ADOREMUS 2018
Symposium Keynote

7 SEPTEMBER 2018

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the scriptural context to adoration and understanding of the holy eucharist

The Eucharist brings together some of the most important and significant elements of our humanity and shared Christian faith: gathering together in the presence of the Lord, worshipping him in the Holy Spirit, proclaiming and responding to the Scriptures, remembering the life, teaching, death, Resurrection and glorification of Jesus, thanksgiving, sacrifice, petition, eating and drinking the life-giving force of God himself, strengthening resolve and purpose in life, outreach to the poor and vulnerable and awaiting the glorious end of time. It is all embracing.

The Scriptures along with the Tradition of the Church are the Revelation of God to which we respond in faith (Dei Verbum 1-10). But the Scriptures – written by real human beings – are a mirror of our human nature and needs and also a source of insight into every aspect of our personal and community existence. I would like first to draw out some of these fundamental aspects to demonstrate how the Scriptures give us insights into our human nature, including central aspects intertwined with the Eucharist (Section A). Then I intend to examine the Biblical historical (Section B), linguistic (Section C) and specific Jewish contexts and backgrounds (Section D) to the Eucharist. After this I will discuss some conclusions. Overall, it is good to remember that if we are going to deepen our understanding of the Scriptural background to the Eucharist and Adoration, then we need to read and re-read the texts in question and try to put them in their wider context, rather than just note the Scripture references.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL, ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN THE SCRIPTURES AND THE EUCHARIST

All thinking human beings ask fundamental questions. Two of the most important are: (a) What is the meaning of my life? and (b) What do I need to fulfill it?

(a) The first question expands into others: Who am I?; What is the meaning of human existence?; How do I live in relationship to other beings?; Is there an existence higher than myself?; Is there a supreme being or more than one supreme beings?; Do I continue to exist after death?; Is reality merely what I experience with my human senses? Such questions have been formulized by philosophers throughout the centuries in the subject of Ontology (Greek: ontos, being), ‘founded’ by Parmenides (born 514 BC)

and called by Aristotle (384-322 BC) “the primary science”. With the Enlightenment and the rise of Rationalism and Empiricism (17th-18th Centuries), Ontology began to take a back seat in the majority of philosophical circles, not least because of the growing agnosticism and atheism. But it re-appeared in a new guise in existentialism and has never gone away completely.

(b) Connected with the questions about the meaning of human existence are those about human needs. What do I need in order to exist? Different psychologists posit various hierarchies of human need. One very well known theorist is Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). Some dismiss his theories but his approaches are still very influential, specifically in education and do provide a possible framework for posing and answering fundamental questions. Maslow originally argued the following hierarchy of need:

• Physiological needs: food, water, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep.

• Safety needs: protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.

• Psychological needs, which are divided into two (a) belonging and love needs: friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection, love, affiliating and being part of a group – family, friends, work and (b) esteem needs - divided into two [i] esteem for oneself: dignity, achievement, mastery, independence and [ii] the desire for reputation and respect from others: status and level of respect.

• Self-actualization needs: achieving one’s full potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences, a desire to become everything one is capable of becoming.

In all the above hierarchy, the majority of the big ontological questions are confronted and an attempt is given to answer them. Maslow continually revised this list of needs and finally expanded them to eight:

Biological and physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, self actualization and transcendence needs.

It is noteworthy that the final model of Maslow (who was a lapsed Jew) accepts the need of the transcendent. Within Catholic theology of course, the human needs that Maslow identifies are all graced with the presence of God. St. Thomas Aquinas’ famous dictum is always good to remember: “Gratia supponit naturam et perfecit eam” (Grace supposes [human] nature and perfects it). In other words, God is present, whether we understand it or not, at every level of human need and only through God do we become fully what we are called to be as human beings.

The Scriptures reveal the nature of God but also that of human beings. Fundamental ontological questions about being and psychological questions about needs are confronted and answered throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament there is a particular concentration of such questions in Wisdom Literature, specifically in the Books of Qoheleth, Job, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Sirac and Wisdom. In the New Testament the questions and answers are thread through the Gospels, in the accounts of the life, teaching, death and Resurrection of Jesus. Other specific aspects of human existence and needs

are addressed in the Letters of the New Testament.

Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) searches for meaning in life when all seems 'vanity' (Hebrew:havel, smoke, vapour). What is the purpose of doing anything – working, believing in God, praying, offering sacrifice, studying, being good – when all ends in nothing? Qoheleth is traditionally interpreted by the Fathers as pointing to the truth that nothing has value without Jesus Christ. But even accepting Jesus does not cancel the pondering because that is the existential reality of the human person. Sartre, Kafka, Unamuno and other existentialists all confront such questions. Job tackles the age-old issue of suffering. How can anyone believe in the justice of God (theodicy) when there is innocent suffering? Ultimately the answer given in the musings of Job and his so-called comforters is that we do not understand. Job puts his finger on his lips as he says he has spoken and questioned too much. The Song of Songs, a series of ancient erotic love poems, sings at its original level of the wonder of human love and sexuality, one of the deepest needs of our human existence. But at another allegorical level it proclaims God's love, always seeking his creatures just as they in turn will gain fulfillment only in finding him. This truth is the basis for the wonderful commentaries on The Song of some of the early Fathers, St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross. The early rabbis at the end of the First and during the Second Century argued whether Qoheleth and The Song of Songs should form part of the canonical books of Scripture or not. Those against pointed to the fact that Qoheleth seems to deny any purpose in life while The Song does not mention God at all. But in the end the vote went to include them and thus we are left with treasures for our reflection.

Within this plethora of human questionings and needs and adapting what is good and wholesome in any approach, I would argue the necessity of the following three 'needs' as a foundation for human growth and maturity: (1) the need for adoration and worship, (2) the need to belong, and (3) the need to be altruistic. All are witnessed to in the Scriptures and are an essential context for the celebration and adoration of the Eucharist.

1. The need for adoration and worship

St. Thomas says that offering sacrifice is incumbent upon all according to the Natural Law (Summa Theologica 2a 2ae 85,1). James Crichton argues that "liturgy is in fundamental accord with the nature of man" (Understanding the Mass, p. 19). Ian Bradley states, "The human impulse to sacrifice is implanted in us by God" (p.183). From the earliest cave paintings (around 70,000 BC) it would seem that human beings have offered animals, natural items and sometimes human beings in sacrifice to the deity or deities – to worship and gain access to the presence of the divine, out of fear, to appease the deity, for protection and for encouraging fertility. This has gone on throughout the centuries and is witnessed to throughout the world. Only with the Enlightenment and in more so-called 'sophisticated and intellectual' circles of modern and contemporary thought might there be a despising of the need to worship, as in some contemporary scientific approaches (e.g. Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, Brian Cox). But when the human person ceases to open up to the basic need to worship and adore (Greek: latria) and

thus enter into the presence of the mystery of the Divine, he/she is not realizing his/her full potential. Often if there is a lack of worship of the Divine then someone or something else takes over, as in the 'worship' of the State or leaders of the State in Communism and Fascism.

As religion became gradually more formalized both in the wider Ancient Near East, further Eastern cultures and then in Judaism, rites of liturgy (ordered public worship) and associated adoration developed. The huge temples along the Nile, in particular Karnak and Luxor (1400 BC) are a witness to this, along with the quasi deification of the Pharaoh. In Judaism we see the development in Temple worship and sacrifices (from c. 900 BC – 587 BC and from 521 BC - 70 AD), above all in Leviticus and parallel texts of the Torah – though the texts are often much later in their final form than the events described. A parallel pagan worship, which continued for centuries to exist in Ancient Israel, is consistently condemned by the prophets (e.g. Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel). Adoration of the one God (monolatry), increasingly understood as the personal God of the Israelites (YHWH), is demanded from a comparatively early era (cf. I Kings 18:20-40) and the proclamation of the truth of the One God (monotheism) is central to the Torah, Prophets, Psalms and other Wisdom texts, including that which later developed in the Synagogue worship.

The Hebrew word for worship is shachah with the hithpalel form hishtehava – meaning "prostration". The external bodily obeisance offered to human kings (e.g. I Kings 1:16, 23) is elevated to the adoration of God accompanied by an internal elevation of the heart (e.g. Isaiah 66:23; Psalm 72:11). This is continued with the New Testament word – proskuneo (e.g. Matthew 2:2; Mark 5:6; John 4:24; Apocalypse 3:9 – NB – the verb is used 24 times in the Apocalypse, far more than other New Testament books). Liturgy and adoration develop in a different direction in Christianity (as well as in different Rites – East and West, as we shall see below) and later in Islam (cf. William Dalrymple and the theory that Muslim prostration is borrowed from Christianity) and other monotheistic and polytheistic religions. Such developments continue to display the human need for the sacred (Hebrew: qadosh means originally set apart) in order to enter the presence of God, richly illustrated in biblical texts with sacred days, above all the weekly cycle of the Sabbath (Gen 2:4a); sacred seasons (Gen 1:14); sacred places: sacred mountain/hill tops, temples, the Temple in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12:12, I Kings 8:1-40, Ps 84); sacred people: Levi, the Cohenim (Exodus 28:1-29:35); Ordination Rites (Leviticus 8:1-36) and sacrifices (Leviticus 6:1-7:38) and sacred books.

