

On the First Eucharist

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J. Duncan M. Derrett, a doctor of laws and doctor of theology, taught Hindu Law (Classical and modern) at the University of London from 1949 to retirement in 1982. Thereafter he published works on Jewish law in the New Testament (his Law in the New Testament, 1970, was reprinted in 2005) and thereafter pursues passages in Buddhist works parallel with some in Greek, Jewish, and Christian sources.

I. Preamble: the Covenant

As a sequel to the covenant at Sinai Jesus offered another (Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20) as if anticipated by Jeremiah (31:31–34; CD VI.19). Its requirements envisage a society novel even to pious Jews (Ep. Diogn 5–6). Its missionaries would be discouraged (Jn 15:20; Acts 19:9, 28:22); its proselytes would be hated (Mk 13:13; Lk 6:22) even by the heathen (Mt 24:9); and their martyrdom would be likely (Mk 10:17, 21, 39). They had a right to a candid induction ceremony.

When the chiefs of Israel, already «half-sharers with the altar» (Ex 24:6, 1 Cor 9:13, 10:16–18) ate and drank¹ (or *as it were* ate and drank)² before Yahweh, or were nourished by his presence,³ they thereby celebrated the covenant brokered by Moses (Ex 24:3,7). Solemn meals confirmed covenants⁴ (Gen 31:46,54; cf. Ex 18:11–12; Josh 9:14 LXX), and so Ex 24:11 completes Ex 24:5–8.

¹ 1Q24, frag. 3, col. 2 (6b–7a–b). Florentino García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 2nd. edn. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 411.

² Onqelos and Palestinian Targums, Ex 24:11. Hermann I. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, I, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 3rd edn. (Munich: Beck, 1961), 210, 890; IV, pt. 2, *Abhandlungen*, 1969, 839.

³ Babylonian Talmud, *Ber.* 17a. Cf. Sir 24:20–22; Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, ii. 39, ed., trans., Ralph Marcus, *Philo, Supplement II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1961), 81–82.

⁴ *Bundesmahl*: Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahls-worte Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 227. Léopold Sabourin, *Rédemption Sacrificielle* (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961), 169, 349.

Jews customarily covenanted by the first party's handing a token to the second. This is *Kinyan*. Current coin was not used; and the token had no intrinsic value.⁵

II. Handing-over, Betrayal, and Bread

To «hand over» (Heb. MSR)⁶ to his enemies an embarrassing insider (Josephus *B.J.* 6.300–09; Jn 11:50), even a refugee (2 Sam 20:21–22; 1 Chr 12:18 LXX), was intelligible to Jews (Mk 14:10–11; Mt 5:25). A dissident (Mt 4:11) or traitor might be handed over for punishment (CD IX.1).⁷ A close associate (Mk 14:18,20; Lk 22:28; Jn 15:27) could well play the role (Ps 41:10(9); Jn 13:18). The gospels predict its occurrence (Mk 13:9,11; Mt 10:19; Lk 21:12,16).

Where bread appears *as if* (*k' ʿillû*)⁸ the victim (Ps 14:4, 53:5 (4)), it represents him in such phrases as «I shall eat him whole» (Prov 1:12), or «I shall eat his pieces» (Dan 3:8), 6:24), e.g.

⁵ Isaac Klein, *The Code of Maimonides. Book Twelve, the Book of Acquisition* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1951), 326. Isaac Herzog, *Main Institutions of Jewish Law*, I, *The Law of Property* (London & New York: Soncino P., 1965) 58, 67, 72; II, *The Law of Obligations* 8–9, 11, 17, 111.

⁶ J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Victim* (Shipston-on-Stour: Drinkwarer, 1993), ch.5, 80–87, 98–101. MSR means «surrender», subjective and objective.

⁷ Also 4Q171 II. 19–20; cf. 11Q19 LXIV. 7–11. Martínez, *Dead Sea Scolls Translated*, 40, 178, 204. Derrett, *Victim* 234 n.4.

⁸ Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim* (New York: Pardes, 1950) I, 49.

inform against him and so nullify him.⁹ A to-
esoteric teaching (Jn 6:64–67) or a repudiated
leadership (Mk 14:27–29) might inspire such a
plot. Paul regarded all this as significant (1 Cor
11:23d). When *X* gives bread as his body saying
«Take it» (as in Mark and Luke) and «Eat it»
(Mt 26:26) he invites each taker to re-evaluate
the project even if it imperils *X* to do so. Every-
one would be alerted¹⁰ by the challenge (Mk
14:18–19; Jn 13:21–25). Alternatively, to him
who *declines* to betray the bread is *nourishment*
(Jn 6:55).

