cup actions which immediately follow one another. This means that what still remain in Mark (and also for us today) are two excerpts from what was earlier an entire meal. It is now the two excerpts--the bread and cup actions--which have special importance. In view of the fact that the unity of the total meal has been broken up, it is likely that the meaning of the whole has at the same time been changed. In this connection the form of the word over the cup in the tradition transmitted by Paul becomes particularly instructive.

In the Pauline formula (1 Cor. 11:25) the cup is described as "the new covenant by virtue of the blood" of Jesus. If we examine this phrase carefully, it becomes impossible to substitute "contents of the

cup" for "cup." There is no mention of the contents. The interpretation refers to the covenant and not to the blood. The blood merely defines the covenant more exactly. There can be no doubt then that it is not an element that is interpreted here but instead the cup, which is passed around the table from which all the participants at the meal are to drink. This cup is the new covenant, the eschatological covenant instituted by God. In its participation in the cup, the celebrating congregation has a share in the new covenant; it actualizes the new covenant, and in its sharing in the cup, the celebrating congregation may even be said to be the new covenant. But the community is the new covenant on the basis of the blood of Christ, by virtue of His death, which is here understood as the basis and inauguration of the new covenant.

Concerning the word about the bread in the Pauline formula (1 Cor. 11:23-24), it is striking that the formula says absolutely nothing about eating. It does not even say anything about the bread's being given or distributed. Surely this is no accident. "Regardless of how certain we may be that the bread was to be eaten, the absence of such terminology raises the question: What really is being 'interpreted' here?"⁵ There are only three possibilities: the taking of the bread, the thanksgiving, or the breaking of the bread, but not the distribution of the bread or the bread itself, for the text says nothing about these. Thus, in the word over the bread it is not an element, not the bread, that is being interpreted.

Professor Marxsen finds corroborative evidence for this inter-

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

pretation of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 10:16-17, although he himself admits that this evidence is indirect. In verse 16 this traditional formula, familiar both to Paul and to the Corinthians, makes no reference to drinking the contents of the cup or to eating the bread. Again we ask, "What is being interpreted?" The text itself says that it is "the cup which we bless" (that is, the cup over which we utter our thanksgiving prayer) and "the bread which we break" (that is, the bread over which we speak our thanksgiving prayer). Hence

we find the same emphases, then, in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and in the formula transmitted by Paul in chapter 11, and in both instances we are dealing with pre-Pauline formulations which he has taken over. Terminology connected with eating is lacking. It is not the food that is interpreted; rather it is clear that the fellowship is constituted at the meal. It is this fellowship which is described as a 'new covenant' (kainē diathēkē) or as 'the body,' namely, the body of Christ.⁶

Now "if we keep in mind that what originally characterized the Lord's Supper was the unity of the whole common meal, it is clear that the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup are in fact the 'liturgical' places in this common meal."⁷ At these two particular places during the complete meal interpretative statements are made specifying what this meal is and what the group is which eats the meal: "the group which is celebrating, praying, and giving thanks is 'the body of Christ'; as such it is actualizing 'the new covenant.'"⁸

Paul goes a step beyond the earlier tradition that he has received (1 Cor. 11:23-25 and 10:16) and speaks expressly of eating the bread

⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

and drinking the cup, points on which the two formulas are silent. Yet "even here it is not as though Paul were talking about the food as such; what is at issue is the partaking which is actualized at the eating. The crucial question is this: Participation in the cup of demons--or in the cup of the Lord?"⁹ Thus for Paul the sacramental reality lies in the act of table fellowship, whether with demons or with the Lord.

The way is now prepared for a development which is more readily discerned at a later stage in Mark. In Mark the terminology about eating is drawn to the food. The bread is given to be taken, and the cup is given and drunk. With the cup attention is drawn to the blood and emphasis is now placed on its contents (the wine). Naturally the contents cannot be described as a new covenant; therefore, new covenant is not stressed. What is decisive is that something else is being interpreted, namely, the elements which are consumed. Since the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι* in the formula has become superfluous, it is dropped;

the two actions of eating and drinking occur together and are naturally intended to share a common interpretation. 'Body and blood' are now the two 'components' of the Christ who gave himself in death. Thus sacramental reality is now attached to the elements, to that which is consumed. This feature was not yet present in Paul; there is not a trace of it in the formula which he transmits.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 15.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER TRADITION IN PAUL AND MARK

Methodology

Professor Marxsen has argued his position carefully from a very close reading of the Greek texts. To be sure he has marshalled together some very detailed evidence which appears to be quite convincing. However, in the opinion of this writer his position may not remain unchallenged. Rather the texts must be read again to determine whether Marxsen has indeed captured the emphases which the traditions, preserved in these several accounts, have intended to express. Moreover this writer contends that Marxsen's argument loses much of its force when Paul's commentary on and interpretation of the pre-Pauline formulas are examined in light of his situation at Corinth; that is to say, each formula must be studied in its wider context with reference to the events in the Corinthian congregation. In this way one may discern what the Lord's Supper really means for Paul so that he may then compare that meaning with the meaning offered in Mark, arriving at some conclusions which may then be compared with those of Professor Marxsen.

A Critique of Marxsen's Reconstruction of the Tradition

The first major problem with Marxsen's argument is that he recognizes an historical development in the celebration, practice, and meaning of the Lord's Supper within the primitive Christian community from its pre-Pauline to its Marcan formulation. Marxsen's entire

position rests on the fact that an historical development in the form and content of the Lord's Supper actually occurs from the pre-Pauline tradition to the Marcan tradition. Since the meanings and emphases expressed in each account are so different from one another, surely such a development can be traced and seen to be the case. Such a development with its subsequent differences, however, is hard to prove from the evidence available in the texts. As C. F. D. Moule notes,

It is hard to resist the conclusion that--to this extent at least--Paul's version is the more historical, while the other two [Mark and Matthew] represent a modification arising from the sacramental use of the two sayings from the Last Supper in close juxtaposition. In all probability, the facts are not really so simple as that.¹

No, the facts are not really as simple as that. While a detailed textual-critical analysis of the accounts of the words of institution falls outside the scope of this paper, the following details ought at least to be carefully considered. Mark's account is followed very closely by Matthew as Marxsen correctly points out; however, Luke does not follow the text of Mark but records instead a differently worded version which is much closer to that of Paul. Concerning the text of Luke, Eduard Schweizer maintains that the consensus today indicates that the long text is primary and the short text secondary.²

The similarities between Luke 22:15-19 [also 20] and 1 Cor. 11: 23-26 do not derive from a literary dependence of Luke upon Paul such that Luke might have quoted from Paul's letter.³

¹The Birth of the New Testament (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962), p. 28.

