

JOHN AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

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John's silence on the baptism of Christ and the institution of the Lord's Supper contrasted with his obvious elaborations upon the themes of bread, water, and blood have puzzled many commentators. Why does John omit these vital incidents and then stress the symbols that give them all their meaning? Is this a hint of historical or doctrinal disagreement between him and the Synoptists? Shall we seek here a clue to the attitude of the author of the Fourth Gospel toward the sacraments? A brief survey of the explanations which have been suggested will reveal how broad the spectrum of opinions has become.¹

1. *Accident*: F. Spitta thought that because of an accident, a page of the manuscript was lost.² However, at no point can we sense a break of meaning in our text and this makes his solution untenable.

2. *Old Age or Ignorance*: Some nineteenth-century critics explained the silence of the evangelist by the fact that John was so old at the time he wrote his gospel that he had forgotten some of the important incidents. Others thought the author did not know these facts at all.³ But nowhere in this work can we find evidence of senility, and critics recognize more and more his remarkable knowledge of Jewish life and society.

3. *Anti-Judaism*: Applying its Hegelian yardstick to our

¹ Although many of the authors quoted below give a few illustrations of the interpretations which have been suggested, I have not found a systematic survey anywhere. To prepare an *état-present* of the studies in this field is a major objective of this article.

² F. Spitta, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur des Urchristentums*, I (Göttingen, 1893), 187 ff. (cited by M. Goguel).

³ J. Moffatt, "The Lord's Supper in the Fourth Gospel," *The Expositor* (8th series), VI (1913), 1-3 refers to several.

problem, the school of Tübingen decided that our author purposely omitted the institution of the Lord's Supper because it was too Jewish.⁴ Though less prominently, this idea is included in the views of many commentators, but since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Jewish outlook of John has been clarified.

4. *Little Concern for Sacraments*: In this exegetical circle, there is a strong emphasis upon the spiritual significance of the ceremony. For instance, in an early essay on the topic, J. Moffatt writes that "the Fourth Gospel was indifferent to the Lord's Supper . . . [because of] the frank conviction that communion with Christ did not depend essentially upon participation in such a rite."⁵ The author's feeling was so strong on this point that he deliberately replaced the primitive sacrament by a different feast, the eucharist by the agape.⁶ Thus the mystical understanding places John in the same group with the author of Ephesians, who says so much concerning union with Christ but does not even mention the Supper. While V. Taylor starts from a different standpoint, he arrives at a similar conclusion: "His eucharistic teaching, like his conception of faith, centers in the idea of communion with the Living Lord, rather than, as in St. Paul's teaching, the thought of participation in His sacrifice."⁷ In his commentary on the Fourth Gospel, J. H. Bernard studies the sacraments at length and arrives at the conclusion that John "avoids sacramental language."⁸ E. C. Colwell explains that for the apostle the two great rites of the Christian Church were of secondary importance.⁹

According to Rudolf Bultmann, Paul gave to the eucharistic

⁴ A. Hilgenfeld, *Das Evangelium und die Briefe Johannis* (Halle, 1849), p. 711, is a good example of this approach.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Thought* (London, 1958), p. 140.

⁸ J. H. Bernard, *Gospel According to St. John* (Edinburgh, 1928), I, clxvi.

⁹ E. C. Colwell, *John Defends the Gospel* (Chicago, 1936), p. 135.

meal an expiatory and sacramental significance borrowed from the pagan mystery religions. John, on the contrary, was the first one to realize clearly the meaning of the ministry of Jesus: in Christ, God encounters man. For this reason, in the Fourth Gospel, the idea of forgiveness of sin is practically absent and the death on the cross is subordinated to the incarnation. The Pauline stress on *crucifixion* and *expiation* is replaced by the Johannine assertion of *exaltation* and *glorification*. Christ gives a new *commandment* instead of a new *covenant*. "The entire salvation drama—incarnation, death, resurrection, Pentecost, the parousia—is concentrated into a single event: the revelation of God's 'reality' (ἀλήθεια) in the earthly activity of the man Jesus combined with the overcoming of the offence in it by man's accepting it in faith."¹⁰

Bultmann finds a major proof for his assertions in the fact that the evangelist does not narrate the founding of the Lord's Supper, in the liturgy of which the atonement idea occurs in the words *for you* (or *for many*). He substituted for it the farewell prayer of Jesus, in which the words: "I sanctify myself for them" (Jn 17: 19) are a clear allusion to the words of the Lord's Supper. "It is therefore permissible to say that though in John there is no direct polemic against the sacraments, his attitude toward them is nevertheless critical or, at least, reserved."¹¹ Texts such as Jn 3: 5; 6: 51b-58; 19: 34 must be the work of an ecclesiastical redactor.

