**THE BIBLICAL ORIGINS OF THE EUCHARIST**

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The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 2002 #72 asserts that the Eucharist originated at the Last Supper:

At the Last Supper Christ instituted the Paschal Sacrifice and banquet, by which the Sacrifice of the Cross is continually made present in the Church …

… Christ took the bread and the chalice and gave thanks; he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take, eat, and drink: this is my Body; this is the cup of my Blood. Do this in memory of me."

This is true as far as it goes. **The Last Supper is the central event. But it is not the only event**. In this presentation a broader understanding of the origins of the Eucharist will be put forward. The presentation will develop the following principal points: - some cautions in approaching the topic of its biblical origins; the fellowship meals with Jesus; and a commentary on the 'institution narratives’, i.e., the stories of what Jesus did and said with bread and wine at the Last Supper.

**SOME CAUTIONS IN APPROACHING THE TOPIC OF BIBLICAL ORIGINS**

Before going deeper into the biblical data on the Last Supper, two cautions must be sounded: First, there is considerable agreement among scholars on particular details of what happened at the Last Supper. But many questions are so unresolved that conjecture and hypothesis, i.e., educated guess-work, takes the place of complete and utter certainty. For example, as highlighted by Jerome Kordell, ‘how much in the accounts is attributable to Jesus, and how much to the Church, whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal, and how the interdependency of the traditions is to be understood’.[[1]](#footnote-1) This needs to be kept in mind by anyone attempting to reconstruct what actually happened. The problem is with the kind of NT materials we have about the Supper. Mixed in with reports of a kind,[[2]](#footnote-2) are editorial comments, traditions, liturgical fragments, etc. They all make it very difficult to say precisely what happened.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Secondly, the Last Supper by itself is insufficient to explain where the Eucharist comes from and what it means. It is necessary to go beyond that supper to the many friendship and fellowship meals that Jesus shared both before and after his resurrection. They all suggest that the Eucharist comes from table fellowship.

**THE FELLOWSHIP MEALS OF JESUS**

Sharing a meal is not simply eating the same food together. That’s what happens on an aeroplane. At the time of Jesus and still today, food is a source of life, and sharing of food with family, friends and associates is a sharing of life. Meal-time is a time for reconnecting with others. It involves a sharing of one's real presence, a sharing of thoughts and feelings, news and views. It expresses such values as welcome, hospitality, self-giving, inter-dependence, solidarity, loyalty, love, compassion, community, and outreach to the hungry, needy and lonely. The chief aim of a family or community meal is to bring people together. In particular situations a shared table may communicate forgiveness and reconciliation.

In numerous instances in the bible, the offering of a sacrifice is followed by a meal celebrating the union with God brought about by the sacrifice. For Jews, their Passover Feast in particular celebrates both their deliverance from slavery in Egypt and their new-found shared relationship with God. For Christians, the celebration of the Eucharist (called ‘the Lord’s Supper’ in 1 Corinthians 11:20, understood as convoked and led invisibly by their Lord Jesus) is their joyful celebration of their fellowship and togetherness made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus, his self-giving even unto death. A shared table, then, may also represent the celebration of a covenant relationship with God in Jesus. So, in short, a shared table represents relationships of peace, union, fellowship, friendship and reconciliation among human beings, and sometimes with God as well.

**Meals in his earthly ministry**

In the course of his public life Jesus is invited to share meals with friends, officials, and poor people. To a Jewish person, a friend is ‘one who breaks bread with me’, and a feast is as obvious a celebration of the joys and successes of life as fasting is a symbol of sorrow.[[4]](#footnote-4) He does not decline these invitations under the pretext of fasting or asceticism. He willingly takes his place at table.[[5]](#footnote-5) To be invited to break bread with someone in biblical times is no mere polite hospitality, but implies being invited to enter into a relationship of trust with that person. To be given a piece of the bread blessed by the master of the house is to be offered a share in those blessings,[[6]](#footnote-6) to be drawn into a bond of kinship,[[7]](#footnote-7) and to be accepted as ‘part of the family’. Eating with others is a much more radical social statement than simply being with them.