²The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament, translated by James M. Davis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 19-20.

They are better explained by the fact that both Paul and Luke used yet another tradition, one that must have been very early in origin and of a liturgical cast. For Paul assures us that he had first taken over these words and then delivered them to the Corinthians. We are thus in possession of two different versions of the words of institution, both of which can be traced back to the very earliest period of the Christian church.⁴

Heinz Schürmann also agrees with this observation when he states,

The New Testament narratives of the institution of the last supper consist of Lk. 22, 19-20 and the closely related 1 Cor. 11, 23b-25 from the same tradition, and, from another tradition, Mk. 14, 22-24 and, dependent on it, Mt. 26, 26-28⁵

This view is also shared by other important scholars among whom may be mentioned M. Dibelius,⁶ J. Jeremias,⁷ H. Lietzmann,⁸ E. Schweizer,⁹ and V. Taylor.¹⁰

Thus we have two independent traditions (Mark-Matthew/Paul-Luke),

³ Eduard Lohse, History of the Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ, translated by Martin O. Dietrich (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 49.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Jesus' Words in the Light of His Actions at the Last Supper," The Breaking of Bread, edited by Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan Van Iersel (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), XL of Concilium, 119.

⁶ From Tradition To Gospel, translated by Bertram Lee Woolf (2nd revised edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), pp. 206, 210.

⁷ The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, translated by Norman Perrin (3rd revised edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 186.

⁸ Mass and Lord's Supper, translated by Dorothea H. G. Reeve (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 177, 185.

⁹ The Good News According to Mark, translated by Donald H. Madvig (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 300.

¹⁰ Jesus and His Sacrifice (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1951), pp. 131-135, 203-205.

running parallel to one another, each reaching back to an earlier, more original tradition which is no longer available to us. The tradition in Mark, then, does not appear to have developed from the tradition preserved in Paul. This fact can be adduced as well from the following data. With reference to the bread-word *τούτό ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα μου* (1 Cor. 11:24; Lk. 22:19) Paul and Luke add the phrase *τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν* (*διδόμενον*); Luke alone adds *διδόμενον*. In comparison with Mark 14:22 this addition represents an amplification whereby special emphasis is placed on the word *σῶμα*. The reference here is to a connection between the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the Church, a connection which the Corinthians had not sufficiently heeded and of which they had to be reminded. In this instance the shorter reading, represented by Mark's tradition, is surely the earlier one. Luke and Paul, however, may also be shown to have preserved an earlier tradition by their use of the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι*. Both strands of the tradition, then, are seen to contain some elements of the earliest tradition.

The evidence becomes even more convincing for Mark's tradition being independent of Paul's when semitisms and hellenisms are noted in the two traditions. Mark's tradition appears to be very ancient because it contains many semitisms. J. Jeremias has found twenty-three of them in Mark's account.¹¹ On the contrary the number of hellenisms in Mark is small, the principal ones being *ἐσθλιόντων λυτῶν* (Mark 14:22) and *εὐχαριστήσας* (Mark 14:23).¹² Bornkamm suggests that τὸ

¹¹ Jeremias, pp. 173-184.

¹² Ibid., p. 184.

αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης (Mark 14:24) is also a hellenism because its translation back into Aramaic is virtually impossible.¹³

On the other hand Paul's tradition contains fewer semitisms, the major ones being ἔκλασεν and ὑπὲρ both found in 1 Cor. 11:24. The overall account in Paul is more graecized than that in Mark.¹⁴ From the evidence, then, this writer concludes that Mark's account is not dependent upon Paul's, for it seems to be just as ancient as Paul's.

In the cup-word Paul and Mark differ considerably as Marxsen has pointed out. But let us look more closely at the different wordings: Paul records τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι ; Mark records τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν . (Matthew's rendering is very close to that of Mark, but in addition he adds the phrase εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν . Luke's account is very similar in wording to Paul's except that he adds τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυννόμενον at the end. τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν rings of Paul's bread-word).

The cup-word of Mark refers to Exodus 24:8 (Ἴδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης , LXX) and possibly to Lev. 17:11 as well. The phrase τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν , which Marxsen completely ignores, is very significant for the interpretation of this passage. The significance of the blood in this reference is in its shedding and the effect that it has upon the people (ὑπὲρ πολλῶν). The emphasis is not focused on the "element" per se as Marxsen suggests;

¹³"Lord's Supper and Church in Paul," Early Christian Experience, translated by Paul L. Hammer (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 136.

¹⁴Jeremias, pp. 185-186.

instead the emphasis is placed on the shedding of the blood within the covenant established by God. To this we shall return later.¹⁵ In Paul, however, the cup-word emphasizes the new covenant in Jesus' blood. The phrase ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη refers to Jeremiah 31:31-34 by which Paul understands the Lord's Supper as a fulfillment of the prophet's words concerning the new covenant to come. Therefore, in spite of the different formulations of the cup-word found in the two traditions (Mark-Matthew/Paul-Luke), the basic idea of new covenant can be seen.¹⁶ The point here is this: both Paul and Mark refer to the Old Testament for meaning in their explanation of the cup. With each, however, the reference is to a different part of the Old Testament because their emphases are different. The common theme of covenant is present in each, but it is explained differently. This difference suggests two dissimilar interpretations of the single theme of covenant expressed in the earliest tradition and, it seems to this writer, militates against a development from the tradition preserved in Paul to the tradition recorded in Mark. Marxsen does not consider the evidence from the Old Testament in his argument; instead, he has considered these texts too analytically, thus robbing them of their original meaning in their respective contexts.

Marxsen's identification of the three layers of tradition from Paul to Mark poses a methodological problem in his argument apart from the previous considerations. Paul is dealing with the Corinthians' practice of the Lord's Supper with special reference to some abuses

¹⁵ Infra, pp. 39-41.