E. Lohse explains that John places the preached word over the sacrament because it alone gives meaning to the ritual action and incites the response of faith.¹² J. Kreyenbuhl goes even further and sees in the Fourth Gospel an evident instance of open and active antisacramentalism.¹³

¹⁰ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I (New York, 1951), 144 ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II (New York, 1955), 38; cf. G. Bornkamm, "Die eucharistische Rede im Johannes-Evangelium," *ZNW*, XLVII (1956), 161.

¹² E. Lohse, "Wort und Sakrament," *NTS*, VII (1961), 125.

¹³ J. Kreyenbuhl, *Das Evangelium der Wahrheit*, II (Berlin, 1905), 25 ff; see also M. Barth, *Die Taufe: ein Sakrament* (Zollikon-Zürich, 1951).

5. *Anti-episcopacy*: While the preceding group had sought a solution in the theology of the author, A. T. Purchas investigates the development of the organization of the early church and finds a solution in the rise of the episcopacy.¹⁴ He believes that John was opposed to the monarchical bishop. In Judas is prefigured the bishop, paid superintendant of the Lord's Supper. But in the foot-washing ceremony is pictured the humble spirit of brotherhood which is characteristic of true Christianity! The study of the texts seems to reveal, on the contrary, that the monarchical bishop came earlier in Asia Minor than in the West and its institution is commonly attributed in the Fathers to the author of our gospel.¹⁵

6. *Calendrical Disagreements*: It is to the liturgical controversies of Early Christianity that B. W. Bacon turns our attention. According to him, John treats the Lord's Supper by a bold transfer from the last Passover to a previous Passover when Jesus had remained in Galilee.

By this transfer, the Fourth Gospel displays a fundamentally Quartodeciman point of view. The dissociation of the institution of the Eucharist from its connection with the Passover Supper and association of it with the *agape* as a rite connected with the Galilean breaking of bread rather than with the scenes of the 'upper room', is only partly true to historical fact; for the Eucharist really was instituted at Jerusalem, as an adaptation of the breaking of bread. Nevertheless, the correction of the Roman misconception: the Eucharist, a substitute for the Passover, and the return to the Pauline and apostolic Christ crucified, our Passover; his resurrection, our first fruits, is as true to fact and as deeply significant, as it is distinctive of the belief and practice of "Asia" in the second century.¹⁶

B. Bauer and W. Heitmüller, according to Goguel, omit

¹⁴ A. T. Purchas, *Johannine Problems and Modern Needs*, pp. 30 f., quoted by J. Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ "For although Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, the order of bishops, when traced to their origin, will rest on John as their author," Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion* iv. 5. Also, as Dr. Kenneth Strand, of the Department of Church History of Andrews University, has mentioned to me, Ignatius refers to the bishop in all his letters addressed to churches in Asia Minor, but not in his letter to the Romans.

¹⁶ B. W. Bacon, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* (New York, 1910), p. 431.

this narrative as a criticism of the chronology of the synoptists.¹⁷

7. *Strong Sacramentalism*: According to C. J. Wright, John is the "foremost teacher" on the sacramental principle.¹⁸ "The theological interest of the fourth evangelist pervades his book," says R. M. Grant, "but it is especially remarkable in his rewriting of the institution of the Lord's Supper. For the synoptists and for Paul, the Eucharist was a solemn memorial of the Lord's death, binding the community together in fellowship with one another and with him and looking forward to his coming again in glory (1 Cor 11: 2-6). For the Fourth Evangelist, it was the sacrament of the flesh and blood of Christ."¹⁹ C. T. Craig agrees with Grant. Any commemorative aspect of the Lord's Supper is entirely missing. The gospel was written for the intimacy of the cult group and insists upon the necessity of the saving sacraments of the Church.²⁰

Albert Schweitzer thinks that the author of the Fourth Gospel was attempting to justify by Christ's example and words the sacramental developments which had taken place in his time. For a Greek, much of the primitive Christian faith (e.g. the incarnation) did not make sense. Although Paul did not share Hellenistic views, he formulated Christian doctrine in a way capable of being hellenized. With his *in Christ* concept, the future union of the synoptic accounts became a reality present in the bread and the wine. After the death of Paul, the eschatological aspect faded out completely; and with Ignatius we arrive at the notion of the "food of immortality." John shared Ignatius' view and, as it would be unthinkable for the author of the gospel that Jesus Himself

¹⁷ M. Goguel, *The Life of Jesus* (New York, 1949), pp. 460-462.

¹⁸ C. J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (New York, 1938), p. 691.

¹⁹ R. M. Grant, "The Fourth Gospel and the Church," *HTHR*, XXV (1942), 96.

