



The Lord's Supper and The Concept of *Anamnesis*

RAY CARLTON JONES, JR.

Canton Lutheran Church, Canton, South Dakota

“Do this in remembrance of me.” According to Paul and Luke, Jesus said these words at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Matthew and Mark have not recorded these words of remembrance, but according to their narratives the Lord's Supper was instituted during the Jewish Passover Feast, a feast of remembrance. We read in Exodus that “this day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance forever” (12:14). The concept of *anamnesis* (remembrance or memorial) is therefore present according to Mark and Matthew, even though the “command of repetition” is not recorded.

In one way or another the early church and the first Christians placed the Lord's Supper in the context of a remembrance—an *anamnesis-of* Jesus. But the question is: How shall we understand the concept of *anamnesis*? Is this a concept which was somehow present at the institution of the Lord's Supper itself? Is this concept in reality a biblical concept, or is it a concept that has worked its way into the Pauline and Lucan narratives—a concept which has its origin in the Hellenistic world of that period? Or has the concept of *anamnesis* first arisen in the primitive Christian community? Is it an outgrowth of the common meals which the disciples themselves shared with Jesus? Or is it a product of the practice of the first Christians which is recorded in Acts—namely, the practice of breaking bread in fellowship with one another—and with their risen Lord?

I. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF ANAMNESIS AND THE JEWISH PASSOVER

The formula “do this in remembrance of me”—and the concept of *anamnesis* as it is present in the New Testament must be understood on the basis of its Old Testament and Jewish background. The biblical concept of *anamnesis* is not an abstract concept or mere recollection, but in the Old Testament it is always closely bound up with an action and with the cult—with a feast, a sacrifice, an offering, and the like. Johannes Pedersen has written that “what we call objective thought, that is to say, inactive, disinterested thought, does not exist for the

Israelite.”¹ That “something rises up to the heart,” as the Israelite would say it, means that a thought or an image has direct and immediate influence on the will. The expression—that “something rises up to the heart”—can have nearly the same meaning as *zakar*, “to remember.” Pedersen writes: “When the soul remembers something, it does not mean that it has objective images of remembrance of a thing or an event, but that the thing or event is called forth in the soul and that the thing or event in question contributes to the direction and activity of the will.”

In other words, a person who remembers God allows his or her entire being and activity to be directed by God. Therefore, to remember God is identical with seeking God, and that is to say to obey God. Remembrance or recollection cannot be separated from action.

Some of the same thoughts are set forth in the lengthy article on *zkr* by H. Eising.² Recollection and remembrance are hardly sufficient descriptions of the Hebrew verb for *zkr*—“to remember”—is an active commitment to a person or an action. Therefore remembrance is not only an activity which is concerned with the past, but one “remembers,” that is to say one “considers,” what will happen in the future (cf. Isa 47:7 and Eccl 11:8). In any case, recollection or remembrance does not merely mean that certain events are recollected or remembered, but that these past events have consequences which exhort the community to action in the present and in the future. As Eising also indicates, *zkr* has mainly a religious meaning in the Old Testament. *Zakar* in the Qal form has God as subject 68 times; in 23 cases God remembers his people; and in 12 cases God remembers his covenant and his people.

When human beings remember something in relation to God in the Old Testament, it is of course God’s mighty deeds which are remembered—especially the Exodus from Egypt. By speaking about the mighty deeds of the past, these deeds become present. In this way the biblical concept of *anamnesis* is an objective concept,³ to remember is to act. It is neither a question of aesthetic recollection nor of epistemological speculation: that a person remembers God means that he or she is placed in a *context*—a context which consists of God’s activity in the past and of God’s will for the present and the future. This meaning of the concept of *anamnesis* has been clearly demonstrated by Max Thurian in his book on the Eucharist.⁴ In the Septuagint there are two main words which can be translated as memorial or remembrance. One of the words is *anamnesis*, and the other is *mnemosunon*. These two words are in fact synonyms, and they are used almost at random to translate the Hebrew words *zakar*, *askarah*, and *zikkaron* which all have the common root *zkr*. The verb *zkr* has many nuances. First of all, it means to remember something, i.e., to think of something that has happened. That is certainly the meaning which is easiest for us to translate and understand. Second, the word is used when one must remember a task. For example, in Exo-

¹Johannes Pedersen, *Israel I-II* (3rd ed.; Copenhagen: Branner & Korch, 1958) 80-81.