2. The need to belong

Human beings from every background and culture have always needed to belong – to smaller units which develop as family and then in different ways to the larger tribe and to a wider society. Amongst other things, sociology examines trends and needs in each society as it changes and develops and thus looks at patterns, functions and dysfunctions. The society in which we live today in Britain (and generally in the West) has evolved rapidly since World War II. The almost universal norm of the family has broken down substantially, work patterns have changed, including widespread working on Sundays, the rights

of all, male and female, have developed, sometimes with little sense of corresponding duties, local gatherings for all sorts of purposes have disintegrated and modern and contemporary technologies, along with radical shifts in where people live (e.g. whole villages taken over by commuters) have led to an increase in individualism and isolationism (cf. Margaret Thatcher infamously said there is no such thing as society – interview for Women's Own, 1987). This has all led to the breakdown of authority, normal group gatherings and regular patterns.

St. John Paul II in Fides et Ratio (1998) analyses the breakdown of traditional philosophies that bind human beings together with certainties and the emergence of the "post-modern age". To this he says we need to give "appropriate attention". According to some thinkers the time of certainties is irrevocably past and the human being must now lean to live in a horizon of the total absence of meaning where everything is provisional and ephemeral (Fides et Ratio: 91). But the thought of Buber and Marcel still strikes a cord for many and is essential for any Judaeo-Christian approach. The locus of human existence not in the isolated "I" but in the "We". Community is vital.

The Scriptures witness to this need to belong: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18); to the tribe and to groupings within the tribe (Genesis 11:27 onwards); to the wider society (Gen 5:1-32 and 10:1-32). Such groupings also then define themselves in 'religious' terms. In the Scriptures we see the developments of the 'edah (Hebrew: gathering) and the qahal (Hebrew: the community called out). Even when the Temple is destroyed and the leaders are in Babylon, the gatherings continue. These form the origins of the Bet HaKenesset (Hebrew: the House of assembly). This continues in the gatherings of the early Christians, emphasized in the word koinonia (brotherhood) (Acts 2:42). The Church is a community that is called out – by God (Greek: ekklesia) to gather (Greek: synagogue). This reality lies at the basis of the celebration of the Eucharist and mirrors the human need to belong to a wider group.

Furthermore, the Scriptures are addressed fundamentally to communities rather than individuals and all presuppose the gathering of the community. They were not composed for the purpose of individual prayer or study. A vivid example of this is the reading of the Torah as it existed at the return from Exile (Nehemiah 8:1-18). As the Talmud teaches: "When two sit together and the words of Torah pass between them, the Shekinah rests between them" (Mishnah Tractate Avot 3:3).

The breakdown of the need to belong has a profound influence on the Church and its gatherings. Many are raised not to want to belong and have no understanding of its importance at any level. In other non-Western cultures where the family, wider gatherings and a sense of belonging remain central, the gathering for Church is less problematical. This is displayed in some groups in our parishes – e.g. Keralan, Filipino, East Timorese, African etc. The rest of us need to re-learn from these examples. It is also important to realise that Muslim culture is profoundly about belonging and this is one major reason why Islam grows and strengthens in societies that cease to have such elements.

3. The need to be altruistic

As human beings, our fundamental nature is to interact in order to build up one another, our families and our society. This is part of the Natural Law. Many do this explicitly by 'vocational' occupations – such as medicine and teaching. Other do so perhaps less consciously or implicitly. Society is formed of a synergy, of working together 'for the common good' – politics, economy, infrastructures, education, health care etc. Philosophers and politicians through the ages have argued the bases for this e.g. St. Augustine in 'The City of God', Leibnitz, Karl Marx. Jeremy Bentham talks of 'the greatest good/happiness of the greatest number'.