III. The Cup, Self-giving, and Love

The Last Supper was a Passover,¹¹ but dissenters
from the socio-religious establishment could
keep the Feast without a lamb.¹² To distinguish
his Eucharist from a mainstream Passover,
Jesus, while giving the bread and passing the
cup, participated in neither (Lk 22:16–18). The
repugnant idea of drinking blood (Lev 7:27; Dt
12:16,23) is masked by another «as if». Several
allusions to *sacrifice* appear, nonetheless. «Pour-
ing out» (Mk 14:24 par.), like «remembrance» in
the case of the bread (Lk 22:19), suggests a
sacrifice (Ex 29:12; Lev 4; Dt 12:27) unless in
non-sacrificial contexts.¹³ They recall Is 53MT
no less than Ex 24:8. Is 53 provided a New
Testament cliché.¹⁴ «Cup» means «fate».¹⁵ But

this cup is *as if* one of the basins or cups¹⁶ of Ex
24:6, that blood being received as a chrism.¹⁷
The Blood of the new Covenant, sprinkled blood
(Heb 12:24; 1 Pet 1:2), is a share (1 Cor
9:1:10:18; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* I, 131), the rest is
Jesus's shed on that very day.¹⁸ That half of his
(true) blood is atoning,¹⁹ for he is an altar.

The bread was given «for you» (1 Cor 11:14;
Lk 22:19), a *midrash* (commentary) on some re-
miniscence (§V.5 below). To give one's human-
ity (*bašar w'ēdam*, flesh and blood)²⁰ was self-
giving in Hindu and later Buddhist Legend.²¹ Jn
6:47–59 recalls the idea, but Mark anticipates
him. Mk 8:14, 16–17 may allude to Is 33:16; but
it tells of Jesus's supply of unadulterated nour-
ishment, i.e. himself (Mk 8:14, 10:45, 14:24).²²
Love for all characterises the «perfect», the
compassionate. We notice the risks at Jn 13:37
and 15:13.

¹⁴ Lk 22:67–68, 23:7–15, 9:51; Acts 8:32–33; Lk
22:37, 23:9.

¹⁵ Strack & Billerbeck, *Kommentar* I, 836–838.
Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*
(Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), 201–203.

¹⁶ The holocaust and its vessels were unique: *Mekilta*
de R. Šim. b. Yoḥai ed. J.N. Epstein (Jerusalem:
Mikize Nirdamim, 1955), 220³²; *Mekilta*, *Baḥôdeš*
III.9,11 (Lauterbach, *Mekilta* II, 210). 'Agan includes
cup (*calix*: J.R. Michaelis; Is 22:24). Cant 7:3(2) in-
spired Jn 2:3: «Thy navel is a rounded goblet never
lacking mixed wine.» (KJV, NIV, NJB; *Tanakh* (Phila-
delphia & Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society),
1985); William G. Braude, trans., *Pesikta Rabbati*
(New Haven: Yale U.P., 1968) I, 170. The élite drink in
the Messiah's banquet: Targum Cant 7:2–3, 8:2. Note
Ps 23:5.

¹⁷ Philo, *Questions & Answers on Exodus* II.33. Tar-
gums indicate the sprinkled blood was a propitiation.
The Eucharist, however, reflects the MT (Dt 12:17).

¹⁸ Day begins at nightfall. See § V.6 below. Sabourin,
Rédemption 347, 356.

¹⁹ Targums on Ex 24. Joel B. Green, *The Death of*
Jesus (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988) 195–196.

²⁰ Jastrow, *Dictionary* I, 199 (*bāšār*).

²¹ J. Duncan M. Derrett, «St John's Jesus and the
Buddha», 161–174 in *Journal of Higher Criticism* 6,
pt. 2 (Fall, 1999); *id.*, «The Buddhist dimension of
John», 182–210 in *Numen* 51, pt. 2 (2004), 195–196.

²² Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* I (Freiburg:
Herder, 1976), 414.

⁹ J. Duncan M. Derrett, «Unappreciated legal
aspects of the Eucharist», 161–176 in *Downside*
Review 110, no. 380 (1992), 174–175 (at 167 read
'akal qaršîn). Derrett, *Victim* 101–109.

¹⁰ Mk 14:29.31; Mt 26:35; Lk 22:33; Jn 11:7,8,16,
13:37–38.

¹¹ Mk 14:1, 2, 12, 14; Mt 26:2, 5, 19; Jn 13:1,
18:28,39, 19:14; 1 Cor 5:7–8.

¹² Bab. Talm., *Pes.* 96a; *Yev.* 71a; *Mekilta* de R. Ish-
mael, *Piṣḥā'* XV.20 on Ex 12:43 (ed., trans., Jacob Z.
Lauterbach, *Mekilta* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publica-
tion Society, 1976) I, 118). Maimonides, *Code* I.v, iii,
17–18. Jastrow, *Dictionary* II, 850 (*m'šūmad*).
Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus* (London & New York,
1979), 308–309; Ethelbert Stauffer, «Jesus,
Geschichte und Verkündigung», 3–130 in A.N.R.W.
25.1 (1982) 115–116.