²H. Eising, “*zkr*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. I. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (5 vols. to date; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-) 4.64-82.

³J. Behm, “*Anamnesis*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1979) 1.348-49.

⁴Max Thurian, *L’Eucharistie: Mémorial du Seigneur; sacrifice d’action de grâce et d’intercession* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1963) 23-51.

dus 13:3 Moses says to the people that they should “remember this day” and eat unleavened bread in remembrance of God’s salvation. Third, when the verb is used as an infinitive with the preposition *le*, we have the meaning to remember to the advantage of someone. Fourth, *zkr* is a mutual term: God remembers something (or wipes out what he remembers!), and the people remind God of something. This mutual meaning can be seen, for example, in Isaiah 43:25-26: “I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Put me in remembrance, let us argue together; set forth your case, that you may be proved right.” Fifth, the word *zkr* can describe remembrance as an active power: God can be remembered and

therefore be reminded of something through a sacrificial act at a particular place (Exod 20:24). To summarize, one can say that *anamnesis* in the Old Testament is a two-way street: (1) one reminds *God* of—and God remembers—his covenant with Israel and (2) *anamnesis* is a reminder to the *people* of God’s grace (in the past, the present, and future). But we must take note of the fact that the cause or the source of *anamnesis* or remembrance is always *God’s* activity: remembrance is based upon and rooted in the history of salvation.

In his book *Mimesis*⁵ Erich Auerbach has described what I would call the classical-aesthetic concept of *anamnesis*. He does this by analyzing the poetry of Homer, and he calls our attention in particular to the passage in the *Odyssey* where the old Eraklaeia, Odysseus’ nurse, recognizes Odysseus when she sees the scar on his leg. Suddenly the past becomes present in that the cause of the scar is described. The scar originates from the time when Odysseus had been out hunting with the sons of Autoklytus. But the difference between past and present is wiped out. The depth dimension of the past, Auerbach writes, is foreign to Homer. It’s not so much a question of past *events* which mark out avenues of direction for the present and the future, but of *recollections* which are assimilated into an eternal present of pure description. There is no time perspective. Remembrance functions here as a well of recollections which do not necessarily lead to action, but these memories or recollections are life-affirmative or simply a pleasure. This form of remembrance continued in the Hellenistic “commemorative meals for the dead” in which particular persons are remembered at a remembrance meal.⁶ This form of remembrance is still present in our own century in the work of Marcel Proust,⁷ where remembrance consists of recollections which arise in the human consciousness—recollections which are called forth by a certain object or by experiences which remind the author of something which has occurred in the past. This form of remembrance—which we encounter in the works of Homer and Proust—could be called the classical-aesthetic concept of *anamnesis*, and it stands in sharp contrast to the biblical concept where action and remembrance are not separated, where time-differences are not erased, where God remembers his people so that his people are placed in a historical,

⁵Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1953).

⁶See the discussion in Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1966) 238-43.

⁷Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1934) 1.33-36.

meaningful *context*, and where his people’s remembrance of past events implies avenues of direction for their actions in the present and future. Auerbach himself has described this difference in that he compares Abraham and Odysseus, and he concludes that Abraham’s manner of action cannot just be explained on the basis of what is happening at the moment, but on the basis of his previous history: Abraham remembers, he is always self-aware—aware of what God has promised him, and of what God has already done. Therefore, the object of the Bible is not to entertain us, writes Auerbach, but we must insert our own life into its world and feel that we have become a part of its world-historical structure.

