

JESUS
“A Public Figure Making a Public Pronouncement”
Covenant, Kingdom and the Family of God

A DIALOGUE WITH TOM WRIGHT
Scott Hahn

Introduction

The theme for our session comes from a comment that Tom makes in *Jesus, Paul and the People of God*, where he describes how years of gospel study led him “to reflect that the real-history Jesus was a *public* figure making a *public* announcement.”¹ So he concludes: “Christian faith is *public truth*,” which is all about creation and history. He then observes how “Biblical scholarship in the Western world has had a particular slant. It has not favored big-picture thinking...” even though “big-picture hypotheses are what we need just now.”² The organizers of today’s session believe that both *covenant* and *mission* are essential parts of that big picture so central to Tom’s biblical interpretation. I was asked to address covenant, and then Mike Goheen will address mission.

Tom’s work is rightly celebrated for its creativity, depth and insistence on attending to both detailed exegesis and *big picture* issues when it comes to the New Testament. Big picture issues generally go under the rubric *biblical theology* in the academy and Tom has made a major contribution in this area. Too often, especially in Evangelical circles, as I’ve noticed, reception of Tom’s work has focused (fixated?) on certain interesting but peripheral areas (e.g., exile, justification), without adequate attention to the big picture aspects (e.g., covenant, mission). And the neglect of these larger issues has been to the detriment of the church as well as biblical scholarship.

I am responding to Tom’s work as a Catholic scholar doing biblical theology. I too have worked hard to show the importance of covenant for understanding and applying scripture. My major work in this area is entitled *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (AYBRL, 2009), and it is from this perspective of a biblical theology of the covenant that I wish to pursue my dialogue with Tom today.

Covenant in Biblical Studies

The title of this dialogue emphasizes the *public* implications of Jesus’ proclamation and the inherent link between this public message and the people of God. Covenant would appear to be a central biblical category for such an emphasis. In recent decades, however, it has been a challenge to open up this perspective via biblical theology in the academy.³ It has been argued, for example, that covenant was a late (prophetic or deuteronomic) development in ancient Israel, and that covenant is marginal in the NT.

¹ *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God*, 127.

² *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God*, 149-150.

³ See Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 1-33. The proper definition of “covenant” (Heb *berith*; Gk *diatheke*) is debated by biblical scholars. Since the 19th century, several German scholars have defined “covenant” in strictly legal terms (Wellhausen, Peritt, Kutsch), reducing it to a synonym for “law” or “obligation.” However, these legal obligations reflect and reinforce covenant relationships, which are solemnized in ritual acts. By the end of the 20th century, a majority of biblical scholars—Protestant (F.M. Cross, G.P. Hugenberger), Catholic (D.J. McCarthy, P. Kalluveetil) and Jewish (M. Weinfeld, A.F. Segal)—agree that covenants in antiquity served to extend (or renew) sacred kinship bonds between parties through legal sanctions and liturgical rites. Intrinsic to covenants, then, are these three distinct but interrelated elements: familial relations (life), legal obligations (law), cultic celebrations (liturgy). These are reflected in the covenant ceremony at Sinai (Ex 24:3-11): the *familial bond* is denoted by the shared meal (vv. 9-11); the *legal sanctions* are present in Israel’s sworn oath (vv. 7-8); the *liturgical ritual* is enacted at the altar of sacrifice (vv. 4-5). A proper understanding of covenant, and the development of an integral covenant theology, thus requires a careful synthesis of all three elements: familial relations, legal obligations, and ritual consecrations.