In the gospels Jesus eats with friends and disciples (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 2:1-11; 12:1-2). He feeds the crowds with more bread than they can eat (Mk 6:30-44 par.; Mk 8:1-10 par.).[[8]](#footnote-8) He speaks of the coming of the kingdom of God in the imagery of a meal (Lk 12:35-37; 14:7-24). Throughout Luke’s gospel Jesus seems to be either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal.[[9]](#footnote-9) Wherever he went, there seemed to be a celebration. The tradition of festive meals at which he welcomed all and sundry is one of the most securely established features of almost all recent scholarly portraits.[[10]](#footnote-10) In Luke especially he gives much of his teaching at meals (Lk 5:31-39; 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 11:37-52; 14:1-24; 22:14-38; 24:20-49).

He also 'welcomes sinners and eats with them' (Lk 15:2; cf. Lk 19:1-10; Mk 2:15-17; etc.), e.g., with extortionists and prostitutes. ‘He enjoys table fellowship with the very people whom Jewish law banned as “unclean”’[[11]](#footnote-11) and immoral. So much so that he is taunted by his opponents, as he puts it himself, for being ‘a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ (Mt 11:18-19). His meals with outcasts are, in fact, acted-out parables of God’s loving care and concern for outcasts. He justifies his behaviour with his words: ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners’ (Mk 2:16-17). When Jesus dines with outcasts, he is assuring them that God respects them, that they are near and dear to God, that they belong to the kingdom of God. By this down-to-earth gesture he is telling them that God wants to welcome and forgive, heal and reconcile them, and bring them home to the community of Israel.

The impact of his dining with sinners is powerfully illustrated in his dealings with that most famous of extortionists, Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). Zacchaeus promises to make restitution to those he has robbed. So, as Jesus says, ‘salvation has come to this house, because he too s a son of Abraham’ (v.9). Eating with Jesus is what makes Zacchaeus change. It also brings about a change in the community affected by his crimes.[[12]](#footnote-12) In short, table fellowship and communion with Jesus lead to conversion and transformation. Ben Meyer expresses it this way: ‘Contact prompted repentance; conversion flowed from communion’,[[13]](#footnote-13) an insight that sheds some light on the Eucharist as a sacrament of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In welcoming sinners to his table, Jesus is, in fact, giving a pre-view of the forgiveness that will be offered to all when the kingdom of God is fully established on earth. The experience of universal forgiveness is presented in Isaiah 25:6 (cf. Amos 9:13) in the form of a great banquet which, far from being reserved to Jews, is open to all peoples. ‘Put simply, Jesus’ eating habits are a central feature of his enactment of the kingdom of God. They represent a radical and powerful expression of God’s generous reign.[[14]](#footnote-14) A foretaste of the joy of the kingdom of God in all its fullness is savoured at these joyful meals, where Jesus is either guest of honour or host.[[15]](#footnote-15) His meals communicate the message: ‘The reign of God is near, Jesus is its mediator, and as you get into his circle, the joy breaks out.’[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Post-resurrection meals**

After his resurrection, Jesus eats with his inner circle of disciples, the ones who abandoned him in his passion. His gesture of sharing meals with them says that he has forgiven them for their failures and infidelity.

The resurrection meals give valuable insights into the Eucharist as a post-resurrection and not simply a Last Supper event, and into the eucharistic presence of Christ. This presence is broader than in the bread and wine that he changes into his body and blood. The context within which that change takes place is one where the risen Christ comes to the Eucharistic Assembly of his followers just as he once came to the Upper Room. Christians too can say with Peter that we are those 'who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead' (Acts 10:41).

The three dimensions of community, reconciliation, and anticipation of the messianic banquet when the kingdom of God fully arrives, are all prominent in the resurrection meals of Jesus. They are there also in both the Last Supper and the Christian Eucharist.

**TWO SUPPER TRADITIONS: LK 22:15-20 & 1 COR 11:23-26; MK 14:22-25 & MT 26:26-29**

In the four parallel versions in the NT about what Jesus did and said with bread and wine, we have two basic traditions, that in Luke and Paul on the one hand, and that in Mark and Matthew on the other. The different details come from different theological and liturgical concerns. When the accounts of the Last Supper were being written down, the Church already had some experience of the regular practice of what they called 'the breaking of bread' or ‘The Lord’s Supper’, in memory of Jesus. The accounts isolate those elements of the Last Supper that justify and explain the Church's Eucharist.