²⁰ C. T. Craig, "Sacramental Interest in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL*, LVIII (1939), 34.

should have given the disciples bread and wine as His own body and blood before His death and resurrection, he omitted the whole incident in his gospel.²¹

In words that often echo Schweitzer's, Ethelbert Stauffer writes that "John was written for liturgical purposes."²² Long before it became one volume, its main sections had been used in worship as the construction of the book, its style and its sacramental references reveal. "John," he states, "brings the Eucharistic doctrine of the Primitive Church to its completion."²³ The Last Supper loses its specific character as a Passover meal, and it is in the Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6 that we find the key to the author's teaching. The eucharistic bread which the believer eats is his flesh in a strict ontic sense (Jn 6: 49 ff), and, therefore Ignatius' "medicine of immortality" is "entirely in the Johannine spirit."²⁴ As this eucharistic bread cannot be distributed by Jesus during his early life, John omitted altogether the narrative of the *Einsetzung*.

C. Guignebert connects closely Paul's and John's sacramental concepts and reminds us that John alone makes Christ's a bloody death (Jn 19: 34).²⁵

8. *Anti-literalism*: E. F. Scott also justifies the author's treatment by Hellenistic trends, but his conclusions are diametrically opposed to Schweitzer's. He explains that John was worried because ideas associated with pagan mysteries were transferring themselves to the Christian sacraments. John wrote his book in order to subordinate the outward rite to what was spiritual and essential; but his efforts, instead of stopping the trend, led directly to lifeless externa-

²¹ A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London, 1931), pp. 334 ff.

²² E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (4th ed.; New York, 1955), p. 40.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁵ C. Guignebert, *Jesus*, transl. S. H. Hooke (New York, 1935), p. 447.

lism.²⁶ John's fears of "the perils of a crude literalism in the language which had come to be used about that sacrament" are also expressed by W. F. Howard,²⁷ P. Gardner-Smith²⁸ and J. M. Creed.²⁹ In the same vein, G. H. C. McGregor explains that John wished to counteract superstitious sacramentalism.³⁰ W. A. Smart expands this view to say that John "systematically allegorized all the life of Christ in order to avoid centering the attention on the physical rites."³¹

9. *Christian Oath of Secrecy*: Other authors have explored the possibility that the contents of the Fourth Gospel was determined by the readers for whom it was intended. C. H. Dodd attempts to show that the author wished to appeal mainly to a non-Christian public. For that reason, he unfolded gradually the *logos* doctrine in the first chapter. For the same reason, he presented the idea of baptism and of the bread of life in a way which was filled with meaning for Christians and conveyed just enough meaning to pagans acquainted with contemporary religious symbolism to whet their appetite for further instruction.³² In an earlier article, Dodd has also shown that the comparison of the language of Mk 8: 6-7 at the feeding of the Four Thousand and of Mk 14: 22-23 at the institution of the Lord's Supper reveals very close parallelism of wording. This must have been evident to early Christians who placed fish and bread on the sacramental table in the

²⁶ E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 132.

²⁷ W. F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (London, 1931), p. 214.

²⁸ P. Gardner-Smith, *St. John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, 1938) p. 35.

²⁹ J. M. Creed, "Sacraments in the Fourth Gospel," *Modern Churchman*, XVI (1926), 363-372; quoted by A. Corell.

³⁰ G. H. C. McGregor, *The Gospel of John* (New York, 1928), p. 272.

³¹ W. A. Smart, *The Spiritual Gospel* (New York, 1940), p. 60.

³² C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 8, 139, n. 343.

paintings of the catacombs.³³ Therefore the words of Jesus on the Bread of Life were naturally associated in the primitive church with the institution of the Lord's Supper. Paul Niewalda comes to the same conclusion in his book *Sakramentsymbolik im Johannesevangelium*.³⁴

Alan Richardson,³⁵ and J. Jeremias³⁶ who studies the *disciplina arcanis* particularly, think that John did not want to describe in detail the sacred mysteries in books which could fall into the hands of disrespectful pagans.

10. "Ergänzung" (Completion) Approach: This is a common view, especially with older commentators. Godet, for instance, believes that John intended to call attention to a fact such as the washing of feet, which was forgotten in the Synoptics, and at the same time pass over events such as the baptism and the supper which were known well enough.³⁷ The same idea is shared by A. Plummer,³⁸ B. Weiss,³⁹ and T. Zahn⁴⁰ among many others.

For Westcott, John presupposes those services which were part of the common experience of the church; but he records the discourses in which were set forth the ideas clothed for us in the two sacraments.⁴¹ According to Lebreton, John, who

³³ Dodd, "Eucharistic Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," *The Expositor* (8th Series), II (1911), 530-546.

³⁴ P. Niewalda, *Sakramentssymbolik im Johannesevangelium* (Limburg, 1958), applying somewhat the same method as H. Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl*, seeks to discover the apostolic meaning of a text by later practices. He ranges far and wide over the field of liturgy and art, but much of his evidence is too late to have a certain bearing on the problem of the sacraments in St. John.

³⁵ A. Richardson, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London, 1959), p. 47.

³⁶ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York, 1955), p. 73. Also, according to Corell, H. Huber, and W. Oehler.

³⁷ F. Godet, *Commentaire sur l'Évangile de St. Jean* (Paris, 1881), III, p. 243.

³⁸ A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Cambridge, 1880), pp. xlix, 269.