While reconstruction of the history of Israelite religion is notoriously speculative, a *canonical* examination of covenant, such as I attempt in *Kinship by Covenant*, does indeed foreground the sort of theology that undergirds a covenantal perspective with creation-wide implications. Bill Dumbrell has argued persuasively for the connection between covenant and creation,⁴ which is also confirmed in my work. As I conclude in my study of the Noahic covenant of grant: “the grant-type covenant with Noah represents God’s unconditional promise to one righteous man that He would establish a gracious order for all people to live as the worldwide family of God.”⁵ A similar conclusion is reached on the Abrahamic covenant: “the Abraham narrative and covenants are closely connected to the preceding narrative of the so-called Primeval history, which accounts for its *universal* outlook (the blessing of all nations).”⁶ Canonically there is every reason to identify covenant as a central theme in the Old Testament, with its dual emphasis on a chosen people and their connection with God’s purpose to redeem creation and establish his kingdom.

Covenant in the NT: Covenant and Kinship

What of covenant in the New Testament? Part Two of *Kinship by Covenant* explores this topic in detail. Suffice it here to note that, early on, in *Climax of the Covenant* Tom rightly and courageously rowed against the stream by insisting that covenant is not marginal to the New Testament but central in all sorts of ways, just as it was in all of Second Temple Judaism: “Covenant theology was the air breathed by the Judaism of this period.”⁷

Tom is also spot on in connecting God’s covenant with God’s family, especially when it comes to Paul’s teaching about faith and how it unites the justified members of God’s Abrahamic family: “When God fulfils the covenant through the death and resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit, thereby revealing his faithful covenant justice and his ultimate purpose of new creation, this has the effect *both* of fulfilling the original covenant purpose... *and* of enabling Abraham’s family to be the worldwide Jew-plus-Gentile people it was always intended to be”⁸

At the same time, it is worth reflecting on why many biblical scholars still think that covenant is marginal to the New Testament; for it is indeed the case that “covenant” is used much less in the New Testament than it appears proportionately in the Old. Why is it, then, that by the time we get to the NT, the use of covenant clearly recedes? My short answer is this: It is certainly not because the covenant was forgotten, but because of how it was fulfilled.

⁴ *Covenant and Creation*.

⁵ *Kinship*, 100.

⁶ *Kinship*, 135, emphasis added. Time does not permit us to address, much less resolve, the crucial but controverted question of the relationship between covenant and creation. K. Barth may have referred to the “analogy of being” as “the invention of the Antichrist,” yet he seems to come perilously close to formulating a profound (if nuanced) version of it by insightfully affirming: “creation as the external basis of the covenant” and “covenant as the internal meaning of creation” (*CD III/1*). I inadvertently wandered into this theological minefield near the end of my doctoral thesis, and reached similar conclusions: “The covenant serves as the transcendent principle that reveals the moral and theological frame of reference for the family. It thus discloses the real meaning of kinship relations and obligations, and why the family is not reducible to mere biology, or socio-political convention. The family then represents the immanent principle of the covenant, which provides the covenant with its concrete historical and social forms in salvation history. The practical reality of the family prevents the covenant from becoming a mere theological abstraction or utopian ideal. Moreover, the family has a certain trans-cultural continuity and permanence, even allowing for a wide diversity of family types and values” (KBC, 657).

⁷ NTPG, 262. He notes: “The idea of covenant was central to Judaism in this period. This has sometimes been questioned on the basis of the relative infrequency of the regular Hebrew word for ‘covenant’ (*berith*) in many of the key texts. But, as Sanders has shown quite conclusively – so conclusively that one wonders how any other view could ever have been taken – covenantal ideas were totally common and regular at this time” (*Ibid*, 259).

⁸ PIFP, 21-39.

My research indicates that the core meaning of covenant in ancient Israel was *familial*, that is, it denoted sacred kinship bonds.⁹ Hence the title of my book: *Kinship by Covenant*. So the promissory aspects of God's covenant with Israel elicited high hopes and great expectations for a future fulfillment. With the exile, however, the Old Covenant becomes, as it were, a story in search of an ending.