The similarities among the accounts suggest that there is within them all a solid core or nucleus of historical fact, even though it is difficult if not impossible to identify it precisely.[[17]](#footnote-17) This has led Raymond Moloney to claim that '... the biblical basis for a eucharistic theology today has to be the eucharistic faith of the early communities reflected in these texts ... rather than in any historical reconstruction of the institution event, for about the latter little agreement is possible'[[18]](#footnote-18) Yet he does grant that the amount of agreement in the four versions points ‘to an historical nucleus in the ordinary belief of Christians concerning the origin of the Eucharist’.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Mark's account (followed by Matthew) is rooted in an early Palestinian tradition, while Paul and Luke reflect the liturgical tradition of Antioch. Both are traceable to the first decade of the Church's history.[[20]](#footnote-20)

In Mark's version, 'This is my body' has been paralleled by 'This is my blood'. It seems that this is an arrangement for liturgical use,[[21]](#footnote-21) in which the bread-cup actions are continuous. But we know that these actions could be separated by the Jewish meal. In fact, the Paul/Luke tradition says that the action with the cup came 'after supper'.

In all versions two main actions are described, one with the bread and the other with the cup. Each action is complete and meaningful in itself, but consists of various gestures. In the first action Jesus takes the bread, says a blessing (or gives thanks), breaks the bread and gives it to his disciples (Mk v.22 = Mt v.26 = Lk v.19 = Cor vv.23-24). In the second action Jesus takes the cup and gives thanks, and gives the cup to his disciples (Mk v.23 = Mt v.27; see Lk v.20; Cor v.25). In each version the actions of Jesus are basically the same. In regard to the words that explain what he means, there is a fair amount of resemblance. Thus, in his action with the bread, Jesus, in all versions, speaks of 'my body'. Then, in his action with the cup, he speaks of 'my blood' and 'the covenant'. These are always put together, even if in different ways.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**The meal context**

Scholars continue to argue whether the Last Supper was literally a Passover celebration. The best evidence is that the Last Supper was not the Passover meal of that year but a festive Jewish meal organized by Jesus as a farewell dinner when he recognized that official opposition to him was mounting at an ever-accelerating pace. He foresees the likelihood that he might be prevented from celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples the following night because of imprisonment or worse.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Certainly, the Synoptics present it as a Passover meal. They imply at the very least that it is to be interpreted against the background of Passover ritual and Passover ideas. This conflicts with John (18:28), who suggests that it was eaten on the evening of the day Jesus died. In his view the death of Jesus corresponds to the sacrifice in the temple of the lambs for the feast. John is thereby suggesting that Jesus is the true paschal lamb. Whether or not it was literally a Passover, it was held so close to the actual feast, that it was celebrated (following the Synoptics) in a Passover context and a Passover atmosphere. We are meant to understand its meaning in Passover terms.

Its association with the Passover would have turned the thoughts of those at table to a twofold deliverance. That which Israel experienced when God rescued it from Egypt and made it his special people. And that which it was still to experience when the Messiah comes and reveals the glory of God.

At the very least the Last Supper was a festive farewell meal for Jesus who was going to his death. Whatever the precise form it took,[[24]](#footnote-24) it would have been a variation on a Jewish family meal, in which those present would always bless their Creator for all his goodness to his people. This blessing (*berakah*) took the form of a prayer over bread before the meal began and a prayer over a cup of wine at its conclusion. In the case of a family meal, the father led the prayer. At a gathering of a rabbi with his disciples, it was led by the rabbi. After blessing (praising) God for the bread, the leader broke it and gave a piece to each person at the table. After blessing (praising) God for the wine, he passed around the cup for all to drink of it and to share in the blessing pronounced over the wine. Everyone there made responses. It is out of these family rituals that Jesus gives the gift of himself in the Eucharist.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**The apparent intentions of Jesus**

As he is about to depart in the body, Jesus shows his intention to continue his bodily presence to his disciples, but in a way based on eating and drinking and nourishment. The form of this presence will be a memorial meal shared by faith-sharing brothers and sisters. Just as human beings must eat and drink if they are to stay alive, so must the followers of Jesus eat and drink if they are to keep living in a Christian way and remain united with their Lord. In becoming food and drink for them he adapts himself to the universal necessity of eating and drinking in order to stay alive. Through the medium of the bread and wine, Jesus will continue to be present to his disciples.