Looking after the poor and promoting justice and peace and the common good have always been part of a shared human goal. The Jewish tradition holds this approach. It teaches that within each of us is the yetzer ha ra (the evil inclination) and the yetzer ha tov (the good inclination), both fighting each other, as portrayed in Genesis 3:15. As human beings we are always called to demonstrate and live out the latter, for our own good and for that of others. The Noahide laws (Genesis 9:1-17) are based on the Natural Law and all are called to hold them. The Fourth to the Tenth words (commands) of the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-22) enshrine this natural law for society (like many Ancient Near East Law Codes) which is spelt out in the rest of the TaNaK. If we live out the basic human element of helping each other on all levels, then the rabbis say that we join the "tiqqun 'olam" – "the repair of the world" and aid the coming of the Messiah.

Matthew 25:31-46, the First Letter of John and the Letter of James are examples of where this natural law of promoting the general common good is a clear foundation of the teachings of Jesus. The feeding miracles of the Synoptics (Mark 6:30-44 and parallels) and of John (6:1-15) point at their first level to the need to share and not to waste. Such sharing remains at the heart of the Eucharist – not just sharing in the Eucharist itself – but also the calling and encouragement to share on a wider scale. Pope Francis recently encouraged us all not to throw away leftover food (cf. the disciples in the feeding miracles) but to eat it later or to try to give it to those who have nothing (Angelus: Sunday 29/7/18). There is a way in which we are not authentic unless as a community we live out the Eucharist "for the life of the world" (John 6:51). The Eucharist is intrinsically linked with justice and peace and making the world a better place.

Thus the Scriptures illustrate and inform fundamental truths which are common to all human beings.

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT OF THE EUCHARIST

The Interpretation of the Scriptures

As we reflect on the following it is necessary to be aware of hermeneutical issues connected with the Scriptures. Dei Verbum Chapter Three gives us three guidelines for these:

(a) The Scriptures are written by the Holy Spirit and teach us the truth for our salvation (DV 11).

(b) They are written by human authors so we need to search out the intentions of the original authors, the Sitzen im Leben (original context) of the material in question and the specific literary genres of any section (DV 11).

(c) The Scriptures need to be taken as a whole along with the Tradition of the Church and the analogy of faith (DV 12).

Furthermore Chapter Four, the first of its kind in any Council Document,

teaches the necessity and lasting value of the Old Testament. Chapter Five examines the three 'layers' of the formation of the Gospel – (i) what Jesus actually said and did, (ii) the preaching of the Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and (iii) the redaction of the Evangelists. This is based upon an earlier document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission Sancta Mater Ecclesia (1964).

The Old Testament

There are three approaches of which to be aware, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, in the debate about the origins of the Eucharist:

1. The Old Testament has little or nothing to offer in the debate about the origins of the Eucharist. This is a practical Marcionism, an ancient and continuing heresy named after a Roman priest Marcion (died c. 160 AD) that dismisses the Old Testament as having no value or relevance for the Christian. Some commentaries on the Eucharist, both older and contemporary, hardly mention the Old Testament and start with the New Testament and/or the Traditio. This approach argues the Eucharist to be a complete break with the past e.g. Gregory Dix: "It is important for the understanding of the whole future of the Liturgy to grasp the fact that Eucharistic worship from the outset was not based upon Scripture at all, whether of the Old or New Testament, but solely on Tradition" (op. cit., p.3). Martimort (volume 2 by Robert Crabie) has nothing of note on the Old Testament and Crabie's History of the Mass (Desclee 1990) does not have any Old Testament references.

2. Many commentaries have been influenced by the History of Religions approach which, although it began to blossom in the mid Nineteenth Century, is sill popular in some fields, including in certain TV documentaries. It argues against the uniqueness of Jewish-Christian revelation and that all that we have in the Scriptures is borrowed from the Ancient Near East. cf. Bouyer: "It is a foregone conclusion, they (a certain group of scholars) would like to tell us, that either there is no prehistory of the Eucharist or else, if there is, it can be found only outside of Judaism…Jewish texts are just parallels not sources… Casel takes immense efforts to find the antecedents of the mystery of Christian worship in the most incongruous pagan rites (op. cit., p.16ff). Leon-Dufour states: "A first source of light is a comparison of the Eucharistic texts with data provided by the History of Religions. Other religions used to have their cultic meals and sacrifices were common. It is obvious that the early Christians had analogues in

the practices of their non-Christian contemporaries. What must be avoided, however, is the too quick assertion of Christian dependence on this or that other religion e.g. Reitzenstein on Iran" (op. cit., p. 10).