Plato’s concept of *anamnesis* has an epistemological function. Thus it is not a question of past events which are remembered, but of a half-mythical vision which leads the soul to a timeless, pre-existent, and super-historical “reality.”⁸ Remembrance is the connecting link

between the soul and the vision (*eidos*). It is not a question of hearing and doing, but of seeing and understanding.⁹ With the thought of Plato we are equally far from the thought of Homer and the world of the Bible in that *anamnesis* has neither an aesthetic function (Homer, Proust) nor a religio-historical function (the Bible) but an epistemological function.

As stated above, the biblical concept of *anamnesis* must be characterized as objective, religious, and historical. Remembrance and action cannot be separated. This is especially true with respect to God: he remembers his covenant and his people, and this means that he intervenes in the affairs of humanity. This means in addition that remembrance is closely bound up with the cult, with the festivals, and with worship. As Gerhard von Rad has expressed it, the cult brings Israel to the remembrance of Jahweh.¹⁰ The past becomes present in the cultic rituals; the participants become forebears. They participate in God's mighty deeds of salvation in Israel's past.¹¹

These considerations are especially true for the Passover-massot feast as it developed in Israel's history. As Herbert Haag has emphasized in his book,¹² in the late post-exilic period the Passover Feast (and that is to say the combined Passover-massot feast) had become Israel's sacrament: the past and the future meet in the present. Here the deeds of salvation of the past have become tokens of the pledge for the future salvation of Israel. Haag cites Renckens who writes that precisely because Israel lives on the basis of a hope which has been promised to her in the past in word and deed, the reality of the past receives decisive meaning.¹³ It is not simply a question of recollection, but of "making" the past a present reality. Therefore the Passover Haggadah—and that is to say the narration of how the Passover Feast was instituted, the narration of the liberation from Egypt—is not just a story which is told to remind, or amuse, or entertain.

⁸Plato, *Phaedrus* 249b-c; Paul Friedlander, *Plato: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon, 1958) 156, and 370.

⁹Plato, *Laws* 5. 732b; cited by J. Behm, "Anamnesis," 1.348.

¹⁰Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962-65) 1.242.

¹¹Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1968) 216.

¹²Herbert Haag, *Vom alten zum neuen Pascha* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1971) 115-77.

¹³*Ibid.*, 116; Henricus Renckens, *Urgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte* (Mainz: M. Gruenewald, 1959) 23ff.

The narration of the Haggadah is *duty*. It is a question of the existence of the people; without this story the people simply would not exist.

In conjunction with the biblical concept of *anamnesis*, the Jewish Passover-massot feast has three functions which must be stressed: (1) Passover is a *confirmation* of the *presence* of God—here and now with his people; (2) Passover is a *proclamation* of the message of salvation (the *past*); and (3) Passover's intercessory *prayer* reminds God of his promise (*future*). In other words, all of the different (temporal) aspects which are tied up with the Hebrew verb *zkr* stand forth with clarity in the Jewish Passover Feast. Passover is an *anamnesis*, which (1) points *back* to the mighty deeds of salvation history (this is the *content* of praise and thanksgiving), (2) realizes God's *presence* in the present in that one offers something to God (namely praise and thanksgiving) while *God remembers Israel*, and (3) points *forward* in time on the basis of the divine promises in history. In the same way, the Christian Eucharist points back in time to God's act of salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; at the same time the presence of

Jesus is experienced in the congregation as a present reality; and finally, the Christian Eucharist points forward in time to the coming of Jesus. The difference is that whereas Jewish Passover points forward in time to God's decisive intervention (the coming of the Messiah), the Christian Eucharist points back in time to God's decisive intervention: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

II. THE WORDS OF MEMORIAL

In the work of Günther Bornkamm¹⁵ and Ferdinand Hahn¹⁶ we can meet what I call a *descriptive* treatment of the relationship of the Lord's Supper to the concept of *anamnesis*. We can simply ascertain that—viewed phenomenologically—there is a relationship between the Lord's Supper and the concept of *anamnesis*. Bornkamm, for example, calls attention to the fact that *anamnesis* in Paul's thought is not *just* connected with the acts of eating and drinking the bread and the wine, but that it is strongly connected with the *proclamation* of the death of the Lord until he comes again, a proclamation which has the form of a confession and a thanksgiving. The proclamation of the death of Jesus and an emphasis on the meaning of the death of Jesus for the primitive community is to remember Jesus; the proclamation in connection with the Lord's Supper makes the power of Jesus and the saving act of Jesus a present reality for the community. Eschatology and the biblical concept of *anamnesis* are inextricably bound up with one another. In the Pauline tradition concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper and the command of Jesus ("Do this in remembrance of me") we recognize the three temporal aspects: (1) the saving act of the past: the death and resurrection of Jesus; (2) the present remembrance and praise; and (3) the future return of Jesus (only the resurrected Lord can return).