¹⁶ Lohse, p. 52.

that have arisen. In Corinth the common meal is eaten first with the celebration of the Lord's Supper as a conclusion (1 Cor. 11:17-22 and 33-34). To this arrangement the Apostle does not object. When Paul writes to the Corinthians, though, it is in light of their present practice: meal first, Lord's Supper last. In Mark's account the meal is still present within the celebration of the Supper as the opening words of the account indicate: *καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν*, "and while they were eating." None of the evangelists states the time more exactly than "in the course of the meal."¹⁷ Yet one might object and maintain that this is a special meal, that is, the Passover meal, and therefore assert that this is not an ordinary meal of the type held in Corinth. However, as G. Bornkamm states:

the accounts of the institution themselves contain hardly any relation to the Passover at all. What is inalienably constitutive for every Passover meal down to the present--the eating of the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread and bitter herbs--does not play the slightest role in the words of institution, and the words belonging to the Lord's Supper are not at all like a Passover haggada in which the elements of the meal were explained. On the contrary, the constitutive actions and words of the institution of the Lord's Supper allow themselves to be accommodated in a Passover liturgy only with great effort and conjectures leading into the hypothetical--not to say the improbable. The decisive obstacle always remains, that in the Lord's Supper these are no words of explanation for the lamb, unleavened bread and herbs; and the Lord's Supper is constituted through a completely different kind of bread-word and a cup-word that has no analogy at all in the Jewish celebration, for a cup-blessing is still no 'word of explanation.'¹⁸

This applies to Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Paul. Paul, even though he knows the idea that Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), makes no

¹⁷Ezra P. Gould, The Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), XXVII of The International Critical Commentary, 263-264.

¹⁸Bornkamm, pp. 132-133.

connection of it with the Lord's Supper. Where the Passover lamb is referred to, no reference is made to the Lord's Supper and vice versa. It is the opinion of this writer that the meal referred to in Mark is simply another of Jesus' fellowship meals with His disciples and does not differ substantially from the meal mentioned in Corinth. Further, it must be observed that nothing specific is mentioned about either meal in the respective texts. Thus in Mark's account the order of celebration is the same as that in Corinth: meal first, Lord's Supper last.

This would indicate that Mark's account is not the third layer in the tradition because the meal has not been omitted. With regard to the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι* G. Bornkamm offers a valuable insight. He thinks that the *μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνῆσαι*, preserved in Paul's formula (actually pre-Pauline), is for Paul only an ancient liturgical formula,

. . . for nothing in 1 Cor. 11 indicates that he seeks to move the Corinthians to an order of the entire celebration in which they would have begun with the first act of the sacramental event, that is, the giving of the bread and the bread-word, then have eaten together, and at the end have taken the cup. Paul does not give instructions about an agenda that concerns the placing of the bread-action at the beginning of the entire meal; rather, he criticizes the conduct of the Corinthians in the Agape-meal that precedes the sacrament, which so disgracefully had lost its meaning. The 'after supper' of his formula still retains a good, though altered, meaning in the form of the celebration which meanwhile has become the custom, a custom we infer from the practice of the Corinthians, as well as from Mark and Matthew, and which was not actually attacked even by Paul. It is now related to the whole of the preceding meal and the sacramental action celebrated at the end of it, and no longer to the common meal that originally followed the bread-action and bread-word.¹⁹

In the opinion of this writer Paul places no emphasis upon the order

¹⁹Bornkamm, pp. 137-138.

of the celebration indicated in the pre-Pauline form of the tradition. His interest and explanation lie instead with the Corinthians' conduct at the meal and its subsequent relation to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Paul addresses the Corinthians with respect to their present practice of the Lord's Supper. He does not present an exegesis or an explanation of an original and pre-Pauline form of the celebration. Therefore, to draw upon this piece of ancient tradition (1 Cor. 11:23-25) for an understanding of the Lord's Supper in Paul is to look for more than the text itself presents. In this respect Professor Marxsen draws from this text unwarranted conclusions for an early understanding of the Lord's Supper. Immediately then he compares this practice (bread-action-word/meal/cup-action-word) with that found in Mark (bread-action-word/cup-action-word) and deduces a development in the celebration which subsequently centers only upon the bread and cup actions. With such a scheme, however, he completely ignores the second layer of the tradition which he himself has correctly identified and argues from the first layer of which nothing in the text is stated. This is a methodological mistake. Paul's understanding of the Lord's supper is to be found in the second layer of tradition in which he deals directly with the Corinthian practice in its immediate context.

To summarize: it has been shown, against Marxsen, that an historical development in the form and content of the Lord's Supper from the pre-Pauline to the Marcan formulation is not clear from the evidence in the various texts. Rather the pre-Pauline/Pauline tradition and the Marcan tradition parallel one another as two versions or types of an

earlier tradition. Each stresses similar themes, though expressed differently, and each is seen to contain some earlier and some later material as well as a difference in the degree of liturgical stylizing. In addition it is difficult to support Marxsen as he derives material from 1 Cor. 11:23-25 which is not stated in the text, and it certainly does not appear that the meal has been omitted in the Marcan tradition.

CHAPTER III

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN PAUL

Background Material

From his exegesis of 1 Cor. 11:23-25 and 1 Cor. 10:16-17 Marxsen has made some very interesting observations. By reading these texts in isolation, that is, without reference to their respective contexts, he has concluded the following: in 1 Cor. 11:23-25 the elements, bread and wine, are not being interpreted. Additional support is offered from 1 Cor. 10:16-17 (though indirect, he admits) because verse 16 makes no reference to drinking the contents of the cup or to eating the bread. Rather the meal and the community that eats the meal are the items which receive interpretation.

Marxsen seems preoccupied with what is not being interpreted in the Pauline formulations so that in his proposed development of the tradition the elements, bread and wine, may be made to stand out already in the Marcan tradition. It must be observed that his interpretation of the Pauline material results from silence. Marxsen argues from what the text does not say, and he thereby shows what the text means because of what it does not say. This method of interpretation is questionable. A more accurate interpretation must come from a reading of the texts in their contexts.

Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper in only two places in his letters: 1 Cor. 10:1-22 and 11:17-34. Each has its own context to be sure, yet in content both are closely related to each other. As stated before

each formula of the Lord's Supper must be studied in its wider context with reference to the events in the Corinthian congregation. In this way we may discover what the Lord's Supper really means for Paul. First we will take up the context of each passage and then pursue its meaning for Paul. In this way this writer intends to show from the evidence in the text that Marxsen's pattern of development is difficult to maintain.