3. The Old Testament (the 46 books of the Catholic Canon) gives us a direct background of origins of the Eucharist. Such an approach has often used a typological method (Greek: tupos – type or figure; anti-tupos – the reality). This was the normal hermeneutic of the Fathers of the Church whose overriding aim was to claim the Old Testament as Christian and as such superseded Judaism. The typological method is commended in The Catechism of the Catholic Church (128) and is still widely used in teaching and preaching. The institutions, events and people in the Old Testament are tupoi of the reality who is Christ, the anti-tupos. Thus by extension, the Eucharist and the Liturgy connected with it is the anti-tupos of tupoi of the Old Testament.

Major tupoi are:

(a) Worship and adoration in general and the demand for "pure worship" (e.g. Genesis 12:8; 28:17-18; Malachi 1:11).

(b) Guidance and feeding narratives (e.g. Exodus 16:1-35; Exodus 24:1-11; I Kings 19:4-11; 2 Kings 5:42-44).

(c) Sacrifices (zebachim) and priests (kohanim) (e.g. Leviticus 1:1-10:20). These are intrinsically connected. The common element of all the animal sacrifices is the blood. The priests are not always those who kill the animal but they always manipulate the blood by dashing against, pouring on or smearing the altar. The blood represents the principle of life (Hebrew: nepesh) and the altar the presence of God. Most of the sacrifices are not wholly burnt but are 'shared' by the priests and sometimes the people. This has the aspect of a sacred meal, shared between God and his people. Practically this means that the priests have meat to eat.

The various forms of sacrifice in Leviticus are as follows:

(i) 'olah (holocaust): this was burnt completely (Leviticus 1:1-17).

(ii) minchah (cereal offering): this was burnt but part given to the priests (Leviticus 2:1-16).

(iii) shelamim (peace/communion offerings): not all was offered (Leviticus 3:1-17). Some shelamim were part of the todah (the thank offering). Part of this is presented to the priests (7:11-15).

(iv) hattat (sin offering): there are separate rites for offerings for the High Priest, the whole community, the leaders of the community and of private individuals (Leviticus 4:3-35). Not all was offered and the rest was given to the priests (Leviticus 6:18-7:10).

Ian Bradley argues that sacrifice is "ubiquitous in the Hebrew Scriptures" (p.86). He examines the erroneous 19th century liberal Protestant scholarship that saw sacrifices as gradually replaced by an interior morality as a means of approaching God (Chapter 3). He concludes, particularly by examining

the Aqedah (Genesis 22:1-19), that God is the origin of sacrifice and links it to the Four Suffering Servant poems of Isaiah and ultimately the sacrifice of Christ (p. 89). John Dunn argues, "In rabbinic Judaism, priest was replaced by teacher. In contrast, and somewhat surprisingly, it was Christianity which found it necessary to revert to Old Testament categories of sacrifice and priesthood, first in an allegorical way, as a means of expressing continuity with the ideal of Christian spirituality, but then in an increasing literal way" (op.cit. p. 255). The Levitical priesthood died out with the fall of the Temple in 70 A.D. and it is after this that the rabbis (successors of the Pharisees) as teachers became the sole leaders within Judaism. It is they who 'replaced' Temple worship, priesthood and sacrifices with the Torah, Mishnah (2nd century AD) and Gemara (3rd century AD), the latter two becoming the Talmud (4th – 5th century AD).

(d) The Passover (Exodus 12:1-34; 43-51). The origins of this are usually argued to be a fusion of two Spring celebrations from differing sources: that of the sacrifice of a lamb for apotropaic and fertility rites (nomadic) and that of a harvest ritual with the eating of unleavened bread (pastoral). Both become attached to the hasty coming out of Egypt.

(e) The Messianic Banquet (e.g. Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 23).

(f) Wisdom's Banquet (e.g. Proverbs 9:1-6).

(g) The sealing of the Covenant (e.g. Exodus 24:5-8; Deuteronomy; Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 53:12; Jeremiah 31:33).

(h) The unity of worship and the single Temple for offering sacrifices (Deuteronomy 12:12; 1 Kings 5:15-38).

(g) Memorial – lezikkron/eis anamnesin (Exodus 12:14). This is not a simple mental image of the past but interconnected with the general Hebrew view of time, linking past, present and future and emphasizing transcendence.