³⁹ B. Weiss, *Das Johannes Evangelium* (Göttingen, 1893), p. 469.

⁴⁰ T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Leipzig, 1908), p. 566.

⁴¹ B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel of John* (The Greek Text) (London,

had recorded at length the discourse on the Bread of Life, thought it superfluous to repeat here what the synoptic gospels had sufficiently developed,⁴² an idea already found in the writings of E. Renan, O. Holtzmann and J. Reville,⁴³ and repeated in E. Gangler's *Abendmahl im N.T.*⁴⁴ E. Lohmeyer and H. Windisch⁴⁵ elaborate this idea and say that John consciously connects the Eucharist with the Miraculous Feeding rather than with the Lord's Supper. The only reference to the Supper in John then is the Washing of Feet, a well-recognized supper custom. This interpretation of the Washing of Feet is also held by Maurice Goguel⁴⁶ and H. Strathmann.⁴⁷

E. C. Hoskyns concludes also that John presumed that his readers were familiar with the events which led to the institution of the Lord's Supper. For that reason, the apostle substituted a brief theological introduction to the passion of Jesus (ch. 13: 1-3) and passed at once to the interpretation of these words and actions "since their understanding is not merely the understanding of an isolated saying or action of Jesus; it is the understanding of the truth which is the Christian religion."⁴⁸

II. *The Whole Life of Christ Considered as Sacramental:* In his *Early Christian Worship*, O. Cullmann adopted a new approach to the problem of the sacraments in the Fourth Gospel. Instead of starting with the author, he considers the

1908). On page 257 is the outline of an article Westcott intended to write on this topic.

⁴² J. Lebreton, *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ* (New York, 1957), II, 213; identical answer in F. M. Braun, *Evangelie selon St. Jean* (3d ed.; Paris, 1939), pp. 417 f.

⁴³ Goguel, *loc. cit.*, mentions them and a few others.

⁴⁴ E. Gaugler, *Abendmahl im Neuen Testament* (Basel, 1943), according to A. Corell, *Consummatum Est* (New York, 1958), p. 46.

⁴⁵ E. Lohmeyer, "Das Abendmahl," *JBL*, LVI (1937), 249. H. Windisch, *Johannes und die Synoptiker* (Leipzig, 1926), p. 78.

⁴⁶ Goguel, *loc. cit.*, provides a valuable survey of opinions on the silence of John.

⁴⁷ H. Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (Göttingen, 1959), p. 201.

⁴⁸ E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London, 1947), pp. 432-433.

Sitz im Leben, the worship of the church when the gospel was written. It is the objective of John, Cullmann believes, to link up the Jesus of history with the Christ who is still alive, through the liturgy of the church, a real presence to be taken seriously, and to be understood "not in terms of substance but of experience."⁴⁹ John selected incidents and words of Christ which shed light upon the main rituals of the church, baptism and eucharist. In the Johannine record, we must seek several levels of meaning: the historical one which refers us to the level of further acts in the history of salvation. Beyond the historical reality of the past, we must also establish the link between seeing and believing today. This experience is made easier for us than during Jesus' lifetime, because of the work of the Holy Spirit, which is given with special reference to the understanding of the earthly life of Jesus according to Jn 14: 26; 16: 12, texts which Cullmann calls "the key to the understanding of our gospel."⁵⁰

With this approach, Cullmann explains why John omits the institution of the Lord's Supper. First, the evangelist has already spoken twice of the Lord's Supper (chaps. 2 and 6). In the second place, "it is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel that it deals with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper not in terms of a simple description of its institution as the Synoptics do, but by showing how from *other events in the life of Jesus* a connecting line is to be traced to this Sacrament."⁵¹ Besides, he wants to illustrate one concept of the sacrament, which does not appear in chaps. 2 or 6, the concept of fellowship of love, which is admirably illustrated by the washing of feet. This indirect reference to the Lord's Supper enables John to establish a connection between the two Sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. In vss. 9 f. we find a reference to baptism, with the stipulation that baptism should not be repeated. In vs. 10, we find that another sacrament

⁴⁹ O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London, 1953), p. 101.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

can and should be repeated, the Sacrament of the Fellowship of Love, the Lord's Supper. "In Baptism the *individual* receives once-for-all part with Christ; in the Eucharist the *community* as such receives part and that again."⁵² This is also C. K. Barrett's view: "John was more interested in the Eucharist than the synoptists. But because he was concerned to root the sacrament as observed by the church in the total sacramental fact of the incarnation, he was unwilling to attach it to a particular moment and a particular action."⁵³ In the Fourth Gospel, history is charged with supra-historical meaning. The incarnation is a sacrament "since it visibly represented truth and at the same time conveyed what was represented."⁵⁴

12. *Impossibility of Communion Before the Death of Christ*: In connection with divergent interpretations of the outlook of John on the sacraments, we find rather commonly the idea that the eucharist could not be given by the Lord before His death. This is supported, for instance, by Moffatt, Goguel, Stauffer and Schweitzer, and is an essential thought in A. Corell's *Consummatum Est*. "In our opinion, the real reason for the omission of this account is that the Eucharist as well as baptism, both of which are vitally bound up with the risen life of Jesus, is impossible before the death of Jesus. In other words, it was not that John was anti-sacramental but that, in his view, sacraments belong to the New Age ushered in by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and can therefore only be celebrated in the Church embodying the New Age."⁵⁵ If John mentions the sacraments at all, it is as Cullmann sees correctly, to state the identity between the Jesus of history and the Christ who is present in the liturgy.