In 1 Cor. 10:1-13 Paul warns the Corinthians against overconfidence. Possession of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, is not enough to guarantee salvation any more than the corresponding acts (1 Cor. 10:2-4) sufficed for the ancient Hebrews. In fact

Paul most pungently demonstrates to the Corinthians that the greatest sacramental gifts of salvation mean no guarantee against judgment and rejection. Indeed, a congregation so richly blessed, if it falls prey again to idol-worship and unbelief, will taste the judgment of God that much the more terribly.¹

The Corinthians appear as robust sacramentalists. In verses 14-22 Paul develops the incompatibility of a participation in both the Lord's Supper and the sacrificial idol feasts by basing it on the nature and meaning of the Lord's Supper.

In 1 Cor. 11:17-34 the Lord's Supper itself is the theme. Here Paul is dealing with abuses connected with the Lord's Supper which had been reported to him. Divisions or cliques had developed in the congregation, which placed in question the celebration of the Lord's Supper. "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (11:20-21). The proper sharing of gifts left everything to be desired. Some feasted while others went hungry. In this

¹Bornkamm, p. 123.

process the church of God was despised and those who had nothing were humiliated (11:22). In this way the congregation, which should be by nature a congregation of brothers and sisters, presented a shameless picture of social cleavage. They did not even wait for one another (11:33).

More may be detected from this text concerning the degeneration of the Corinthian celebration. This involves the understanding of the Lord's Supper in Corinth generally and at the same time the very different understanding of the same by Paul. As noted in 1 Cor. 10 the Corinthians appear to be very crude sacramentalists to whom Paul must explain that the possession of the sacrament in no way guarantees eternal salvation. From 1 Cor. 11 the only important part of the Corinthian gathering seemed to be participation in the Lord's Supper. At least that was the only part of the gathering which had any meaning for the people. G. Bornkamm pertinently observes:

They so completely regarded this as the main thing [participation in the sacrament] that the preceding meal became a thing which one could shape according to his own likes and for his own enjoyment. Therefore they had few scruples about the injury of the poor and the latecomers. No one was excluded from the high and holy sacrament. There even the poor of the congregation got their due. But up to this point they could confidently spend the time eating and drinking in table fellowship with family, friends and peers.²

Paul objects strongly to the Corinthians' practice--he cannot and will not commend them in it (11:22)--for one cannot hold a high and holy celebration of the sacrament when one has previously violated brotherly duty so scandalously. Therefore he bids anyone who is hungry to eat at

²Ibid., p. 128.

home (11:22, 34) lest he come to be condemned. The point is this: "for Paul meal and celebration still belong so closely together that he can maintain that the bad state of affairs in the common meal make the entire Lord's Supper illusory."³

With this background at hand we are now able to pursue Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper. In 1 Cor. 10 and 11 Paul has set forth an interpretation of the Lord's Supper that deals with several themes all interrelated: Jesus' death, the elements, the fellowship of the individual with his Lord, and the fellowship of the people with each other. Marxsen has argued that Paul does not speak specifically of eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord in his formulas, and he does not express the simple equation of cup (that is, the contents) and blood. Further, the typological picture (10:1-4) does not say that Christ is the miraculous drink which Israel was given to drink; he is rather the rock from which the water springs.⁴ Therefore he does not change himself into a sacramental substance but is the giver of the spiritual drink and the spiritual food.⁵ However, consequences must not be drawn from these observations which place in question the whole sacramental concept of the eating and drinking. Such would certainly obliterate the peculiarity of the Lord's Supper. At the same time a sacramentalism which pushes the elements into the foreground in an un-Pauline manner, thereby obscuring what the Apostle says, must be avoided.

³Ibid., p. 129.

⁴Ibid., p. 145.

⁵Ibid.

Exegesis of 1 Cor. 10:1-22

Paul's conception of and teaching about the Lord's Supper derives from his distinctive combination of the Sacrament and the Church as the Body of Christ. Concerning 1 Cor. 10:16 Ernst Käsemann remarks:

Certainly no one denies that the expressions *κοινωνία τοῦ αἵματος* and *τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ* correspond, and that they refer to the elements of the Lord's Supper, which provide a means of participation in the blood and body of Christ.⁶

The thought expressed in verse 16 is this: by receiving the cup of blessing and the broken bread we participate in Christ Himself. In verse 17 the Apostle modifies the tradition of verse 16 "to the point where participation in Jesus and his body becomes identical with incorporation into the Church as the Body of Christ."⁷

Participation in Christ is characterized in 1 Cor. 10:1-4. These verses indicate the identity of the old and new saving events. The Christian experience of Israel's saving event is exemplified in Israel herself. The saving events of Israel's journey through sea and wilderness are applied to Baptism and the Lord's Supper interpreted sacramentally. Moses is the forerunner and type of the Messiah. Baptism into Moses is analogous with baptism into Christ. Behind the expressions *πνευματικὸν βρῶμα* and *πόμα* lie a primitive Christian eucharistic theology which Paul has taken up and used in this passage. Undoubtedly *πνευματικὸν βρῶμα* and *πόμα* mean "food and drink which convey πνεῦμα."⁸

⁶"The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," Essays on New Testament Themes, translated by W. J. Montague (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 109.

⁷Ibid., p. 110.

⁸Ibid., p. 113.

This is why it is immediately suggested that the rock which followed was spiritual, i.e. Christ himself, who is again identified with πνεῦμα in II Cor. 3.17. The gift takes on the character of the Giver and through the gift we become partakers of the Giver himself. . . . The gift is at once instrument and effective power just because it is participation in the Giver himself. In giving himself to us as πνεῦμα the Christ incorporates us into his Body.⁹

Hence,

because the Lord is the Pneuma and because in the sacrament the exalted Lord conveys, along with his gift, participation in himself as the Giver, therefore the gift of the sacrament must also be Pneuma. And so we are incorporated into the Body of the exalted Lord by means of this gift operating as effective power.¹⁰

The elements, therefore, perform a very important function for Paul in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. They are the instrument and the power by which Christ gives Himself to the recipient and incorporates him into His body.

Further, incorporation into the Body of Christ by receiving the cup of blessing and the broken bread draws very important consequences for the individual. According to 1 Cor. 10:5-13 the sacrament is a call to obedience, the possibility of a decision for faith and against the temptation to disobedience.¹¹ The gift of the sacrament (Pneuma) brings with it the Giver. "In the Pneuma, the Kyrios comes to us, takes possession of us and claims us for his own."¹² In the sacrament we receive the revelation of Christ himself, his self-manifestation, and his presence. The Lord's Supper dispenses πνευματικὸν βρῶμα and

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 114.

¹¹Ibid., p. 117.