(h) Pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16-17); the pilgrimage and gradual Psalms (Psalms 120-134).

The typological relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament has to be used with great caution. It is linked with the language of promise and fulfillment – that the Old Testament is the promise and the New Testament the fulfillment. Thus as far as examining the background to the Eucharist is concerned, all the elements above would be argued to be valid in as much as point to their ultimate fulfillment in the Eucharistic banquet. But this reduces the Old Testament to a mere preparatio evangelii (preparation for the Gospel) and is often linked directly with supersessionism, that is the approach that the New Testament and Christianity fulfills and succeeds Judaism which is therefore defunct. Since Nostra Aetate (1965) there is a slow progression of the teaching of the Popes and the Documents of the Church away from typology and thus supersessionism (cf. The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church [1993] and The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible [2001]), although as

stated above The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) encourages its use (CCC 128). Typology is still widely used in preaching and teaching without realizing its consequences by many. It is much better to use the language of parallels, avoiding the language of fulfillment.

The New Testament

The New Testament obviously gives us more direct evidence for the Scriptural/Historical context of the Eucharist. Central points are:

1. The feeding miracles of the Gospels. Matthew and Mark have two – the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 13:13-21; Mark 6:31-34) and the feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). The latter takes place in the Decapolis pointing to Jesus feeding the gentiles (as signified by 4 – a number of universality) as well as the Jews (as signified by the number 5 – the number of the Torah). At the centre is the sequence of action: blessing, breaking, distribution and collection of the remainders.

2. The Institution Narratives are crucial. The oldest of these is usually accepted to be 1 Corinthians 11:23-27 and then Mark (14:22-25), Matthew (26:20-25) and Luke (22:15-20). As with all issues connected with the Synoptic Gospels, there are differing theories as to the inter-relationship between these texts.

3. Normally – and from the context of the Gospels – the Last Supper is argued to be part of the Passover meal. Some commentators posit that it cannot be the Passover because of the timing sequence and the elements involved.

4. The central and common factor of all the narratives is the taking, blessing, breaking, sharing and eating bread and drinking wine with the proclamation of Jesus that it is his body and blood. The verb eimi is used. This means definitively “is”, not “means” as, for example in the JW translation. In Hebrew and Aramaic the verb “to be” is not present but clearly understood.

5. John does not have an Institution Narrative and the Supper has a different chronology than that found in the Synoptics. In John, Jesus dies at the moment of the slaughter of the paschal lambs (John 19:31). This could point to the use of a solar rather than lunar calendar, the former used by the Essenes (cfr. Annie Jaubert’s theories). John provides us with the farewell discourse at the Last Supper along with the foot-washing. This includes the command to love (Greek: agapan; Hebrew: ahav), linked with friendship and commissioning (John 15:10-17). Thus he points to the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist, which is love. John seems to deliberately parallel the farewell discourse of Jesus with the farewell discourses of Moses around which the Book of Deuteronomy is composed.

6. John provides us with the rich text of Jesus’ discourse in the Synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:22-71). This emphasizes the ‘carnality’ of Jesus, the Bread of Life (e.g. Greek: fagein; Hebrew: akal; and sarks; Hebrew: basar), pointing to the literal significance of biblical Hebrew. John is consistent in showing that Jesus is the new Moses (6:32-33). It is interesting that the parallels are mostly about bread/body. There is no extended discourse in this text about blood, so central to sacrifice.

7. The word ‘in memorial’ (Hebrew: lezikkron; Greek: eis anamnesis) is used (Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:23-25). This is a technical term (cf. Exodus 12:14) in the Scriptures and has at its background the Hebrew concept of time. This is fundamentally not linear, as in the sequence of past, present and future but concerns rather whether an action is closed or open, finished or continuing. Moreover, the verb zakar does not mean ‘to remember’ in the sense of merely mentally recalling a past event. It means transcending time and living here and now the reality in question in the present moment. Thus when we use Jesus’ words and actions at Mass “Do this is memory of me”, we are entering the eternal mystery of the sacrifice of the Last Supper and Calvary.

8. The words over the bread and wine would seem to be connected with the Passover and therefore with the Paschal sacrifice. According to Matthew it could be that Jesus deliberately does not drink the fourth cup at the end of the Passover meal, thus pointing to the new reality of the Kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

9. The Letter to the Hebrews links priesthood and sacrifice together. Typologically (NB above) Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek who is sacrificed to complete all other sacrifices (Hebrews 7:1-28).