¹⁴M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie*, 50-51.

¹⁵Günther Bornkamm, "Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 53 (1956) 312-349. See also Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1951-55) 1.149.

¹⁶Ferdinand Hahn, "Die alttestamentlichen Motive der urchristlichen Abendmahls-überlieferung," *Evangelische Theologie* 27 (1967) 337-374.

But is there in addition a *historical* basis for the celebration of the Lord's Supper as an *anamnesis*? In other words, did Jesus himself command that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated in remembrance of him? If we begin with the assumption that the texts we have concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper are liturgical texts—as far as the Synoptic Gospels are concerned, in any case—the question arises: Why is the command of Jesus to celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him missing in Mark and Matthew as well as in the shorter Lucan text? The answer is very simple: the practice of the primitive community, as Mark and Matthew bear witness to it, is living proof that Jesus himself said that the Lord's Supper should be repeatedly celebrated in remembrance of him. *For a liturgical rubric is not to be told, but to be carried out in practice.*¹⁷ The command of Jesus that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated over and over again is simply the most obvious reason for the fact that the Lord's Supper was celebrated on a regular basis in the primitive community. But the question remains: Why was it necessary for Paul to expressly reproduce the command of Jesus in 1 Corinthians? The answer must simply be that Paul wrote a letter to a particular congregation, whereas Mark

wrote his gospel for a larger public. Paul will expressly guide and give counsel. Mark will instruct and describe (see in this regard Vincent Taylor's claim that Mark is to be understood as a primitive Christian Catechism).¹⁸

That Jesus himself therefore commanded that the Lord's Supper be celebrated in remembrance of him is implicit in the Marcan tradition. A liturgical rubric is not to be recited, but the text describes the practice of the community. Thus this particular liturgical practice presupposes the words of institution and remembrance. In addition, the words of institution appear in 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul reports that he has received the words of institution from the risen Lord ("for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you"). How should we understand these words of Paul that he has *received* the command of repetition from the Lord and that he has *delivered* them to the congregation at Corinth? According to Bornkamm, we must understand the term *paralambanein/paradidonai* as the rabbinic school expressions *qibbel/masar*.¹⁹ With these rabbinic terms in mind it becomes clear that a *paradosis* is a "handing-down" in a chain of tradition: Paul has thus received this tradition (*paradosis*) concerning the command of Jesus presumably during his stay in Antioch before he went out on the first missionary journey. But what about the words "from the Lord?" Do these words indicate that the historical Jesus is the first link in the chain of tradition, or do these words point to the resurrected Lord himself? The alternative is false, according to Bornkamm, in that the word of the tradition *is* the word of the resurrected Lord.²⁰ The tradition does not simply hand down the words of Jesus, but this tradition—consisting of these words—is experienced as the word of the

¹⁷J. Jeremias. *Eucharistic Words*, 238. Jeremias cites P. Benoit, "Le recit de la Cene dans Lc. XXII, 15-20," *Revue Biblique* 48 (1939) 386: "On ne récite pas une rubrique, on l'exécute."

¹⁸Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (New York: St. Martin's, 1952) 133.

¹⁹See also C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 265.

²⁰See also Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 196, n. 36: "Inspiration or human transmission is no true alternative."

resurrected Lord. It is not simply a question of a juridical, rabbinic tradition, but of the resurrected and living Lord's words to his community in the primitive tradition. These considerations alone demonstrate the reality of the concept of *anamnesis*: the command of repetition is not the dead word, the obligatory, juridical repetition, but the living word, the resurrected Lord's presence in his community (cf. 1 Thess 1:13). To receive something from the Lord is not just to receive a historical tradition, but a living proclamation.