13. *Broadening of Intention*: Although he believes that the most common explanation is that of the *disciplina arcanis*

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 109 f.

⁵³ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York, 1955), p. 42.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Corell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

(which is hardly accurate), R. H. Lightfoot suggests that the author wishes to have in mind not only the original disciples, but all the future members of the Lord's body.⁵⁶

Why then did not John include the institution of the Lord's Supper in his gospel? As our survey, which is far from exhaustive, has revealed, the most varied and contradictory opinions have been offered. Some can readily be eliminated, as we have seen. This gospel is not the product of a failing or ignorant mind. It would also seem strange that the author would attempt to cloak with secrecy a ceremony which was described in three other works circulated rather widely in his own day. Especially is this so when he did not hesitate to develop fully the themes of eating the flesh and drinking the blood which are essential parts of the ritual and the very cause of Gentile calumnies. Besides, does not the oath of secrecy require a degree of religious sophistication unlikely to appear so close to the birth of a dynamic movement which surges forth to "witness" to all nations? In his studies, Jeremias alludes to many instances of the *disciplina arcanis* in the pagan world, but his references to the primitive church are unconvincing. Such an oath is foreign to the spirit of the apostolic preaching.

Around R. Bultmann a sizeable group of scholars have investigated the Gnostic mind and believe they have found in John a kindred soul, eager to reach communion with the divine through the discovery of the true gnosis, the revelation of God's reality. Whatever light this approach may shed on the mind of the author of the Fourth Gospel, it only involves us in greater difficulties when we use it to solve the problem which concerns us, since it requires the hypothesis of a redactional hand for all the texts in the gospel which have sacramental overtones. Does this not appear to be a bypass of the issues rather than a highway to a solution? John's evident concern with the themes of bread, water, blood should steer us away

⁵⁶ R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (Oxford, 1956), p. 261.

from any solution which posits that the author was not interested in the Lord's Supper.

Cullmann's wise reminder that, in the end, the meaning of a work is not determined solely by its author but also by the understanding of its readers is timely. We will grant that Christian readers who had been baptized, who partook of the Lord's Supper would find a wealth of meaning in all references to water, bread, or blood. However, W. Michaelis and several others question whether the whole gospel is built around the sacraments.⁵⁷

Another prominent group points to the Hellenistic mystery cults and asserts that our author purposes to give Christian credentials to sacramentarian practices drawn from pagan sources. The Lord's Supper loses its eschatological significance and becomes a "food of immortality." This solution does not seem in harmony with the most recent research which shows the strong bonds between the Johannine material and the Hebraic milieu.⁵⁸ While the Old Testament has a great deal to

⁵⁷ W. Michaelis, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium* (Bern, 1948). Niewalda gives a good survey of the opinions of the reviewers of Cullmann's book.

⁵⁸ The literature on this topic is growing rapidly. W. F. Albright, "Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John," *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), p. 171 states: "I subscribe unreservedly to his [J. A. Montgomery's] conclusions: 'That the gospel of St. John is the composition of a well-informed Jew, not of the Pharisaic party, whose life-experience was gained in Palestine in the first half of the first century, and whose mother-tongue was Aramaic; and that this conclusion alone explains the excellence of the historical data and philological phenomena of the book.'" After summarizing the conclusions of Braun, Kuhn, and Grossouw, Daniélou concludes: "The debate on the original background of the Gospel of John appears to be definitely closed" (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and Primitive Christianity* [Baltimore, 1958], p. 108). See also, L. Mowry, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel of John," *BA*, XVII (1954), 78 ff.; L. Morris, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and St. John's Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1960); G. Baumbach, *Qumran und das Johannes Evangelium* (Berlin, 1947). However, all stress the basic differences which still exist between the Dead Sea Scrolls and John.

say about atonement, it is mute on sacramentarian practices.⁵⁹ While apocalyptic writers delight in describing the great eschatological banquet, we find no evidence for a mystery-religion type of a meal.⁶⁰ Before adopting a solution which clashes so much with a Judaic mind, should we not explore the problem from an angle which is closer to John's background?