In regard to his first disciples, the Twelve gathered round him, however, both the Passover background and the general Jewish tradition about ritual meals enable us to interpret more specifically what Jesus has in mind for them. In inviting them to the Supper he is assembling the nucleus and leaders of God’s new covenant people. There he speaks his final word to them to explain how his leaving them will be a new kind of Exodus (i.e., a new kind of Passover). His solemn prayer of blessing over the bread and over the cup is a sacrifice of praise to accompany the sacrifice that he will make next day, when as the Suffering Servant of God, he will offer himself in his body and blood on the cross.[[26]](#footnote-26)

**Intentions expressed**

And so, with an eye to his approaching death, Jesus gives a new meaning to the bread and wine of the Supper. He re-interprets them, he renames them, he identifies them with the gift of himself even unto death. Focusing his attention on the reality of the bread and wine, the words of his thanksgiving-prayer over them makes them something new. His words really transforms them into his body and blood. David Power comments: He genuinely gives his own self to the disciples in a communion of life, covenant, and eschatological hope that springs from his self-surrender.[[27]](#footnote-27) In doing so he expresses himself in a way which the Church will later call 'sacramental'.

Strictly speaking, Jesus does not bless the loaf of bread and the third cup of wine in front of him; he rather blesses his Father over the bread (the *matzoth*) and the wine, thanking him in the name of the entire group for his past saving interventions. Jesus blesses his Father, not bread, but in the process the loaf of bread is blessed by being changed. Without being annihilated as bread it is transformed so profoundly that it becomes the carrier of his presence in a form that can be eaten.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Consideration will next be given to 'the bread-word' and 'the cup-word' which go with the actions of Jesus with the bread and the cup.

**Words with actions – ‘the bread word’**

‘... the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you"' (1 Cor 11:23-24; cf. Lk 22:19; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22).

The action of Jesus with the bread (as with the wine) amounts to a prophetic action**,[[29]](#footnote-29)** in which he represents in a realistic way the offering of his life to God. For the bread he breaks and gives, signifies and is his body which will be broken and given in death the next day. (The wine in the cup which he gives, signifies and is, as we shall see, the life he is to pour out on the cross in order to re-establish the covenant bond between God and God’s people). His disciples, by eating and drinking, are already sharing in the blessings of this sacrifice of his life.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The words of Jesus with the bread interpret his action of taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing. So does the presence of his disciples for whose sake he is acting.

The word 'this' which Jesus utters does not refer simply to the material object that he holds in his hands, but to his complete action with the bread. This is the bread for which he blesses God, and so it is identified as the gift of God given to support human life. This is the bread he shares among everyone there by giving them pieces from a single loaf. It is therefore a source of union for those who eat it.[[31]](#footnote-31) Finally, this is the bread that Jesus as host gives as food to his guests, the disciples, in order to strengthen them in their relationship with himself and the Father. Ever afterwards he will be present to them through this bread that they will share and eat in his memory.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The expression 'my body' refers to the whole bodily person of Jesus, but as laying down his life for others. Paul attributes to Jesus the explicit words 'my body that is for you' (v.24) and Luke 'my body, which is given for you' (v.19). In Jewish thinking, 'body' means more than the bodily part of a human being, as distinct from the blood or the soul. It means the whole human being in his/her bodily existence. So, Jesus is saying in effect, **'**This is me in my concrete personal reality. What I am giving you is myself.'[[33]](#footnote-33)

Thus, by his action of sharing the bread and by the words that accompany the sharing, Jesus is saying that he and the eucharistic bread are one and the same person. He is also saying that by means of the eucharistic bread, he will become present to his disciples after his death. He is also suggesting that through their sharing the eucharistic bread, he will empower them too to lay down their lives in loving service of others, in imitation of him.[[34]](#footnote-34)

**Words with actions – ‘the cup word’**

'In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"' (1 Cor 11:25; cf. Mt 26:27-28; Mk 14:23-24; Lk 22:20).

In analysing 'the cup-word', it will first be appropriate to state the connection between blood and life in the Jewish thinking of Jesus, before highlighting his reference to the new covenant that he is establishing in his blood.For the Jews, blood represented the life-substance (Dt 12:23; Lev 17:11, 14). It stood for the living being with blood coursing through its veins, especially when suffering a violent death (Gen 4:10; 2 Macc 8:3; Mt 27:4,25; Acts 5:28, etc.). It refers then to the person in the act of shedding his/her blood.