The incarnation of God's Son is what effected the fulfillment of the covenant, and then some. Christ's coming, in effect, brought about such an explosion of good news that the divine fulfillment exceeded all human expectations. For instance, from the start of his public ministry, when proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, Jesus employs divine kinship terminology with unprecedented frequency and force. In the Sermon on the Mount alone, Jesus refers to God as Father some seventeen times, which is more than the entire Hebrew Bible. After his death and resurrection, Jesus sends the Spirit to empower believers to share in his own divine sonship, and to be taken up into the worldwide family of God. In sum, the New Covenant fulfills the Old with a hitherto unexpected escalation of sacred kinship and divine communion.

In the Old Testament, God's covenant is prominent and explicit, whereas divine kinship, though present, is muted and implicit; or as Janet Soskice notes: "The kinship of God and humankind is both compelled and resisted by the Hebrew scriptures – compelled for reasons of intimacy and resisted for fear of idolatry."¹⁰ The New Covenant is precisely what reverses these proportionate emphases.

In the New Covenant, Jesus effects a fulfillment of the Old that exceeds Israel's hopes, the terminological result of which is noted by biblical scholars; i.e., the language of divine kinship must increase, while the explicit use of covenant terminology now predictably decreases. So the NT covenant minimalists may be right after all, but for all the wrong reasons; while Tom's bold resistance to the minimalists may be slightly wrong, but for all the right reasons. As explanatory hypotheses go, I find this one to be useful in addressing the relative scarcity of covenant in the New Testament (except for Hebrews), along with the emergence and predominance of family terminology.

Unfortunately, I do not have the time to show the many ways that these considerations actually fit and reinforce Tom's big picture approach to the New Covenant. Instead, I wish to trace one aspect of his retrieval of covenant and kingdom and the (public) practices that follow, by attending closely to some particularities of covenant liturgy and kingdom ecclesiology.

To anticipate, the church is the apostolic community to which Jesus commits the message and practices of the kingdom. For example, one aspect of the covenant that is sometimes neglected is the importance of the liturgy for sealing and renewing the covenant. This is evident throughout the Old Testament but often neglected in the New, even though the institution of the Eucharistic liturgy is precisely the only time Jesus employs the term "covenant" in the gospels, particularly when he refers to it as the "new covenant/testament" (Lk 22:20). Moreover, not only

⁹ F. M. Cross notes: "Often it has been asserted that the language of 'brotherhood' and 'fatherhood,' love,' and 'loyalty is 'covenant terminology.' This is to turn things upside down. The language of covenant, kinship-in-law, is taken from the language of kinship, kinship-in-flesh" (FETC, 11).

¹⁰ KOG, 2. She adds: "The text both gives and takes away, for it is on the face of it preposterous that we, creatures, should be the kin of God.... To claim that God is our Father, or Christ our brother, is thus to make a strong claim not only about God but about us. Given this strength of implication, we should be more startled that we are by the kinship titles in the Bible. Yet for many centuries and until relatively recently, kinship titles and related imagery (father, brother, being 'born again') was little remarked background noise of Christianity..." (2-3). Drawing on the research of Paul Ricoeur and Robert Hamerton-Kelly, Soskice also observes "that whereas God is described as 'father' more than 170 times by Jesus in the New Testament, and is never invoked in prayer by any other title, God is designated 'father' only eleven times in the entire Old Testament, and is never invoked as such in prayer.... The main name relation of God to the people in Exodus is covenant, not kinship.... Movement may then take place to the designation of God as father... in the Prophets" (KOG, 75-6). "Already, then, we see the turning of the symbol, the God who is 'not Father' in Exodus, becomes father and spouse in the Prophetic literature and is revealed in the intimacy of the address of 'Abba' in the books of the New Testament" (77).

does Jesus explicitly identify the Eucharist as the new covenant, he also ties the sacrificial communion of this new Passover meal explicitly to the conferral (or covenanting) of the kingdom with the twelve apostles (Lk 22:29).