¹²Ibid., p. 118.

πῶμα from the spiritual rock which is Christ. Hence the sacrament effects the transformation of a man. Because a Christian's existence is not determined by himself but by whoever his Lord is at any given time, the sacrament mediates new existence by giving him the new Lord, the one true Kyrios beyond and above all the lordships of the world. Here the Kyrios reaches out for him and claims his will for Himself, thus making him an instrument of His will and a member of His kingdom. Obedience is the new dimension in which the Christian exists and into which he is translated by the sacramental epiphany of the Christ. This obedience is the possibility of a truly free decision and therefore also the possibility of apostasy. However, to obey and be for Christ as Kyrios is made possible through the sacrament which effects participation in Him.

Paul directs this last thought, the Lordship of Christ in the sacrament and His claim upon the participant, to the occasion of food offered to idols and to idol worship in Corinth. 1 Cor. 10:16 is directly related to 10:21. Paul sets side by side the Lord's Supper and the pagan sacrifice. Drawing once again from the practice of Israel, Paul claims that those who eat sacrifices become partners with the one to whom the sacrifice is made. His implication is very clear. He does not believe that food offered to idols is anything or that an idol is itself anything, but he does believe that in eating things sacrificed to idols the Corinthians incur the danger of entering into partnership with evil powers (δαιμονίαι). Important is the idea that to eat of the sacrifice is to share in the sacrificial act itself and therefore to enter into communion with spiritual powers. At stake in verses 21-22,

then, is the choice of lordship: will it be the lordship of demons or the lordship of Christ? One cannot participate in the cup and the table of both. That would be contradictory, thereby provoking the Lord to jealousy, whose resultant anger the Corinthians would not be strong enough to deflect.

Thus Paul considers the Lord's Supper a means of entering into partnership with Christ, accepting His Lordship, and thereby sharing in His sacrifice. Again the words of 1 Cor. 10:16 become instructive. Those celebrating the Lord's Supper receive a share in the shed blood of Christ as they drink the cup, and this means that they share in his death since blood is never anywhere thought of as a mysterious, material substance.¹³ They also receive a share in the body of Christ given into death as ~~they~~ eat of the bread. Hence, they share in the saving significance of His death. From the death of Christ the new situation of salvation comes into being, that is, the new existence of the believers as well as the new task of their life. Now the life of each believer is a life for Him. But as life is now for Christ, it is at the same time a life for all other fellow believers because they are also united with Him in His death as well as in the sacrament. 1 Cor. 8:11-12 is particularly instructive in this instance. Hence, it is not at all surprising that Paul stresses the one body of all believers, the Body of Christ, in verse 17.

Exegesis of 1 Cor. 11:17-34

The occasion for Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor.

¹³Bornkamm, p. 139.

11:17-34 focuses upon disorders which have arisen in the Corinthian congregation. The existence of such disorders, namely, divisions, factions, gluttony, and drunkenness, negates a true celebration of the Lord's Supper. In fact when the Corinthians gathered together it was not the Lord's Supper they celebrated at all. For this reason Paul endeavored to correct their understanding of the Supper by reminding them in the first place of the well-known formula of their own liturgy (11:23-25), and in the second place by drawing the implications of eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord.

The double command to repeat the Lord's Supper ("Do this in remembrance of me") belongs to the peculiarities of Paul's formula. It is evidently an addition and a mark of increasing liturgical stylization, but its meaning is very important in light of verse 26.

As is shown by the "for" in v. 26 and the explicit reference to the two acts of eating and drinking, to which the "command to repeat" was added, Paul himself explains it by the phrase: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." The "remembrance" and the death of the Lord are thus placed in the closest relation to each other.¹⁴

As the Corinthians already know, eating the broken bread and drinking the cup of blessing give them a share in the saving significance of Jesus' death (a thrust of 1 Cor. 10). The remembrance formula is not used for the meal as a whole, but just for the two acts of eating and drinking in particular.¹⁵ Whenever these acts take place, then, not only are the Lord and His death merely recalled, but the saving significance of His death and His presence in the worship of the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 141.

congregation are also proclaimed. In this celebration the death of the Lord is proclaimed for what it really is--a work of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is further emphasized in the words spoken over the bread and cup. The bread is the body of the Lord Jesus given into death for each recipient, and the cup offers each recipient a share in the new covenant, the new eschatological order of salvation. The new covenant is synonymous with Jesus' making the Kingdom of God an already present reality by virtue of His death. The death of Jesus is, therefore, the foundation on which the order of the divine kingdom is set up. Through the Lord's Supper each person participates in Christ, appropriates for himself the saving significance of His death, comes under His Lordship, and enters the Kingdom of God, fully reconciled to the Father on account of His death and resurrection. Reconciliation occurs among the brethren as well because of their common union as the Body of Christ.

Yet it is just because Paul thinks so highly of the Lord's Supper that he feels so keenly the scandal of the Corinthians' celebrations with their divisions and shameful disorders. The disorders ruin the Supper because Christ's death is no longer proclaimed as a work of reconciliation.

From all indications in the text it does not appear that the Corinthians had ceased to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Rather they had continued to eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord, but without regard for their fellowmen. Therefore Paul had to remind them what eating and drinking really involved. All that really mattered to them were the acts of eating and drinking. They were robust sacra-

mentalists as the context in 1 Cor. 10 suggests. All were equal in the sharing of the sacrament; each received his portion of the bread and the cup. Yet in other matters distinctions were made, and these became particularly apparent in the common meal before the Lord's Supper. Such a state of affairs led the Apostle to claim that they were not celebrating a Lord's Supper at all.

According to verse 21 each made haste to eat the provisions he had brought before (the force of *προλαμβάνει* must not be overlooked) it had become possible to make a general distribution. As a result offensive inequality developed between the people, becoming to many of them a source of humiliation, thereby contrasting absolutely with the spirit of love of which such a feast should have been a symbol. The extremes noted in verse 21 are striking: one is hungry while another is drunk! The greatest possible distinction and separation between people exists in the Church at the meal. One is obviously hungry and humiliated because of his poverty, while another is drunk and oblivious to his brother's need. Hence, the Church of God is despised! With this state of affairs a true Lord's Supper became impossible. Such a degeneracy seemed to Paul so serious that he regarded the prevailing sickness and mortality in the congregation as a punishment for it (verse 30).

For this reason Paul warns the Corinthians of the consequences of such behavior as they partake of the Lord's Supper: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27).