Even though it appears that Jesus himself has commanded that the Lord's Supper be celebrated in remembrance of him, there remains the question: How shall we understand these words of remembrance (the command of repetition: "do this in remembrance of me")? Two attempts to answer this question can be mentioned: one by Max Thurian, and the other by Joachim Jeremias. Thurian interprets the words of Jesus in this way: "do this *as* my *anamnesis*." Thus understood, the Lord's Supper is a living remembrance (understood as *lezikkaron*, a making present, making a past reality a present reality) of Jesus and his life, his propitiatory death and resurrection.²¹ Just as the Jewish Passover was a remembrance of the fundamental deeds of salvation through the liberation from Egypt, and confirmed for Israel that God remembers Israel in the present, thus the Lord's Supper is the remembrance of the fundamental act of salvation

which has initiated the new covenant: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The content of the remembrance is the entire ritual which surrounds the Lord's Supper. Therefore for Thurian *anamnesis* is a liturgical act, and not a subjective recollection. Here we have a biblical understanding of the concept of *anamnesis*. *Anamnesis* is an action which reminds God of the action which he has executed through his son's suffering, death, and resurrection. And this action is a link in the entire history of salvation—not only from the conception to the resurrection, but from the creation to the return of Jesus Christ.

These remarks lead us at once to Joachim Jeremias' interpretation of the words of remembrance. It is possible to understand—perhaps even to translate—the command of Jesus in this way: “Do this, in order that God may remember me” (or “will be reminded of me”).²² Jesus commands his disciples to repeat the liturgical actions of the Lord's Supper, in order that the prayer to God, which is set forth before the death of Jesus, will be realized. The content of this prayer is the coming Kingdom of God, which is bound up with the person of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is therefore the realization of this prayer to the Father—namely, that the Father will remember, will be reminded of Jesus, and that is to say, the Kingdom of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, which is breaking in with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the living, earnest prayer that Jesus return in glory. In Jeremias' interpretation the eschatological aspect is emphasized.

Even though the two authors emphasize different aspects of the concept of *anamnesis*, their two points of view are hardly irreconcilable. On the contrary, when we think of what *anamnesis* (*zkr*) means in the Old Testament, it becomes clear that the Lord's Supper is both a memorial feast as well as an earnest prayer

²¹M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie*, 174-77.

²²J. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 237.

that Jesus may return in glory. To remember Jesus, to be reminded of Jesus, is to “remember” the entire history of salvation from the creation to the return of Christ. To pray that Jesus will come in glory presupposes that Jesus died and was raised—only the resurrected Lord can return in glory.

III. THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE CONCEPT OF ANAMNESIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE JEWISH PASSOVER

The words of institution and the command of repetition originate from the Lord himself—from the historical Jesus and the resurrected Lord. The concept of *anamnesis* is not just a free-floating “theme” or “idea,” but it becomes concrete both historically at the Last Supper and ritually in the Christian Eucharist. But can the historical origin of the Lord's Supper be located precisely so that we know exactly at what point in time Jesus ate the Last Supper with the disciples? In other words, to phrase the question in its classic form: Was the Last Supper a Passover meal? I have previously written that it is of decisive importance that we understand the Last Supper and the words of institution in the *context* of the Passover Feast, that is, in relation to the meaning and the message of the Passover. That is the position of the Synoptic writers, the author of John, and Paul—each in his own way. But the question is: Shall we understand the Passover Feast as a kind of principle of interpretation (as Paul does and John possibly does), or is

the Synoptic version, which indicates that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, historically accurate? Or is there a third possibility? I believe so, but first let us look at the question: Was the Last Supper a Passover meal?