Rightly understood and practiced, liturgy - with both word and sacrament - powerfully embodies and enacts the drama of Scripture as evoked by covenant and kingdom. As Gordon Lathrop notes, "The Word and Sacrament of Jesus Christ are surprisingly resilient. Allowed some presence in our assemblies, they will call us to the surprise of a reoriented cosmos. If we lay down our heads on them, even a little, they will be Bethel-stones for us, full of the presence of the triune God and enabling new views of the world."¹¹

The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire in 1-2 Chronicles

My recent study of 1-2 Chronicles reinforces this linkage between covenant, kingdom and liturgy. In a new book, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1-2 Chronicles* (Baker 2011), I show how Chronicles should be read as a work of prophetic historiography that reflects a profound covenantal and liturgical worldview. The Chronicler wants his readers to understand that the history he is retelling is not finished; it is ongoing. Indeed, the Chronicler's history of Israel in exile reads like a story in search of an ending.

To be sure, God's divine purposes are still unfolding in the lives of his people—despite the catastrophe of the exile and the hesitant and anticlimactic beginnings of the people's return to and rebuilding of Jerusalem. The author's intent is to recall to the people of Judah God's original intentions—not only for Israel, but for creation.

Many scholars recognize the pivotal feature of the Chronicler's prophetic historiography as God's covenant. Not surprisingly, the covenant is established to extend sacred kinship bonds – setting God, Israel, and humanity in a familial relationship. These family ties are more than a metaphor, or a sort of legal fiction. The divine covenant points to a sacramental consanguinity, a blood bond, in which Israel is called to be "one flesh and bone" with the Lord, a covenantal image the Chronicler actually uses to narrate the origins of the Davidic covenant (1 Chr 11:1).

The Chronicler focuses on God's covenant with David because it establishes the Kingdom and the liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, the making of the Davidic covenant is the climax of history, since it is presented as the fulfillment of God's purposes for creation. For the Chronicler, the Davidic covenant advances the fulfillment of God's purposes in all the covenants that came before, especially the Mosaic covenant with Israel at Sinai and the foundational covenant between God and Abraham.

Beginning with David's first convocation in Jerusalem, the Chronicler repeatedly refers to the liturgical assembly of Israel in the Jerusalem temple as the *qāhāl* (LXX *ekklesia*). While the term occurs 48 times in the Pentateuch, mostly to describe the liturgical assembly of Israel at Sinai; the Chronicler uses the term 37 times, more here than any other book in the Hebrew canon. For the Chronicler, Israel is fundamentally a *qāhāl* when the twelve tribes are assembled for worship, where they form a liturgical empire. Israel is not primarily a national entity organized for military, political, or economic purposes; all those ordinary rationales for governments are re-ordered in Israel to one single overarching purpose, which is giving thanks and praise to the God of Israel, the God of creation.

This is the heart of the Chronicler's theocratic vision—that the Kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon is the Kingdom of God on earth, a kingdom that is essentially a *qāhāl*, a liturgical assembly. Indeed, Chronicles is the only book in the Hebrew canon where the actual expression "Kingdom of God" (*Melek Yhwh*) appears.¹² Indeed,

¹¹ Lathrop, *Holy Ground*, 49.

¹² "Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? ... And now you think to withstand the Kingdom of the Lord [Melek Yhwh] in the hand of the sons of David?" (2 Chron. 13:5, 8).

with the exception of Chronicles, the Book of Daniel, and select psalms, the notion of the Kingdom of God is rare in the Hebrew canon. While God is sometimes described elsewhere as king, his kingdom or rule is assumed but rarely referred to. In contrast, the Chronicler refers to God's kingdom or reign 16 times—always in relation to the Davidic kingdom. In fact, no other kingdom is divinely established by a covenant in the Old Testament, just as no other kingdom is identified as divine, except for David's. In Chronicles, the Davidic covenant is what establishes and makes manifest the kingdom of God on earth.