Bread and cup, body and blood of the Lord correspond to each other in strict analogy. These 'dimensions' are obviously identical, but the nature of this identity is mysterious and it may never be rationalized. Yet if the worshipper does not reckon with this identity, he is behaving ἀναξίως, that is, not so much 'unworthily' as, quite literally, 'inappropriately'.¹⁶

Behaving inappropriately at the Lord's Supper would involve confusing the πνευματικὸν βρῶμα and ποτὶον, that is, the bread and cup of the Lord, with profane or ordinary food and drink. Ordinary food can take on spiritual character and so become identical with the body and blood of the Lord only because the Kyrios Himself effects it. It is the presence of the Lord who is using this means to manifest Himself. Therefore, the worshipper is behaving inappropriately at the Lord's Supper if he does not reckon with the self-manifestation of the Lord. Further, he is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, that is, the death of Jesus. In the face of Christ's self-manifestation only two possibilities are open: "either to unite with the Christian community in proclaiming the death of Jesus or to unite with the world in bringing it about."¹⁷ Failure to perceive Christ's presence involves becoming guilty along with the world of the death of Jesus.

Therefore, Paul calls for a self-examination of every worshipper in order to underscore the importance of his recognizing Christ's presence. Because the gifts, bread and cup, bring with them the Giver Himself, indifference toward them is impossible. Christ's presence can never leave the worshipper unchanged. The latter cannot, by his own lack of reverence, render the gift ineffective, or can he turn the presence of Christ into absence. Where Christ is not heeded as reconciler because

¹⁶Käsemann, p. 122.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 123.

of His death, His action as Judge of the world takes over. Where the worshiper does not truly partake of Christ and allow himself to be incorporated into the Kingdom of God and under His Lordship, according to 1 Cor. 10:22 he is provoking the Lord to display His power of judgment and death, meeting Him as the one stronger than he.¹⁸ It is the encounter of judgment that some of the Corinthians have already met according to 1 Cor. 11:30. Because perceiving the presence of Christ and the significance of His death which is proclaimed by eating and drinking the bread and cup would be very difficult to do in a state of drunkenness and gluttony, Paul must be very serious in his command for self-examination so that divine judgment may be avoided.

Further, in verse 29 Paul adds that "any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself." The word "body" has been variously interpreted as referring either to the bread of the Lord's Supper as the body of Christ or to the Church. It is customary to find the literature defending one or the other of the above suggested interpretations. However, it is the contention of this writer that the word "body" is clearly a double entente. With this verse Paul once again underscores the seriousness of his call to self-examination. The Corinthians must recognize Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. Yet at the same time one cannot be overfed in the face of hungry people, neither can another be drunk, and still be aware that he is proclaiming Christ's death that has reconciled him to his neighbor. By drunkenness and gluttony the one Body of Christ, that is, the people of God, the Church, is broken and alienated, and the

¹⁸Ibid., p. 125.

reconciliation accomplished by Christ's death is, in the face of the disorders, rendered a mockery. The unity of the people with each other, specifically accomplished by Jesus' death and resurrection, is destroyed because the identity of Christ with Himself in all His members is missing. In this way Christ is despised and the Church is despised. Hence, judgment has entered the ranks of the Corinthians.

Paul cannot and will not commend them in this practice. Rather he seeks to remedy the situation in verses 33-34a: "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another--if any one is hungry, let him eat at home--lest you come together to be condemned." The force of the command to "wait" must echo the force of *προλαμβάνει* in verse 21: refrain from eating immediately so that the food may be distributed, and wait for the other brethren to arrive. "If any one is hungry, let him eat at home," suggests that the Corinthians dispel a ravenous appetite at home so that they may be able to eat moderately with the other brethren and avoid being condemned in their gathering.

From the foregoing exegeses of 1 Cor. 10 and 11 this writer concludes that Paul's understanding of the Lord's Supper is founded upon his Christology from which his ecclesiology subsequently derives and develops. It seems clear that Paul is not interpreting the meal or the community celebrating the meal; instead, he is concerned with reviewing and explaining what eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord really entails. Food offered to idols, idol worship, and social disorders among the Corinthians at the common meal precipitate his discussions of the subject. The saving significance of Jesus' death and the reconciliation it effects between God and man is central in the cele-

bration of the Lord's Supper. On this basis only can there really be a new community (a new covenant), a community whose existence under the Lordship of Jesus Christ requires radical obedience to Him and radical love and concern for every member of the community. Such obedience and love were missing; therefore, the Apostle wrote in order to correct the abuses brought about by an improper understanding of the Lord's Supper in Corinth.

CHAPTER IV

THE LORD'S SUPPER IN MARK

G. Bornkamm criticizes Marxsen when the latter points out that "body" and "covenant" (not "blood") are two terms which do not correspond to each other and, therefore, thinks that on the basis of the first term "body" a change in emphasis and position in the cup-word had necessarily to be undertaken for the purpose of parallelism in Mark's formula.¹ In this instance Bornkamm is referring to an article Marxsen wrote in Evangelische Theologie.² Marxsen also demonstrates with the present publication which is under discussion in this paper that the omission of the meal contributed to a change of emphasis in the cup-word as well as the necessary parallelism of the two phrases when brought together. However, since it has already been shown that the meal has not been omitted in the Marcan tradition,³ Marxsen's argument from the omission of the meal falls as well. Bornkamm questions the accuracy of Marxsen's view as follows:

But is this correct? The answer will have to be that, in fact, it is easy to explain how the Marcan form of the cup-word could grow out of the Pauline. But--and this must be emphatically added--that applies only to one understanding of the sacrament, one that is not simply to be accepted as Paul's. The change of "the (new) covenant in my blood" to "my blood of the covenant" only became necessary through a thinking which understood the body and blood of Christ as the two constituents of Christ given

¹Bornkamm, p. 142.

²"Der Ursprung des Abendmahls," Evangelische Theologie, XII (1952/1953), 293-303.

³Supra, pp. 17-19.

up in death. From then on, the interest adheres consistently to the two elements representing the body and blood of Christ. But it is very questionable whether this interest in the elements which, as we know, plays such an exceedingly important role in the history of the Lord's Supper problem, is present in Paul.⁴

Hence, it is difficult to see how Mark can derive such emphasis on the elements from Paul. This fact alone would militate against a development in such an understanding from Paul to Mark. However, the question must be raised, "Does Mark actually emphasize the elements as forthrightly as Marxsen supposes?" The contention of this writer is that Mark does not show such an interest in the elements as Marxsen suggests. To determine this the account of the words of institution must be seen in its context and its relation to the Old Testament material in Exodus 24:8 and Leviticus 17:11.