¹³ Gen 9:6; Is 59:7–8; Mt 23:55; Mk 11:21; 1 Cor
4:17.

IV. The Charade, Eating and Drinking with God.

God's love for Israel finds her rich in «mixed» wine and wheat (Cant 7:3(2)) so the Messiah will feast them (Mt 26:29; Targ. Cant. 8:2; Midr. Cant. 1:8, 7:7). We have seen (§I) the Israelites dining in front of Yahweh to celebrate the first covenant. Bound by a solemn contract,²³ the people soon broke it (Ex 32:4). They «ate and drank in *that* spirit» and «played» (Ex 32:6; Is 24:5–6; 1 Cor 10:7). The institution of the Eucharist, which is both a sacrifice (*qua* Passover: Ex 34:25; Dt 16:2, 5–6; Lk 22:15; Jn 18:28) and a covenant (Ex 6:4–5; Ps 105:8; 111:5), and a perpetual memorial (Ex 12:26–28) of Ex 24 and its shameful sequel,²⁴ is depicted in Lk 22:19d by what is *midrashic* in character miming a reminiscence. The disciples' rights relative to the Teacher were preserved, for taking the bread one could «eat his piece»; whilst drinking from the cup one adopted his self-giving as Saviour (Lk 22:19) — an intriguing paradox.

The minatory aspect of the Eucharist is intrinsic (1 Cor 11:27–30), yet its repetition is attested (1 Cor 11:18–22; Lk 24:30, 35; Acts 2:42–46). The solemn «eating and drinking» need occur once only (§ I above); yet the means whereby saving occurs («on behalf of many, i.e. everyone»: Mk 14:24; cf. Jn 6:53) needs to be remembered even by future Judas Iscariots. Optimism is none the less apposite (Mt 13:23, 20:16; Lk 13:23–24).

The Eucharist thus was in Greek terms a *thiasos*²⁵ as the mainstream Passover itself had always been.

V. Results

1. Each communicant is offered two paths leading to salvation or defection respectively, but salvation *and* defection are not ruled out.
2. «Forgiveness of sins», because it recalls Is

²³ Mekilta, *Bahôde* III, 25 (Lauterbach II, 211).

²⁴ Sabourin, *Rédemption* 347.

²⁵ Lucian, *Peregrinus* 11. *Kleine Pauly* V, 1185^{34–51}; 1188⁵⁹–1189⁷.

53:5. 6, 11–12, suggests that a defector may repent and be readmitted, in view of Ex 32:29–33:6, in spite of the logic at Heb 6:4–6.

3. The elements are unobjectionable. «Blood» is «life» (Gen 9:4; Lev 17:11–14) shared with the altar. Jesus gave his life (Tit 2:14) for communicants (cf. Jn 4:32–34). «As if» in Asia takes the place of Western abstracts. The New Israel will never lack wine or wheat (Cant 7:3(2)).

4. «Sacrifice» and allusion to Is 53 are Jesus's own self-definitions. The improbable can happen (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1456a24).

5. The cup is consonant with Mekilta, *Bahôde* 3.9,11: half the blood is ingested by Israel, half is sprinkled by Jesus, both altar and sacrifice (cf. Heb 9:12–14; 13:10–12; Ignatius, *Magn.* 7:2).²⁶

6. Variations in description of the rite between gospels and Paul²⁷ reflect contemporary doubts as to its interpretation (cf. Did 9–10). To incorporate interpretation within a script representing reminiscence is a *midrash*. Mt 26:28 *eis aphasin* is an example; Lk 22:19d could be another, since a sin-offering is omitted at Ex 24:5²⁸ and Zech 5:11 is unclear.

7. Ignorance of «eating his pieces; of Kinyan; of Ex 24:5–11 with its altar at Ex 24:6; of Ex 32–33; and of sacrificing humanity for others (cf. Ex 32:32; Eph 5:2) arose outside Jewry. Clues to the institution were lost.²⁹ Imagination took their place, discord followed and doubts whether it ever existed.³⁰ Canticles (now read during Passover) was ignored.

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas; J.A. Bengel; Henry A. Ford, See Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* II (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 425 (b). Sabourin, *Rédemption* 345 n.3 (contracting parties).

²⁷ Cheslyn P.M. Jones, «The Eucharist. The New Testament», 148–169 in *The Study of the Liturgy* (ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnolds; London: S.P.C.K., 1978), 158–160. Green, *Death* 194 n.56.