The gospel of John is built structurally around a key Jewish idea: the glorification of Messiah, a matter that was foremost in the minds of the disciples and the multitudes which gathered around the Master. As Kittel in his work on the glory of God and in his article in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch* shows, the Greek word δόξα in the Septuagint has acquired the meaning of the Hebrew *kābōd* and describes particularly the visible manifestation accompanying a theophany (Ex 33: 22; Dt 5: 21; etc.).⁶¹ In texts such as Is 60: 1 and Hab 2: 14, it includes also an eschatological value often associated with the person of the Son of Man in the apocalyptic literature.⁶² It is in this traditional Jewish setting that John looks at Jesus: "And we beheld his glory" (Jn 1: 14). "The divine glory, the δόξα revealing itself in the flesh, in the σάρξ, that is the leading concept of the whole gospel."⁶³

But this glory is revealed only gradually to the readers. This structure may be termed the suspense-motif in the gospel, which in many ways is the Johannine counterpart to the Marcan Messianic secret. While in Mark we find an evident

⁵⁹ Guignebert, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

⁶⁰ Most scholars agree that the Qumram community meals have little in common with the mystery religions; cf. Daniélou, *op. cit.* pp. 28 f.; F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, 1961), pp. 118 f.

⁶¹ See G. Kittel, "δόξα," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, II, (Stuttgart, 1950), 252 ff.

⁶² Cf. Mk 8: 38; 13: 26; Mt 19: 28; 25: 31; Rom 8: 18; 1 Thess 2: 11. For references to extrabiblical literature see R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen, 1959), pp. 44, 374; E. Stauffer, "Agnostos Christos," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 287 ff.

⁶³ Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

concern on the part of Christ to keep secret matters which have been revealed by demons or miracles, in John we are told continually to wait for the full understanding. The complete meaning of the acts of Jesus, their complete scope can only be known later. To a certain degree, the author follows this suspense pattern in the introduction: he identifies the hero of his book as the Logos, a term full of mystery as far as its human counterpart is concerned till verse 17, where Jesus Christ is finally named. This suspense motif is typical of the book. Here are a few examples: "Thou shalt see greater things than these . . ." (ch. 1: 50). "Mine hour is not yet come" (ch. 2: 4). "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (ch. 2: 19). "The Son of Man must be lifted up" (ch. 3: 14). "He must increase but I must decrease" (ch. 3: 30). "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father" (ch. 4: 21). "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (ch. 4: 14). "Verily, verily, I say unto you the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God . . ." (ch. 5: 25). "Does it offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (ch. 6: 61 f). "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready" (ch. 7: 6). "Yet a little while am I with you and then I go unto Him that sent Me" (ch. 7: 23). "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He . . ." (ch. 8: 28).

The glorification of Messiah is organized around two poles: a misunderstood glorification (ch. 6) and the true glorification (ch. 13-19).

In ch. 6, Jesus has just performed the messianic sign. As one like unto Moses, He has fed a multitude in the wilderness. The crowd, frenzied with hopes, wants to make Him king. Jesus now defines the true messianic sign, the real feeding of the people, the gift of his flesh and blood.

As Cullmann remarks, John couples the most materialistic language with repeated insistence on the primary importance

of spirit and faith. Instead of the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ used generally with the Lord's Supper, we have $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\zeta$, one of the components of the phrase $\alpha\lambda\iota\mu\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\zeta$ used in the New Testament to describe the fullness of human nature (Mt 16: 17; Jn 1: 13; 1 Cor 15:50; Gal 1: 16). In Jn 6: 54, 56 ff. rather than using $\epsilon\sigma\theta\acute{\iota}\epsilon\iota\nu$ or $\phi\alpha\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$, the author speaks of $\tau\rho\acute{\omega}\gamma\epsilon\iota\nu$, "to eat loudly, to masticate." John, therefore, refers not to a spiritual revelation, but to the historical, incarnated Christ. But this realism is combined with urgent appeals to faith (vss. 35-42, 60-69). "The decisive, life-giving element is not the flesh, not the $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\zeta$, but the spirit."⁶⁴ In His words on the Bread of Life, Christ announces that He will give His human flesh, His human blood ($\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$ in this case has the two meanings, "to give out" and "to give up to death") and that, understood by faith, these will become a food and a drink more real and more life-giving than Moses' manna and water. While the relationship between the Feeding and the Bread of Life is apparent, the connection between the answer of Christ and the popular effort to make Him king is often overlooked. Jesus, who has just rejected a human crown, points His hearers to the cross, where He will obtain His true glorification. He is truly the messianic king and the gift of His life is a more convincing sign of this fact than the giving of food, but this can only be realized when "the hour has come."