In Mark (as also in Matthew and Luke) the institution of the Lord's Supper has been incorporated within the larger context of the passion narrative.

This is why we do not find in the Gospels, as in Paul, an introductory statement referring to the reception and transmission of the tradition. The evangelists instead write everything in the form of a report, setting before the pericope about the Supper's institution a lengthy introduction which is intended to afford the pericope its proper locus and to establish the context within which it is to be interpreted.⁵

Mark 14:12 ("And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the passover lamb") presents an historical difficulty. The slaughter of the pascal lambs did not take place on the first day of the Feast but on the preceding day, the Day of Preparation. This is the only day that could be meant here, for it is supposed to be a

⁴Bornkamm, pp. 142-143.

⁵Lohse, p. 36.

question of preparing for the Passover.

It is necessary to call attention to this contradiction in the introductory time reference because a deduction affecting our judgment of the entire pericope can be drawn from it. The author of these sentences was not a Jewish Christian from Palestine, for such a person would certainly have been able to distinguish clearly between the Feast itself and the Day of Preparation. The sentences must have been formulated rather in a Hellenistic milieu where people were not altogether familiar with Jewish festival customs. What we have here then is not a historical report, but a later composition intended as an introduction which could serve to establish and emphasize the connection between the Supper and the Passover.⁶

As previously noted it is difficult to equate the Supper with the Passover meal;⁷ in the Marcan redaction only a connection is suggested and this for theological reasons.

Jesus' Last Supper is to be viewed in terms of the Passover meal which is now being supplanted by the Lord's Supper. Christ's church no longer observes the feasts of the old covenant. It confesses instead its faith in its Lord, who for our sake was nailed to the cross. Jesus is the Lord who commands, and whose words are unconditionally obeyed.⁸

The Lord's Supper replaces the ancient Passover Feast in the Old Testament and becomes the festal celebration of all God's people, both Jews and Gentiles.

What does such a festal celebration mean in Mark? The words of institution are instructive: "This is my body"; "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many." Here the word "body" is used to designate the gift being offered to all; it is the body of Jesus given into death for all, and whoever receives it is granted a share in the

⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷ Supra, pp. 17-18.

⁸ Lohse, p. 39.

same body, a share in Jesus and His atoning work.

Even more instructive is the second phrase. However, it must be taken as a whole sentence and as a complete thought: "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many," (emphasis added). Marxsen ignores this last phrase (underlined) which this writer believes is extremely important for the understanding of this passage. The passage must be interpreted in light of its Old Testament reference: Ex. 24:8 and Lev. 17:11, possibly also Zech. 9:11. (Even in the passion narrative up to this point it can be shown that Mark 14:13-16 refers to 1 Sam. 10:2-9 and 14:18-21 to Psalm 41:9. "Since the Christian church sought to interpret the passion in terms of the Scriptures, the words of Scripture also played a role in the shaping of the tradition").⁹ The cup (of wine) is interpreted here in terms of shed blood, that is, covenant blood, and it serves as an allusion to the sacrifice that concluded the Sinai covenant.¹⁰ More specifically $\epsilon\kappa\chi\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$ alludes to two things: it alludes to Moses' sprinkling of the people at the ratification of the covenant (Ex. 24:8), and it also alludes to the blood sprinkled on the altar during the atonement rites (Lev. 17:6; the Hebrew text uses the same term, פָּרַף , for both aspersions, Ex. 24:8 and Lev. 17:6).¹¹ In the celebration of the Lord's Supper,

⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰ Edward J. Mally, "The Gospel According to Mark," The Jerome Biblical Commentary, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), II, 54.

¹¹ Luc Dequeker and William Zuidema, "The Eucharist and St. Paul (1 Cor. 11, 17-34)," The Breaking of Bread, edited by Pierre Benoit, Roland E. Murphy, and Bastiaan Van Iersel (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), XL of Concilium, 55.

this same aspersion is rendered present; the people drink the cup which corresponds to Moses' sprinkling of the people at the ratification of the covenant, while the shed blood in both instances effects atonement and the remission of sins. The blessings for Israel implied in the poured out blood of the Sinai covenant are now seen as a type of the blessings to come to all men, Jew as well as Gentile, in the poured out life of Jesus. Jesus' blood poured out will admit the mass of mankind into a new covenant (the antitype) with God.

According to Lev. 17:11 ("For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life") it is God who has given the blood to His people (in order to cover up their guilt); they did not give it to Him. This is the only place in the Old Testament where this fact is stated. It is, therefore, God's own sacrifice by means of which He places the individual into the covenant.¹² And so it is in Mark's gospel. It is God Himself who gives His own blood ὑπὲρ πολλῶν and thereby places all men into covenant and into communion with Himself. In Lev. 17:11 "it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life;" so "the Bible speaks of the shedding of blood even more often in connection with the offering of human life, beginning with the blood of Abel and on down to the blood of the prophets and witnesses."¹³ Hence, the blood of Jesus has been shed, and His life has been sacrificed ὑπὲρ πολλῶν . Therefore,

¹²An insight from Professor Alfred von Rohr Sauer in an Old Testament Theology class lecture, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., February, 1973.

¹³Lohse, p. 51.

the covenant between God and man is effected by Jesus' shed blood.

The phrase τὸ ἐκχυννόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν links Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:11-12 in order to reveal the inner meaning of His death. It is possible that Mark has prepared his readers for the sublimated idea of sacrifice in the figure of the Suffering Servant of the Lord through the references in 8:31, 9:31, 10:33, and 10:45. He has become the substitute for all men by paying the price which they could not pay and by relieving them of the burden so that they might be free from it.

With the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Mark the people experience the present validity of the covenant established by Jesus' death. What this writer sees stressed in Mark's account is the sacrificed Christ; His death; His forgiveness of sins; the new life He offers His people on the basis of the new and final covenant, that covenant which was not present before but which is the covenant to end all covenants; and the new life He offers to all people in faith and in genuine love for one another. The sacramental reality is the partaking of, the taking hold of, and the accepting in faith of the crucified and risen Christ by the means which He Himself has suggested: some bread and some wine.