At the same time, the Chronicler's prophetic viewpoint reveals how it is, that when the Kingdom looks small in the eyes of Israel – because they face the military might and opposition from superior powers – it is precisely then that the true nature of the Kingdom is manifested—in and through Israel's covenant worship in the Temple liturgy.

The climax of Chronicles is reached during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, in their respective celebrations of the Passover. In these dramatic scenes, the Davidic king wields divine power in and through the convocation of 'all Israel' to celebrate the paschal liturgy in the Jerusalem Temple. Thus we see revealed the deepest meaning of the kingdom, as the king harnesses all the wealth and power at his disposal for the purpose of assembling God's people to renew their covenant by celebrating the Passover feast. The Chronicler's prophetic "word" is twofold: First, the kingdom is not primarily human, but divine; nor is it essentially political or military, but rather priestly and liturgical. The second and related point is this: the Kingdom is one and the Kingdom is God's, human faults and earthly appearances notwithstanding.

An Alternative Biblical Theology of Empire

The Chronicler presents us with a prototypical kingdom ecclesiology, where the kingdom on earth is a sacrament of the Kingdom of God. And this message is intended to speak to his audience precisely in their exilic context. Although there is no Davidic king seated on an earthly throne, the kingdom is nonetheless real. In the restored liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple, the people have the divine Kingdom made manifest on earth in its covenantal and sacramental expression. Whether there is a Davidic king, or a Persian ruler such as Cyrus, in the rebuilt and re-dedicated Jerusalem Temple, the people of God will behold on earth their true King who reigns in heaven. In all of this, I would suggest, we find the seeds of an alternative biblical theology of God's kingdom as a liturgical empire, one that intends to instruct Israel on how to live in the new post-exilic environment, how to worship the true God while still living under the domination of a foreign power. At the same time, Chronicles also points to a future fulfillment; for the story is not yet complete.

It is precisely the Chronicler's prophetic sense of salvation history as awaiting fulfillment that makes Chronicles such fertile ground for New Testament studies. To date, I believe, the work has not received the kind of attention from New Testament scholars that it deserves.

In many ways, the New Testament authors lived under conditions similar to those in the Chroniclers' audience—trying to keep the faith while living under the domination of foreign powers and gods, precisely as believers in the Christ, the only true and divine king. Likewise, it may be more than mere coincidence that the Christian canon begins with the Davidic genealogy of Matthew, just as the last book of the Hebrew canon, Chronicles, began with the same; what better way for the first editors of the Christian canon to underscore the continuity between the Old and New Testaments and the fulfillment of God's plan for the covenant family of Israel and humanity. Moreover, it is significant that the renewal of the Davidic covenant in Chronicles is enacted by the reconstitution of the *qāhāl* under Kings Hezekiah and Josiah at the celebration of the Passover, not unlike Jesus, who instituted the Eucharist as the liturgy of the New Covenant Passover, while serving at the table as king (superior to Gentile rulers), where

he also conferred the (Davidic) kingdom of his Father upon the twelve, as representatives of the New Israel, who are to reign with him, not only by eating and drinking at his table, but by imitating his royal table service in their own Eucharistic ministry.¹³

Perhaps by now you can see more clearly why I am so fond of Tom's "big picture" approach to the public truth of God's covenant and kingdom. Time does not permit any more than this, although I am sure that additional study of Tom Wright and the Chronicler would shed additional light on Jesus' stated purpose in Matthew to build his Church (*ekklesia*), as the New Temple, upon the Rock to whom he entrusted the keys of the kingdom. Likewise, somebody here might want to examine these strands of covenant and kingdom and how they are interwoven in the literary fabric of the Apocalypse, where the faithful on earth join with the saints and angels in the Paschal liturgy of the Lamb, who now stands in the New Jerusalem, as the son of David, the king of kings, and the high priest at the altar of the New Temple of God. The pilgrim church is thus delivered by the risen Lord through a succession of persecuting empires to the victory of the new creation.