The problem is mainly as follows. The Synoptic report and the Johannine report concerning the Last Supper and the crucifixion of Jesus are not in agreement with respect to the chronology of events. According to the Synoptic authors the crucifixion occurred on a Friday, the first day of the Passover Feast, the day before the Sabbath. Therefore the Last Supper was a Passover meal on Thursday evening, the 14-15th Nisan. According to the Gospel of John, the crucifixion also occurred on a Friday (19:31, 42), but the Last Supper occurred the day before the Passover Feast (13:1, 29), that is, the 13-14th Nisan. The next day (Friday) the Jews remark that they are about to begin the celebration of the Passover (18:28), and the day itself is called the day of preparation for the Passover (19:14). Therefore, according to the chronology of John, the first day of the Passover Feast took place on a Sabbath day (“for that sabbath was a high day,” 19:31). Who is right? According to the Synoptic writers, the interrogation and the judgment took place on the first day of the Passover Feast, something which was not permitted according to Jewish law. In addition, many other things occur which according to Jewish law and custom were not at all permissible on such a feast day: the crowd gathers, Simon from Cyrene comes into the city from his field, Joseph from Arimathea buys a shroud, and so on. On the other hand, the Johannine chronology implies that Jesus died around 3:00 p.m. not on the 15th Nisan but on the 14th Nisan—that is to say, at the same time that the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple in Jerusalem. There are some scholars who believe that the Johannine chronology is a fictive construction so that the Johannine chronology is subordinated to the Evangelist’s sym-

bolism, i.e., Jesus is the Lamb of God who is slaughtered at the same time as the Passover lambs.

But this evaluation of the Johannine chronology is just a little too easy. The Johannine chronology must be taken seriously. Indeed, if we follow the Johannine chronology and thereby assume that the Last Supper took place Thursday/Friday, the 13-14th Nisan, a lot of the problems which are connected with the Synoptic reports simply disappear. Many of the events which are described in the synoptic reports could have occurred on the day before the Passover Feast: the women prepare spices and ointments (Luke 23:56), Joseph of Arimathea buys a shroud, and Simon from Cyrene comes in from his field. All of these events could have taken place the day before the first day of the feast itself (as the Synoptic chronology implies). Although this theory (that the Johannine chronology is correct) means that the Synoptic writers call the day before the Passover (Thursday, 13-14th Nisan) “the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread,” J. B. Segal maintains that already in the second and first centuries before Christ the day *before* the Passover feast (the 13-14th Nisan) was called “the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread.”²³ The days before the great Jewish festivals were celebrated as feast days in that period. Segal believes that the Synoptic writers’ chronology and their dating of the Last Supper as a Passover meal is an artificial construction. The most decisive argument for Segal’s suggestion is the fact that the most important element of the Passover meal—the Passover lamb—is not even mentioned. There is still a problem even if we follow the Johannine chronology. It is impossible that the Sanhedrin would have conducted an interrogation and what even appears to be a trial on the day before the feast. Nevertheless, there are certain exceptions according to Segal, and one

can also consider the trial as a Roman affair. Even so, it is clear that the Johannine chronology is less problematic than the Synoptic chronology.

What are the consequences of all this for the biblical concept of *anamnesis* as it appears in the Passover Feast and as it relates to the Lord's Supper? Practically none. Already in 1948 a solution was proposed by Franz-J. Leenhardt.²⁴ Leenhardt simply made it clear that an interpretation of the Last Supper in the light of the Passover was not dependent on a solution of the problems of chronology which surround the reports of the Last Supper. (Joachim Jeremias himself admits in the German edition of his book in 1967 that even if the Last Supper was not a Passover meal in the strict sense of the word, nevertheless the Last Supper was in any case surrounded by the atmosphere of the Passover Feast.²⁵) Here is the solution of the problem: the Last Supper presumably took place the 13-14th Nissan, the day before the Passover began, but the Last Supper must be understood in the light of the Jewish Passover and its importance and meaning for the Jewish people as this comes to expression in the Passover Haggadah.²⁶ The proposal that the Last Supper took place in the context of the

²³Judah. B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover: From the Earliest Times to A.D. 70* (London: Oxford University, 1963) 245, n. 2.

²⁴Franz-J. Leenhardt, *Le Sacrament de la Sainte Cène* (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestle, 1948).