10. The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) gives us an insight to the early structure of the Eucharist with the Scripture Readings and homily (vv.25-27), the breaking of bread (v.30-31) and the proclamation (vv.33-35). The Greek verb used to ‘explain’ (v.27) is hermenuein from which is derived the word ‘hermeneutic’. Luke is reminding the Christian community that Christ is the hermeneutical key to understanding the whole of the Scriptures (vv.44-48).

11. There are other references in the New Testament to the “breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42), “supper of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:17-22) and the “wedding Feast of the Lamb” (Apocalypse 19:9). These are also linked to the apocalyptic hope of the Lord coming again and gathering all nations together as in Isaiah (Isaiah 25:6; 66:18-23) and Zechariah (Zechariah 14:16-21).

12. In some texts usually connected with the Eucharist (as above) there is a concentration on bread and eating. In the Old Testament as a whole and in the Letter to the Hebrews there is a greater focus on blood. The drinking of blood is forbidden according to the Torah (Genesis 9:4). This is probably in contradistinction to the pagan practice of drinking blood at sacrifices. So Jesus’ command to ‘drink my blood’ contains a shocking and surprising element.

The above is a presentation of the biblical background and context for understanding the Eucharist as the culmination of the meals, the sacrifices and the memorials of the Scriptures as a whole.

BIBLICAL LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

The Semantics (language) of the Scriptures can further help us to deepen our understanding of the Eucharist. The following are major elements of which to be aware:

1. Hebrew has no semantic equivalent for the Greek words connected with eucharisteo (Jouon). Religious gratitude and thanks are expressed by the Hebrew todah (thank-offering), which occurs thirty two times in the Tanakh. These are also expressed by the Psalms of Thanksgiving, both collective (e.g. Psalm 136) and individual (e.g. Psalm 116).

2. The LXX translates todah as eucharistia at Leviticus 7:12, Psalms 41:5,49; 49:14; 68:31; 106:22; 146:7 and Amos 4:5.

3. The root eucharist is found in the Deutero-Canonical Books (e.g. 2 Maccabees 1:11; 10:7; 12:31; Judith 8:25; Wisdom 16:28; Sirac 37:11) and the Apocrypha (e.g. 3 Maccabees 7:16).

4. The material equivalent in Hebrew for the root eucharist is baruk (68 times in the Tanakh in its passive participle form). This is normally translated in the LXX as eulogetos – blessed.

5. This means that the root eucharist is properly a New Testament term.

THE CONTEXT OF JEWISH LITURGY FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Some argue strongly that Jewish Liturgy, both that described in the Old Testament, that which we discern from the New Testament and early Jewish prayer, is the basis for the development of the Christian Eucharist. However, despite many advances in the historical scholarship of First Century AD Palestine, we still have to be careful of 'evidence' argued from the First Century AD as it is very patchy. Dating of the beginning and development of many of the aspects below is uncertain. In addition it is important to remember that Judaism in all its richness evolved over many centuries and was still evolving at the time of and after Jesus. Cf. Bradshaw, "When C.F.D Moule used the quotation from Isaiah 51:1 as the title of his now classic work Worship in the New Testament, it seemed perfectly possible to state with a considerable degree of assurance what Jewish worship was like in the First Century of the Common Era. Thirty years later, however, things are by no means so clear…" (op. cit. p.1). He also states: "What is equally important for the background of Christian worship is that we should not single out any one Jewish tradition as normative and treat others as deviations, nor restrict our focus to asking which elements of later Jewish liturgy go back to the first century (p.14)…We must therefore be content to remain agnostic about many of the roots of Christian worship practices which we observe clearly for the first time in the following centuries." (p. 55)

Jones, Wainwright et al (eds.) The Study of the Liturgy, (p. 68), state:

"From the outset, the originality of Christianity is seen in its worship, but so is the traditional Jewish character of Christianity." Marrow argues that the intelligibility of the Eucharist "remains contingent upon such Old Testament and contemporary Jewish institutions as Passover, the prayer of thanksgiving (todah) and sacrifice (zebach)".

Most scholars emphasize the importance of the following as the background for elements and structure of the Christian Eucharist:

1. Berakhoth (plural of berakah) – blessing God for his gifts. The beginning of most Jewish prayers is Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu Melek ha'Olam – Blessed are you Lord our God, king of the Universe. We borrow directly from this formula for the prayer at the Presentation of the Gifts at Mass - "Blessed are you Lord God of all creation…" (Audet argues that the Hebrew formula of blessing is the literary genre of the Eucharistic Prayer as a whole – Mazza p.14).