CHAPTER V

REARRANGING THE RECONSTRUCTION

From the evidence advanced in this paper the particular interest in the elements themselves (the bread and the wine) as the body and blood of Christ, the two constituents of Christ given up in death, does not appear to be prominent either in Paul or in Mark. It is certain that a peculiar interest in the elements of the Lord's Supper does develop, but it is difficult to document such an interest as occurring in the tradition from Paul to Mark (45-65 A. D.). Rather this interest may be seen to develop in the very late first century with the Gospel of John (John 6:25-65) and with more clarity in the second century with Ignatius, Justin, and Irenaeus. Of course, the first century date is naturally open to question, depending upon how one interprets the discourse recorded in John 6.

An important factor which led to an interest in the elements themselves was the changing concept of the Church. When the concept of the Church, whose existence was first rooted in the living presence of Christ, yielded to that of an institution which, through its clergy, assumed the role of mediation between the believers and their God, it is very likely that such a change must have influenced Christians to view the Lord's Supper with different eyes.¹ This phenomenon is present in Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch.

¹Arthur Vööbus, "The Eucharist in the Ancient Church," Meaning and Practice of the Lord's Supper, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 55.

In his letters there first emerges the picture of the local congregation governed by a single bishop who is supported by a council of presbyters and assisted by deacons. In this Ignatius betrays a stage of development beyond the situation reflected in the Pastoral Epistles, the Didache, and I Clement.²

According to Ignatius the single bishop is the leading figure in the Church, and without his approval no services (the Eucharist, baptisms, and love feasts) are to be held.³ The bishop is even to preside in God's place,⁴ while deference to the bishop is the same thing as deference to God!⁵

With the gift of the Lord's Supper, transmitted by the mediation of the clergy, came the understanding of its granting access to the mysteries of the transcendental world.⁶ In this respect Ignatius' comment concerning the Lord's Supper in Ephesians 20:2 becomes instructive:

At these meetings you should heed the bishop and presbytery attentively, and break one loaf, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which wards off death but yields continuous life in union with Jesus Christ.

With this passage Smyrnaeans 7:1 should also be read:

They [the Docetists] hold aloof from the Eucharist and from services of prayer, because they refuse to admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which, in his goodness, the Father raised [from the dead] .

²Cyril C. Richardson, editor, "The Letters of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch," Early Christian Fathers (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 76.

³Ignatius Smyrnaeans 8:1-2.

⁴Ignatius Magnesians 6:1.

⁵Ignatius Ephesians 5:3-6:2.

⁶Vööbus, p. 56.

One last passage pertinent to this discussion occurs in Romans 7:3:

I take no delight in corruptible food or in the dainties of this life. What I want is God's bread, which is the flesh of Christ, who came from David's line; and for drink I want his blood: an immortal love feast indeed!

For Ignatius the Eucharist is already the *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας* .

The food of the Lord's Supper is the flesh and blood of Christ, who gave Himself into death for His people, and it is capable of bestowing immortality upon the recipient. It contains the powers of the world beyond. No doubt the realism of the elements as the flesh and blood of Christ is to be associated with Ignatius' anti-Docetic bias as well as with his preoccupation to be one with Christ through physical death (martyrdom). The extreme realism of the elements as the flesh and blood of Christ is a new thought in the tradition in the opinion of this writer.

A second factor which caused the elements to be singled out was the separation of the Lord's Supper from the (Agape) meal. With this separation both elements were brought together and made strictly parallel in their meaning and function.

However, it is difficult to determine just when this separation came about. In Paul and in Mark the meal is still present with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the first indication of a separation is to be found in Pliny's famous letter to the Emperor Trajan commonly dated 112 A. D. The reference to Christian worship is necessarily obscure because of the writer's evident lack of clear information. The relevant portion of the letter for this discussion is as follows:

They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error,

was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then re-assemble to partake of food--but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. Even this practice, however, they had abandoned after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I had forbidden political associations.⁷

The statements which are of most importance are those which give evidence of two meetings of Christians on a fixed day (stato die), one of which occurred before it was light (ante lucem), at which they sang a hymn to Christ and bound themselves by a solemn oath (sacramento se obstringere). The other meeting, the later one, is evidently the Agape, but it was discontinued after Pliny's edict according to which political associations were forbidden. What the sacramentum was is not clear, and the content of the worship service is not detailed in the letter.

At any rate, the Eucharist could not--after this time at least--have been held at the later meeting, which was suppressed by Pliny's direction, and it is inconceivable that the Christians in Bithynia could have abandoned the Eucharist in consequence of the action of the Roman authorities.⁸

The evidence becomes clearer with Justin Martyr about 150 A. D. and Irenaeus around 180 A. D. It is surprising to find that both Justin and Irenaeus, though making much of the Eucharist, provide no reference whatever to the Agape.⁹

⁷Pliny Letters x, xcvi.

⁸J. F. Keating, The Agapé and the Eucharist in the Early Church (New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 56.

⁹Neville Clark, An Approach to the Theology of the Sacraments (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1956), p. 57.

Why the Agape is not mentioned is also not clear, although it seems plausible to suggest that Roman restrictions could have been a major factor (as Pliny's letter would suggest).

In Justin the Eucharist is administered by the president of the brethren,¹⁰ and it is specifically referred to as food.

For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.¹¹

After the distribution the bread and wine mixed with water are taken to the absent by the deacons as the flesh and blood of Christ. That the elements may be carried to the absent is a new thought in the tradition.

With Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, the recipient of the Lord's Supper becomes, in a sense, concorporeal and consanguinal with Christ.

As we are His members, so too are we nourished by means of created things, He Himself granting us the creation, causing His sun to rise and sending rain as He wishes. He has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be His own Blood, from which He causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, He has established as His own Body, from which He gives increase to our bodies.¹²

When the Eucharist is received the individual's body is no longer corruptible, but it has the hope of resurrection into eternity.¹³

Again we see the extreme realism of the elements as the body and blood of Christ.

¹⁰Justin Martyr Apology I, 65.

¹¹Justin Martyr Apology I, 66.

¹²Irenaeus Against Heresies v, 2. 2.

¹³Irenaeus Against Heresies iv, 18. 5.

While the material cited from Ignatius, Pliny, Justin, and Irenaeus gives local tradition and history, not universal practice, nevertheless it is the opinion and contention of this writer that the direction which the tradition is taking is quite apparent. What seems certain is that a peculiar interest in the elements themselves as the body (flesh) and blood of Christ becomes pronounced only as we move to the second century, an interest which was not stressed in the accounts of the Lord's Supper preserved as early tradition in Paul and in Mark.

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