²⁵J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (3rd ed.; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) 82; cf. *Eucharistic Words*, 88.

²⁶For the Passover Haggadah, see *The Passover Haggadah*, ed. Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1953).

Passover has received support from Helmut Feld in his examination of the myriad of results which New Testament research has put forth during the last number of years.²⁷ We find there a number of convincing arguments for the claim that the crucifixion took place on the 14th of Nissan, before the beginning of the Passover Feast. Among other things, the release of a prisoner is mentioned, and such a release is comprehensible only if it occurred before the evening of the 14th of Nissan, so that the released prisoner could thereby participate in the Passover meal. In addition, Feld mentions the Jewish scholar Ben Chorin's suggestion that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, but that Jesus did not follow the official Jerusalem (lunar) calendar but was under the influence of the Qumran sect's (solar) calendar. There is also the fact that only "the twelve" celebrated the Last Supper together with Jesus, even though the group accompanying Jesus to Jerusalem was considerably greater. That the meal was celebrated in a smaller group also indicates a certain influence from Qumran. But most important is the simple fact that it would be typical of Jesus to hold the Passover meal without following the official calendar. That Jesus had a rather free relationship to ritual and religious rules—without thereby ignoring the thrust of these rules and their proclamation of God's sovereignty—is obvious to all.

Every Jewish meal begins with the breaking of bread and thanksgiving. Thus did Jesus begin the meals which he shared with the disciples (where he acted as house father), and thus begins the main meal of the Passover Haggadah (immediately after the washing of the hands). In the report of the institution of the Lord's Supper in Mark we read that Jesus took bread, blessed it, gave it to the disciples, and said: "Take this, this is my body." The breaking of bread and thanksgiving are inextricably bound up with one another for the Jews. This thanksgiving is emphasized in the Passover Haggadah by the Kiddush prayer, and the Kiddush prayer is an

enumeration of God's mighty deeds in Israel's past—for the creation and for the election of the people. This prayer of thanksgiving points back in time—to the creation and the election. The prayer of thanks—"Blessed art thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the universe, for you bring forth bread from the earth"—points back in time to the creation, to the beginning of time. This short prayer is said at every meal and receives special emphasis at the festival of Passover. And this prayer of thanks is always closely tied to the bread for the Jews. At the Passover meal bread is not only a sign of creation and election, but also of the misery the Jews experienced in Egypt and a sign of remembrance for their liberation from Egypt. Indeed, all the *food* components of the Passover meal (and food is bread for the Jews, *lehem*) function as signs of the misery, slavery, and liberation which are connected with Egypt: the bitter herbs are to remind the Jews of bondage; the bread is to remind the Jews of their misery; and the Passover lamb is to remind them of God's saving action and grace. Bread—that is to say, the food components of the Passover—points back in time and assists in making these past events a present reality for the Jews. As Rabbi Gamaliel has said: "In every generation let each man look on himself as if he came forth out of Egypt." Thus we see that all the food com-

²⁷Helmut Feld, *Vas Verständnis des Abendmahls* (Varmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976) 45-48.

page 444

ponents—bread, *lehem*—are a link in the concept of *anamnesis*: the past becomes present and relevant; God's saving action is re-experienced every time the Passover is celebrated. Everyone participates in the past events at the Passover meal. On such occasions bread—or food—is not just bread—or food—but bread is also misery, bondage, and liberation as they were experienced in Egypt and as they are experienced today. The slaughter of the Passover lambs in Egypt was the beginning of the history of salvation for the children of Israel; the death of Jesus reopens the history of salvation for all people. The liberation from Egypt was for all the children of Israel—forever; the propitiatory death of Jesus is for the benefit of all people—forever. The bread is broken first; it points back to creation and election; it is broken in thanksgiving.