2. Hodayoth – prayers of praise not found in the Scriptures. They are similar to the Psalms of praise. Many hodayoth were found at Qumran.

3. The Shema Yisrael (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). This proclaims the uniqueness of God and command to total love of him with one's being – summarized in the word 'heart' (Hebrew: lev, meaning memory, intellect and will).

4. The Amidah (Nineteen prayers of praise, requests and thanksgiving to be recited three times every day).

5. Birkat hamazon – Grace at meals. These praise the Lord for all his gifts, especially for the different types of food to be eaten.

6. The haggadah (narrative recitation) at Pesach (Passover), with particular mention of zikkron/anamnesis (Exodus 12:14) and of Passover as a sacrifice (p. 8 above). Some argue that the Passion Narrative of Mark's Gospel is the haggadah of the Christians recited at Easter and the first stable written form of the Gospel. The account of Jesus' ministry is attached to this. There remains a debate about whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or not. Leon-Dufour, for example, argues that we need also to note that "the practices followed in the monastery of Qumran are very important and enable us to look at the (biblical) texts objectively" (Leon-Dufour p. 10).

7. Kiddushim at chaburoth. The Kiddush is specifically the blessing of the wine at the beginning of Shabbat on Friday evening. This comes before the motzi – the prayer said over the bread. Once again, it is difficult to date this custom or to know exactly what happened in the first half of the First Century. But the important element is the presence of bread and wine. Jeremias argues that the Kiddush meal as such had not developed at this time (cf. Bradshaw p. 49).

8. The synaxis of the Shabbat Synagogue Service, followed by the Kiddush. Here, as with all the above, exact datings are unclear. The earliest layout of a format of the service is probably that found in Luke 4:16-22. Later, from the Second Century AD, we learn of the structure of the reading of the Torah seder (portion) followed by the reading of the haftorah (the reading from the Prophets). It is not clear at this stage whether the Torah was read over a one or three year cycle.

9. Temple zebachim. The latter are divided in Leviticus (6:1-7:38) into the various categories noted above (pp.10-11).

For many of the above we are in the realm of the use of the Tanakh in Judaism rather than its use

in se. However this interpretation of the Scriptures is crucial for our understanding of the development of Judaism and parallel developments of Christianity. Both interpretations inform one another.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament give us clear insights into the background context and major elements of the Eucharist in se and in its structural and liturgical developments. The weight which is given to these elements is linked with the specific hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures as elaborated in the tradition of each separate Church community. For Catholic Christianity the Biblical (Old Testament and New Testament) bases of the Eucharist are essential for its understanding, along with the on-going Tradition of the Church. At the same time, the Eucharist forcibly encourages us to focus on the Scriptures. There has not been enough recognition of this in much of contemporary liturgical approaches to the Eucharist nor in many of our Parishes of the crucial intrinsic synergy between the Eucharist and the Scriptures, especially with regards to the Old Testament.

2. The Eucharist, with its human and biblical backgrounds, is a specifically important reflection for the relationship of the Catholic Church with Judaism. Such reflection is not merely necessary for the understanding of the background of the Passover and other historical developments of Judaism and Jewish Liturgy. It is also necessary to understand the Church in relationship with Judaism today and the intertwining of the Old and New Testaments for Christians. In the Synagogue in Mainz in 1980, St. John Paul II proclaimed: “The meeting of the people of God of the Old Covenant, never revoked by God (cf. Romans 11:29) with those of the New is at the same time a dialogue within our Church, that is to say, between the first and the second part of her Bible.” Catholics and Jews are united in a deep veneration of the presence of God in our midst, for the Jews especially in the Torah and for Catholics in the Eucharist.

3. Different Churches have different approaches to the nature and frequency of their celebration of the Eucharist. For the Catholic Church the Eucharist is the source and summit of the theology and liturgical life of the Church (LG 11; CCC 1324). As such it is all embracing and includes all biblical/theological themes and their elaboration, not merely the ones mentioned above. The Scriptures and the Eucharist are like a reflection of one another: “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she venerated the Body of the Lord, in so far as she never ceases, particularly in the Sacred Liturgy, to partake of the Bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ” (Dei Verbum, 21). It is as though the Host and Chalice have imprinted upon them the Readings of the Lectionary at each Mass.