We now come to this true glorification. As we read the first few verses of ch. 13, we realize by the author's emotion and gravity that he has reached a very significant point in the life of his Master. With special emphasis he depicts Jesus' clear knowledge of the timetable of His earthly life (vs. 1), of His authority and divine origin (vs. 3), and the Savior's love which is now surpassing itself (vs. 1). With typical Johannine predilection for contrast, this lucidity of the Lord is set against the misunderstandings of the apostles, and Christ's total devotion to His disciples against the traitor's bondage to Satan. While the mood of humiliation colors the first part of

⁶⁴ Cullmann, *loc. cit.*

ch. 13, it ends with a triumphant "Now is the Son of man glorified" (vs. 31). This theme of glorification swells until it becomes a key thought in ch. 17. We may therefore conclude that for our author, Jesus reaches the lowest point of the *katabasis* when He girds Himself and washes the feet of His disciples. The Son has truly emptied Himself and taken the form of a servant (Phil 2: 7). The question, "Know ye what I have done to you?" (Jn 13: 12), reveals Jesus' insistence that His followers must grasp the full meaning of what they have just seen. Immediately afterward, Judas unmasked before his companions leaves the room and Jesus says, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." The manifestation of love has driven evil from His presence. The glorification can begin. The Son can be lifted up and draw all men unto Him (ch. 3: 14).

It is with this background that the theme of glorification is taken up again in the Passion narrative. Just as in ch. 6, the author develops on one hand the theme of misunderstood kingship; on the other he now reveals the true glory of the Messiah. In His interview with Pilate Jesus gives a solemn assurance that His kingdom is not a materialistic, wordly kingdom. To use Jewish eschatological terms, it belongs to the Age to Come. The loyalties of His subjects are not expressed in acts of war. To cast this idea into relief, John pictures the soldiers deriding a Jesus dressed in mock royal garments and the crowd hurling insults at Him whom they could not crown. All illusions about a material glory are crushed. In contrast, there stands the solemn moment when the dying Christ utters the supreme words, "It is finished." Theologians have long argued whether this should be taken chronologically or theologically. In any case, John desires to say that the misunderstanding of Jesus has run its course; the light can now shine, the true glory must be revealed. Symbolically, Pilate has refused to take down the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," which, in its three languages, as Loisy has seen, is a proclamation of the universal kingship

of Christ. As Jesus gives up the spirit, the fulfillment-motif replaces the suspense-motif. The veil of the Temple is rent: a new Temple of the body of Christ is about to replace Herod's gleaming but empty structure. The eyes of the centurion and of the crowd are opened to the tragedy which has taken place. Just as Pilate, the representative of Rome and of all that the world calls great, had presented a broken and rejected king to a screaming mob, *Ecce homo!* so now the author presents to the eyes of faith a glorified Savior from whose side water and blood flow forth. As Kittel says, "The δόξα springs out of His death."⁶⁵

This last wonder must have made a deep impression upon the author, who stops his narrative and invites us to watch and believe⁶⁶. This event emphasizes first the true humanity of Jesus: "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 5: 6). According to Jewish symbolism, Christ gives His church atonement and purification in His death. John has bridged successfully the passage from the Mosaic Law to the gospel. It is no longer so much a matter of what man must do but of what God has done. We see also how our author relates himself to the words of Jesus in the Synoptics: "This is my blood of the New Testament . . ." (Mk 14: 24; Mt 26: 26-29; Lk 22: 17-19). The Supper in the Synoptics is prophetic of the new covenant; in John the blood has been spilled and the new covenant exists.

In the midst of a congregation which celebrates baptism and the Lord's Supper, the connection with the two sacraments could not have been missed. It is in the death of Christ that baptism and Lord's Supper find all their origin and value. As he had done already in ch. 6, John takes care to point out that "it is the Spirit that gives to the sacraments their validity. He thinks of the sacraments in an altogether religious and eschatological manner: all thoughts of magic

⁶⁵ Kittel, *op. cit.* II, p. 252.

⁶⁶ Westcott, *op. cit.*, in the appendix gives a survey of the interpretations of Jn 19: 34 by the Church Fathers.

or impersonal mysticism are entirely out of question.”⁶⁷

The cross followed by the resurrection gives significance to all that Christ has said and done. Now it is possible to understand promises such as the following: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (ch. 3: 14). “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am” (ch. 8: 28). “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (ch. 12: 32). We know what water and what bread He had offered and the sense of the miracles appears manifest in Him (ch. 2: 22; 7: 39; etc.). The church finds its *raison d'être* in the continued presence and influence of the incarnate and glorified Lord.

We can understand why the Fourth Gospel is the gospel of belief. As E. F. Scott writes, John does not use the word πίστις, but “the equivalent verb is present under almost all its possible variations and dominates every chapter of the gospel . . .”⁶⁸ (This becomes even more impressive when we observe that in many cases the verb *receive* is used in a related sense.) In the first chapter the disciples believe. After the miracle at Cana they believe. In the light of ch. 19, we know that eventually Nicodemus believed. The Samaritans believe, the nobleman believes, etc. In response to belief, Jesus *gives*: He gives authority; He gives a wine much superior to the preceding wine; He can give a Temple; God gives His only begotten Son; Christ gives the water of life, the bread, etc. Believing and receiving combine in chaps. 13-17 into *abiding*. A new nature living in connection with Christ is promised. By the gift of Jesus on the cross, the believer's relationship with Christ can be compared to that of the branch to the True Vine.