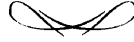
²⁸ Philo, *Questions & Answers on Exodus* i.32.

²⁹ See R.T. Beckwith, «The Jewish background to Christian worship», 39–51 in Jones *et al. ed.*, *The Study of the Liturgy*, 48–50.

³⁰ As in J. Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1991).

Summary

To recover the institution of the Eucharistic *thiasos* it is desirable to restore (1) the meanings of Ex. 24:5–11; (2) the Jewish practice of *Kinyan*; (3) the idiom of «eating his pieces»; and (4) the widespread Asian legend of saints who gave their flesh and blood to save the lives of others. Then Isaiah 53 may be reviewed. Our sources are completed by (5) Jesus's inventive self-definitions and (6) Paul's and the evangelists' *midrashim* on scraps of reminiscence. Yet (7) there is an aroma appropriate to the Messiah's banquet promised at Cant 7:3(2).



LITTERATUR

Jörgen Magnusson: *Rethinking the Gospel of Truth. A Study of its Eastern Valentinian Setting*. 189 sid. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala 2006.

Denna avhandling, disputerad och godkänd i september 2006, handlar om *Sanningens evangelium*, den tredje traktaten i Nag Hammadi Codex I (den så kallade «Jung Codex»). Denna traktat består av en valentiniansk gnostisk predikan om det «sanna evangeliet». Jörgen Magnusson presenterar i sin avhandling två nya översättningar av den koptiska texten och nya förslag om hur den ska tolkas.

I det första kapitlet diskuterar författaren Nag Hammadi-fyndet och dess betydelse för forskningen om den valentinianska varianten av kristendomen, och gnosticismen i allmänhet. Han fortsätter med en överblick av forskningen angående *Sanningens evangelium*, dess relation till valentinianismen och gnosticismen, dess uppkomst, och dess sociala och historiska sammanhang. Han tar särskild hänsyn till Einar Thomassens nya bok om valentinianismen (*The Spiritual Seed. The Church of the «Valentinians»*, Brill 2006). Det är klart att Thomassens bok har varit av stor betydelse för Magnusson, och detta syns i alla delar av avhandlingen. Thomassen har rekonstruerat valentinianismens historia, och på grundval av en analys av alla källor som finns har han skildrat de väsentliga lärorna av valentinianismens två «skolor», den «västra» skolan och den «östra». Magnusson grundar sin analys av *Sanningens evangelium* på Thomassens rekonstruktion av valentinianismens historia, och han har rätt att göra det.

Det andra kapitlet heter «Communication centred approaches», där författaren tar upp de nya metoderna som han använder i sin tolkning av *Sanningens evangelium*. Dessa är «text linguistics», «intertextuality» och nya teorier om hur man ska översätta en text från ett språk till ett annat. I sin användning av textlingvistik är

han närstående NT-exegetiken i Uppsala, särskilt den metod som har förts fram av Lars Hartman.

Det tredje kapitlet heter «Applying the method on the Gospel of Truth». Detta kapitel innehåller en mycket detaljerad analys av den första delen av *Sanningens evangelium*, vad författaren kallar dess «first chapter» (16,31–18,31a). Detta kapitel, enligt Magnusson, består av elva små bitar, och varje enhet får en «macrostructural» analys, en «microstructural» analys och en «semantic» analys. Hade han gjort det samma med de andra delar av texten skulle boken ha blivit jättetjock! Ändå skulle det ha varit bra om han hade identifierat de andra «kapitlen» i *Sanningens evangelium*, vilket han inte har gjort.

Magnussons två översättningar finns i det fjärde kapitlet, en «basic» översättning som finns på vänster sidan och en «analytical» översättning på den högra. Den första översättningen är mer bokstavlig, och den andra mer läsbar.

I det femte kapitlet («The Gospel of Truth and Valentinian discourse») tar Magnusson upp några viktiga teman i *Sanningens evangelium*, och jämför hur dessa teman behandlas i andra valentinianska källor. Till exempel diskuterar han vad sägs om «alltet» («the All»), som består av andliga väsen som existerar inom Gud fadern och kommer från honom. Magnusson hävdar att *Sanningens evangelium* hör till ett tidigt stadium i utvecklingen av den östra skolan inom valentinianismen.

Kapitel 6 heter «The socio-religious context of the Gospel of Truth». Magnusson är intresserad bl.a. av hur predikanten (författaren som «jag») uppmanar och uppmuntrar sin församling («ni» eller «vi»). Magnusson påpekar att *Sanningens evangeliums* författare har en synpunkt på det bibliska laget som är olik den som finns t.ex. i Ptolemaeus' *Brev till Flora*. (Ptolemaeus var en ledare i den «västra skolan».) Båda lagenligheten och laglöshet hör till den «kosmiska