¹³ More work is needed to connect what Jesus prescribes as the apostles' liturgical action ("do this in remembrance of me") with the mystery of his superior kingship that he also confers on the apostles, which they exercise in their Eucharistic ministry and table service: "I covenant to you, as my Father covenanted to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk 22:29-30). See Wright (NTPOG, 447-8): "The fact that Paul can chide his congregation in Corinth for their misbehavior at the eucharist shows that this celebratory meal was so inbuilt into the structure of early Christianity that even within a very early congregation it could be taken for granted and abused. Paul's appeal to the Corinthians, taken in conjunction with the synoptic institution narratives and the references to the eucharist in the *Didache* and Ignatius, make it clear that this sacramental act was, like baptism, associated directly with the Jewish background of Passover, exodus and (Davidic) kingdom. It occupied a place similar to that of Passover in the Jewish community, except that it was celebrated not just once a year, but at least every week, reflecting the regular celebration of Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week. It thus tied the life of early Christianity very firmly to the historical life of Israel.... Equally, we know of no early eucharist that did not recite the events of Jesus' death, much as the Passover liturgy recited the events of the exodus..." Tom is certainly correct to point out the universality of the Church's sacramental practice from the first generation. The Apostolic Fathers show an intense concern for Baptism and Eucharist. Their concern is not merely with ritual form, but also and primarily with reality and presence. From the first generation they assume what we would today call a realist perspective. Ignatius of Antioch is writing in 107 AD as a holy bishop approaching martyrdom, likely drawing from personal contact with the Apostles and other hearers of the Lord. In writing of the Eucharist, he speaks of a real presence, not simply a communal meal. His eucharistic doctrine is fleshed out, so to speak, in terms that echo the gritty language of John 6: the Eucharist is the "flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 4) and the "blood of God" (Eph. 1). NB - he doesn't use the milder *soma*, but the grittier *sarx* (i.e., the stuff that gets ground like wheat in the teeth of lions). Eucharistic realism is a constant in the patristic record from the Apostolic Fathers through Cyprian and Hippolytus, from John Chrysostom to John of Damascus. (The late, great - and corpulent - Cardinal Wright, upon hearing of post-conciliar theories about the Eucharist being only a meal, famously retorted: "A meal? Why, it's not even a snack!")

Postscript: Benedict on the Paschal Mystery

In the unity of the Last Supper and the crucifixion, Benedict sees the true depth of the bible as the saving word of God. For Jesus intended his saving death to be re-presented in the sacrificial offering of the Eucharist, by which death itself is transformed into liturgy, a life-giving word and sacrament.¹⁴ The paschal mystery is thus revealed as Jesus' sacrificial self-offering, initiated in his Eucharistic action, but consummated in his passion. By instituting the Eucharist in the context of this sacrificial feast, then, he fulfilled the old Passover precisely by transforming it into the New. And that fulfillment fuses both sacrifice and meal into the one New Covenant, the paschal mystery.

Apart from the Eucharist, Calvary is nothing more than a Roman execution; but apart from Calvary, the Eucharist is nothing more than symbolic words and a meal. The gospel reveals a love that is stronger than death, precisely by transforming what used to mean the loss of life into what has now become the gift of life. As lamb and priest, Jesus is not merely a victim of Roman violence and injustice, but of divine love and mercy. There is a dynamic sense in which Jesus is portrayed as the embodiment of the *qahal*, Israel's covenantal-liturgical assembly; his life is seen as a kind of lived liturgy. Benedict notes: "The great events of Jesus' life are inwardly connected with the Jewish festival calendar. They are, as it were, liturgical events in which the liturgy, with its remembrance and expectation, becomes reality—becomes life. This life then leads back to the liturgy and from the liturgy seeks to become life again."¹⁵