Our study of John's understanding of the Lord's Supper has revealed the primary importance of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude and the wonder on the cross. This

⁶⁷ Corell, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

understanding is clear only in the light of the lifted-up, incarnate Lord. For this reason John omits a parallel to the synoptic narrative of the institution of the Supper. In his day the rite was celebrated regularly and his objective was rather to interpret afresh than to repeat. Besides, in the Ephesian Hellenistic environment, it needed to be presented in a way that would distinguish it from all pagan sacramental meals. We can safely deduce that if John had attached vital importance to the material aspect of the memorial, he would have included some information concerning its foundation. Rather, his goal is to focus the eyes of believers on the wonder which gave the key to its meaning and value.

Could John's presentation also unveil a bit of polemics among the disciples? The gospel narratives often picture the disciples questioning their Master or even openly disagreeing with Him and between themselves. Mlle. Jaubert has lately suggested that all the Jews in Christ's time did not celebrate the Passover together.⁶⁹ While the priestly circles held it according to the variable time derived from the lunar calendar, some sects seem to have kept it regularly on a Wednesday according to the ancient solar calendar advocated in the book of Jubilees. The events on the eve of the Crucifixion seem to reflect this division among the Jews. In the Synoptics the disciples, knowing that the time of the Passover had come (Mk 14: 12; Mt 26: 17), ask the Lord for instructions on where they should prepare the meal, while in the Fourth Gospel during Jesus' trial the priestly classes had not yet celebrated the feast (Jn 18: 28). John seems to have had connections with these classes. Tradition calls him "a priest," and ch. 18: 15 states that the "other disciple . . . was known unto the high priest." Thus John may have favored the priestly lunar calendar and felt that the earlier celebration was not the proper one, (in the Quartodeciman-controversy Polycarp specifically appealed to John as one who kept the Passover on 14 Nisan, a practice in accord with the Lunar

⁶⁹ A. Jaubert, *La date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957).

calendar).⁷⁰ He carefully dates the selection of Christ as the true victim on the tenth day (ch. 12: 1), his death on the fourteenth day at the time the Passover Lamb was slain in the Temple (ch. 19: 36), and His resurrection on the sixteenth day as the first sheaf.⁷¹ His insistence on the water and blood (he is the only evangelist to emphasize the aspect of blood in the death of Christ—which distinguishes him from Qumran, as does his apparent predilection for the lunar calendar!) and his silence on the earlier Passover supper give weight to the belief that he may have attached more importance to the Friday event than to the Synoptic Supper.

This supposition would also agree with the fact that the roots of the Quartodeciman controversy go to the earliest times of the church.⁷² Both sides claimed they were following apostolic examples and neither ever challenged the claim of the other on this point. The Asian practice insisted on a celebration according to the proper day of the month, as the usual Jewish practice was; the Romans were concerned to have it fall on a definite day of the week, which agreed with the principles of the solar calendar. At the origin of the controversy apparently lay a difference in point of view between John and Peter, who appears to be the source of much of the synoptic tradition.⁷³ We can see why John would insist on the importance of the Passover event: on that day the new covenant replaced the old. Therefore, the Easter celebration should be scheduled so as not only to commemorate the resurrection but also that all-important Passover. For the Petrine party, the symbolism of the relationship between the resurrection and the Sabbath was even more important.

⁷⁰ Polycrates of Ephesus quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, v. 24. 3.

⁷¹ Bacon, *op. cit.*, pp. 419 ff.

⁷² This is the conclusion of recent studies such as those of B. Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartodecimaner* (Gütersloh, 1953); W. Rordorf, "Zum Ursprung des Osterfestes am Sonntag," *ThZ* XVIII (1962), pp. 167 ff.; J. Van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (Leiden, 1959), p. 165.

⁷³ On several occasions in his gospel, John seems to want to show that he had an even closer relationship to Christ than Peter: chaps. 1: 41; 13: 24; 19: 26; 20: 4; 21: 7.

We have not proposed a completely new solution to our problem. Our study has attempted to show that John's language and symbolism are perfectly congruous with a Jewish background. It has recognized also that readers who knew of baptism and the Supper could not help associating Jesus' words with these rituals and understanding that by themselves they have no magic power, but that when taken by faith, they become signs and power of the life that Christ shares with the believer. Finally, we have suggested that apostolic Quartodeciman disagreements may be due to John's conviction that on the Friday of the Crucifixion an event of matchless importance took place: the new covenant replaced the old.

Postscript

This paper was already in the hands of the printer when G. H. C. MacGregor's article, "The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS*, IX (1963), 111-119, arrived. His conclusions, "Thus is the outward rite subordinated to the spirit and ethic that ought to rule the communicant" (p. 118), is not new since it was already expressed in his commentary on the Gospel of John referred to in note 30.