In the version of Mark and Matthew Jesus does not simply say 'This is my blood', but 'This is my blood of the covenant...' (Mk 14:24, Mt 26:28)). It matches the saying of Moses as he sprinkled the blood of the Sinai covenant sacrifice on the assembled people: 'See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you...' (Ex 24:8). In the version of Paul and Luke Jesus says that the cup of wine ‘is the new covenant in my blood’ (1 Cor 11:25; Lk 22:20)

As is well known, God's people of old were unfaithful to the conditions of the covenant on Sinai. For their rebellion and disobedience, they were eventually sent into exile. But even as he was punishing them, their faithful and merciful God was promising them a future pardon that would restore good relations:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel (and the house of Judah). It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt - a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jer 31:31-34).

The new covenant, then, is to mean true knowledge and love of God. In his action and words with the wine, Jesus is declaring that this covenant is present in his own person. He is thus fulfilling the Servant prophecy: 'I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations' (Is 42:6). And since an alliance required blood, he would give his, give it as God's Suffering 'Servant', give it as 'a man of suffering', innocent yet 'struck down by God and afflicted ... wounded for our transgressions ... crushed for our iniquities' (Is 53:3-5). In short, he will sacrifice his life for the salvation, the spiritual well-being of all (cf. Is 49:6; 53:12; Mk 10:45).

In his words with the cup of wine, Jesus is drawing the attention of his followers to his intention to lay down his life to bring in that ‘new covenant’. In fact, the cup of wine which he holds in his hands, and which, contrary to the usual custom, he gives to all at table,[[35]](#footnote-35) stands for himself both as shedding his blood, and as communicating to his disciples a share in the new covenant. Already the sacrifice of Calvary is communicating its benefits through the sign that represents it. And because they all drink from the one cup, his disciples are bonded closer with Jesus, closer with one another, and closer with God.

**CONCLUSION**

This presentation has amplified and developed the basic perspectives of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. It has located the origins of the Eucharist principally but not exclusively in the Last Supper. It has given particular consideration and emphasis to the influence of the total series of fellowship meals of Jesus both before and after his resurrection.

What has been said about Jesus' post-Easter meals in particular has illuminated the fact that the Eucharist is not simply the repetition of what Jesus did and said at the Last Supper, but also his living presence as the crucified and risen Lord to his celebrating followers. In short, ‘on the night before he died, the Lord Jesus gave his disciples a way of truly experiencing his person and his mission’.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The beginnings of the Eucharist have been beautifully and brilliantly summarized in *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (the Lima Statement) of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches:

The Church receives the Eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St Paul wrote: "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of me." 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" (1 Cor 11:23-25; cf. Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).

The meals which Jesus is recorded as sharing during his earthly ministry proclaim and enact the nearness of the Kingdom, of which the feeding of the multitudes is a sign. In his last meal, the fellowship of the Kingdom was connected with the imminence of Jesus' suffering. After his resurrection, the Lord made his presence known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread. Thus, the Eucharist continues these meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his resurrection, always as a sign of the Kingdom. Christians see the Eucharist prefigured in the Passover memorial of Israel's deliverance from the land of bondage and in the meal of the Covenant on Mount Sinai (Ex 24). It is the new paschal meal of the Church, the meal of the New Covenant, which Christ gave to his disciples as the *anamnesis* of his death and resurrection, as the anticipation of the Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). Christ commanded his disciples thus to remember and encounter him in this sacramental meal, as the continuing people of God, until his return. The last meal celebrated by Jesus was a liturgical meal employing symbolic words and actions. Consequently, the Eucharist is a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates to us God's love in Jesus Christ, the love by which Jesus loved his own "to the end" (John 13:1). It has acquired many names: for example, the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, the Holy Communion, the Divine Liturgy, the Mass. Its celebration continues as the central act of the Church's worship.[[37]](#footnote-37)

An understanding of the biblical origins of the Eucharist, and especially its NT origins, leads his followers, surely, to wonder and gratitude for the length and breadth and depth of Christ's love for them, expressed in the gift of himself in bread and wine. Surely it also leads them to an attitude and life-style of unselfish self-giving in love and service to others!