At the heart of Christ's life as portrayed in the Gospels is his journey to his final Passover, celebrated in the days before his death. Here the prayer of Jesus becomes a kind of typological interpretation of the whole Old Testament. "The exodus of Israel and the exodus of Jesus touch each other: all the feasts and all the ways of Israel lead to the passover of Jesus Christ."¹⁶ Benedict describes the essential unity between the Last Supper and the Cross as it is portrayed in the gospels in terms of a liturgical consummation of Christ's mission. "He fashioned his death into an act of prayer, an act of worship"—a sacrificial offering of his whole self, his body and blood, to his Father.¹⁷

In turning his death into an act of prayer, a prayer that was accepted by God in raising him from the dead, Jesus made it possible for all peoples "to participate in his most intimate and personal act of being, that is, his dialogue with the Father."¹⁸ The covenantal reality of our divine filiation becomes possible because, on the cross, Jesus shows himself to be the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures and liturgy—thus revealing the God of Israel's fathers to be the God of the nations.¹⁹

In Benedict's biblical theology, the event of the cross be read, then, in the light of the interpretation that Jesus himself gives during the course of the Last Supper. This reading of Christ's death, which carries through all the New Testament writings, sees the cross in both cultic and salvation-historical terms. The cross is a liturgical-sacrificial act by which God is making a new covenant with humankind, fulfilling the expectations and inner meaning of Old Testament history.²⁰

¹⁴ The "once for all" nature of Jesus sacrifice, which is depicted in Hebrews 7-10 in terms of our royal high priest offering himself (i.e., his crucified – but now resurrected – body) *in the heavenly sanctuary*, thus denotes not the *termination* but rather the *perpetuation* of the sacrificial liturgy of the New Covenant. Accordingly, re-presentation should not be confused with repetition, for how can you repeat that which never ends?

¹⁵ *Jesus of Nazareth*, 306–307.

¹⁶ *A New Song for the Lord*, 16.

¹⁷ *Behold the Pierced One*, 22.

¹⁸ *Behold the Pierced One*, 30.

¹⁹ "This universalization of the tradition is its ultimate ratification, not its abrogation or replacement." *Behold the Pierced One*, 29.

²⁰ *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 94–95, 97. *Many Religions, One Covenant*, 41; *Gospel, Catechism, Catechesis*, 91–92, 96.

Jesus' words at the Last Supper bring together Israel's covenantal history and sacrificial law, evoking especially the Old Testament festivals of Passover and the Day of Atonement. We can hear in Jesus' words the deep echoes from the prophets and psalms, and especially the Mosaic covenant at Sinai (Ex 24:3-11).

However, Jesus' use of the expression "new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25) not only looks back to Moses and Sinai (Ex. 24:8), even more, it explicitly evokes Jeremiah's promise of a new covenant, which would not be like the covenant that was made and then broken at Sinai (Jer. 31:31-34). As Benedict describes it, the new covenant "will no longer be limited to physical descendants of Abraham, no longer to the strict keeping of the Law, but will spring from out of the new love of God that gives us a new heart."²¹

Thus, as radically new as it is, the new covenant's full significance nonetheless cannot be gauged except in light of the old covenant. Benedict's interpretation is again dependent upon the wealth of scholarship on the covenant, scholarship to which we referred in our previous chapter. He sees in the upper room at Jerusalem a profound "spiritualization" of the Sinai event, yet with the same essential purpose—to seal a covenant by which a people are consecrated to God as his family, his "blood" kin.