The Passover Feast points not only back in time but also forward in time. The four cups of wine which are drunk during the Passover meal are all bound up with the coming joy, the fulfillment of God's promises, and the coming of the Messiah. In the language of the Bible the cup is often used in connection with a judgment and/or a blessing. The cup is a sign of the fate or lot one is granted. It can be understood as a condemnation or a blessing (Jer 25:15-17; Pss 16:5, 9; Ps 116). The cup in the Old Testament can serve as a sign of the lot or fate which befalls one, whether it is fortunate or tragic. The cup has a special place during the Passover meal. It is a symbol for God's decisions concerning the nations and Israel. It is a sign of God's wrath against the nations and a sign of Israel's coming liberation. To drink of the cup during the Passover meal means that one participates in God's special blessings for Israel. During the Passover meal immediately after the drinking of the third cup there is a pronouncement of God's judgment over the peoples. And immediately thereafter follows the second part of the Hallel, the recitation of Psalms 115-118 with their Messianic expectations: "This is the day which the Lord has made." These words point to the day of liberation, the day of redemption. This third cup is the cup of blessing—a blessing for Israel and a curse for the enemies of Israel. The cup is closely bound up with the Day of the Lord, the Judgment of the Lord, the Redemption of Israel. The cup—i.e., the

wine—points forward in time to the coming of the Messiah.

Therefore Jeremias is right when he draws attention to Jesus' refusal to drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God has been established with the return of Jesus.²⁸ We have here a genuine word of Jesus which appears not only in the Synoptics but which also has echoes in Paul (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:17-18; 1 Cor 11:26). Here it is clear that the cup—the wine—and the words of Jesus which are spoken in connection with the drinking of the wine point to the fulfillment of the coming Kingdom of God, which is now breaking in with the death of Jesus. The words point to the royal return of Jesus and the final establishment of the Kingdom of God. The words of Jesus can hardly be interpreted differently when we remember what wine—the cup—meant for Israel and how the cup was understood in the context of the Passover meal. The cup points forward in time to the end of time and the coming of the Messiah. The participants in the Passover meal participate in this coming reality at the moment the cup is lifted and the blessings—and curses—are expressed.

²⁸J. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 207-18.

We see, therefore, that the concept of *anamnesis* becomes concrete in the Jewish Passover meal. The bread points back in time and makes the past events of bondage and liberation present and relevant; the wine (the cup) points forward in time and makes the judgments and joy of the coming reality present and real. Everyone participates in this reality by eating bread and drinking the wine from the cup.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have attempted to interpret the meaning of the Lord's Supper on the basis of the biblical concept of *anamnesis*. Regardless of whether one has a sceptical view with respect to the institution of the Lord's Supper in the context of the Jewish Passover (as is the case with Bornkamm and Hahn), or one is convinced that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (as is the case with Thurian and Jeremias), it appears that the biblical concept of *anamnesis* is impossible to avoid. I have tried to follow a middle path in that I have followed the main lines of thought in Leenhardt's book, *Le Sacrement de la Sainte Cène*, where he interprets the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the light of the meaning of the Passover meal for the Jewish people. In this way one can suspend judgment with regard to a definitive solution of the chronological problems surrounding the crucifixion and the Last Supper (even though it appears that the Johannine chronology is to be preferred), while at the same time maintaining the absolute importance of the historical *context*: the institution of the Lord's Supper was comprehensible for the disciples because of their knowledge of the Passover; and the meaning of the Lord's Supper for us becomes clear when we understand it in the context of the Passover. The interpretation of the bread and wine can only be properly understood in the context of the Jewish Passover.

Therefore the concept of *anamnesis* is not just an interpretative concept. The concept is to be found in the very historical context which surrounds the institution of the Lord's Supper. The context of the Passover is the foundation for the understanding of the *biblical* concept of *anamnesis*. The context of the Passover reveals the depth and the breadth of *anamnesis* in connection with the Lord's Supper. *Anamnesis* means that *we* are drawn into the history of salvation: "In every generation let each man look on himself as if he came out of Egypt." This is

the Passover's eternal present, an eternal present which is true for the Christian Eucharist. *Anamnesis* means that the entire history of salvation is remembered and re-experienced—from the creation to the return of Christ. The bread in the Passover meal points back in time to creation and liberation; the wine points forward in time to the Day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah. This is the eschatological aspect of the Passover—an aspect which is also true for the Lord's Supper.