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   Jerome Kordell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* [Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament} (Wilmington DEL: Michael Glazier, 1988), 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. By referring to the accounts as 'reports of a kind', I am suggesting that I stand somewhere in between 'the contemporary approaches' summarized by David Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition*' (New York: Crossroad, 1992): 'Two contemporary approaches to the scriptures affect the investigation of eucharistic texts in the New Testament. On the one side, there is the attempt to offer a historical reconstruction of events and sayings. On the other, there is the reading of the scriptures as literary texts, not simply in the sense in which works of fiction are literature, but in the sense that the texts are read as imaginative renderings of events and sayings, with meaning rather than chronicle as the purpose' (23). He concludes: 'The starting-point for a study of the Eucharist in New Testament texts is then the account of church life, not the account of the supper' (27). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament*, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James Mackey, *Jesus, the Man and the Myth* (London: SCM Press, 1979),148. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Philippe Rouillard, ‘From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist,’ *Living Bread, Saving Cup: Readings on the Eucharist*, ed. R.K. Seasoltz (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 140-141. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*. tr. Edward Quinn (London: Collins, 1977), 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The feedings are recounted in the language of the 'institution narratives'. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Robert Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. NT Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Donald Senior, *Jesus: A Gospel Portrait* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 63. He comments: ‘This emphasis on table fellowship is notable in a semitic culture where sharing a meal was considered more a sharing of life than simply a casual association’ (ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, Brazos Press, & London: SPCK, 2007,194. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ben Meyer, ‘Jesus Christ,’ in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 3 H-J*, D.N. Freedman Editor-in-Chief (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 782. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Neufeld, *Recovering Jesus*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Johnson, *Consider Jesus*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Nevertheless, there are reputable scholars who claim to have reconstructed what Jesus probably did and said with bread and wine. The Reformed scholar, A.I.C. Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1983), endorses the re-constructed text of the Catholic scholar, Johannes Betz. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Raymond Moloney, ‘Eucharist’, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph Komonchak et al. (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987), 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Moloney, ‘Eucharist’, 344. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament*’, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Kodell, ibid., 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament*, 56-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kodell, ibid., suggests that ‘the Supper is completely explainable within the typical outline of the festive Jewish meal’ (57). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Moloney, ‘Eucharist’, 343. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Liam Walsh, *The Sacraments of Initiation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 174 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Luis Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash 1986), 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. e.g., Acts 21:10-11; Jer 19:10-11; 28; Ezek 5:1-12; 2Kg 13:14-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. Johannes Betz, 'Eucharist, I, Theological', *Sacramentum Mundi*, eds. Karl Rahner et al. (New York: Herder and Herder, and London: Burns and Oates), II, 257-267, 259; Pierre Benoit, 'The Accounts of the Institution and What They Imply', in J. Delorme et al., *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964): 'Jesus does not only give the bread and wine as food; to be able to make this gift, he begins by giving his body and blood, that is to say his life. It is clearly the Father to whom he gives it, as a sacrifice of expiation and reconciliation: his very words will make this explicit' (77-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Heron, *Table and Tradition*, remarks: 'The taking of the bread in his hands, the blessing of God, the breaking and sharing of the bread were all part of that single act in which God was praised, the table-fellowship established, and the meal begun ... the main point of the whole action was the blessing of God and the receiving and eating of the bread as a gift from him' (25). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Church tradition will subsequently see in this Last Supper gesture of Jesus, the communication to his disciples for all time of his presence in the Spirit, when they do the same actions in remembrance of him. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cf. Walsh, *The Sacraments of Initiation*, 202; K.W. Wolff, 'Basar - Man in his Infirmity', *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1974): '... *basar* points towards man **per se**, but now in his bodily aspect' (28). E. Schweizer, '*soma*', *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. G. Kittel & G. Friedrich, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans: 1971), VII, 1024-1094, says of its use in the OT: 'It is a term for man as a totality' (1048). On the 'bread-word' of Jesus, Schweizer comments: '... it is likely enough that the original reference of the saying was primarily to the I or person of Jesus ... Not the least reason why *soma* was chosen in translation might well have been that it often denotes the man who suffers death ...' (1059). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Nigel Watson, 'Eucharist in the New Testament', *Communion in Australian Churches*, ed. R. Gribben (Melbourne: JBCE, 1985) 18-24, raises the question: 'Is it conceivable that in the setting of the Last Supper, Jesus could have intended the words "This is my body" as a sign and a guarantee of his presence, his personality, his person?' (20) He answers: 'It does become conceivable that Jesus should have intended to convey such an assurance, when one recalls that for the Jews a meal was, in a very special sense, a means of fellowship, a means of giving oneself to another and sharing in a common life' (20). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Heinz Schurmann, 'Jesus' Words in the Light of His Actions at the Last Supper', *Concilium* 10.4 (1968) 61-67, 63. The usual custom at a festive meal was for each guest to drink from his/her own cup. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. John Baldovin, *Bread of Life, Cup of Salvation: Understanding the Mass* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. BEM 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)