At the Last Supper, when Jesus uses these same words ("blood of the covenant") to refer to the cup, as Benedict notes: "*the words of Sinai are heightened to a staggering realism, and at the same time we begin to see a totally unsuspected depth in them.*"²² What makes Jesus' words so staggeringly realistic is that, unlike Moses, he offers not a substitute, such as a fatted calf or lamb, but instead truly offers himself in sacrifice. The kinship made possible by Jesus' sacrifice is thus not "symbolic" or "representational" as in the case of Sinai, but *real*. It is "a blood brotherhood between God and man" effected by a true communion with God's own Body and Blood. What at Sinai was only "a hesitant attempt is here achieved. He who is the Son of God, he who is man, gives himself to the Father in dying and thus shows himself to be the one who *brings us all into the Father*. He now institutes true blood brotherhood, *a communion of God and man.*"²³

Here we begin to grasp the breadth of what Benedict means when he describes the Church as *communio* and the Body of Christ. From this Body, a new divine family is formed – the new creation – bringing all peoples into the kingdom of God. The Church exists to bring about this *communio* encounter, especially in the divine liturgy.²⁴ For Benedict: "What takes place here is both spiritualization *and* the greatest possible realism. For the sacramental blood fellowship that now becomes a possibility brings those who accept it into an utterly concrete—and corporeal—community with this incarnate human being, Jesus, and hence with his divine mystery.... The God who has come down thus draws man up into his own realm. Being related to God means a new and profoundly transformed level of existence for man."²⁵

For Benedict, the worship of the new covenant is the goal of the biblical story, and the consummation of salvation history. If everything in Scripture is ordered to the covenant that God makes with his creation, then everything in the Church ought to be ordered to celebrating the new covenant and advancing the kingdom into all of creation.

²¹ *God Is Near Us*, 38.

²² *Many Religions, One Covenant*, 60. Emphasis added.

²³ *God Is Near Us*, 38-39.

²⁴ *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 254-255.

²⁵ *Many Religions, One Covenant*, 60.

Additional Wright Quotes (NTPOG)

NTPOG; p. 361: For our present purpose the point is that already by the middle of the second century baptism and eucharist, as significantly new forms of religious praxis, had become so much second nature to the Christian church.... They were not strange actions which some Christians might on odd occasions perform, but ritual acts which were taken for granted, part of that praxis which constituted the early Christian worldview.”

362: It is clear, remarkably, that these two basic forms of Christian praxis were equally taken for granted as early as the 50s of the first century. Paul can write of baptism as a given, from which theological conclusions can be drawn (Romans 6.3-11). He can describe, or allude to, the eucharist in similar fashion (1 Corinthians 10.15-22), taking it as read that the Corinthian church regularly meets to partake of the Lord’s Meal together, and moving on to argue on this basis about what is and is not appropriate in their behaviour within a pagan city.

363: Although sacrificial language was used often enough - it could hardly be avoided, since it was the regular language of both pagan and Jewish devotion - it is clear from our earliest records that the usage, in relation to Christian devotion and ethics, is completely metaphorical. !!!???

Pg 451: No new Temple would replace Herod’s since the real and final replacement was Jesus and his people.

Pg 451: No Land claimed its allegiance, and no Holy City could function for it as Jerusalem did for the Jews; Land had now been transposed into World, and the Holy City was the New Jerusalem.

Worship and the Spirit in the New Testament

Pg 9: The Johannine theology of the Spirit reaches its full height in the Farewell Discourses, where Jesus promises that by sending the Spirit he will enfold his followers within the intimate personal fellowship that he already enjoys with the Father. Having declared in chapters 2 and 12 that the present Temple is redundant, Jesus constitutes those around him as the community in which the presence of the living God will be known - known by the Spirit, the Paraclete, who will be in them and with them. The so-called High Priestly prayer of chapter 17 then becomes the central act of renewed Temple worship, grounding the worship of Jesus’ followers forever afterward in Jesus’ own prayer, his own holy self-offering to the Father, and enfolding those followers within his own holiness and offering even as he entrusts them with his own mission.

Pg 10: This is not because of some generalizing or Platonizing downgrading of the notion of sacred space, but because of the eschatology now inaugurated around Jesus himself.

Pg 10: This insistence, before the sequence of festivals has really gotten under way, means that the reader should already know, on Jesus’ subsequent visits, that the program announced in chapter 2, of Jesus replacing the Temple with his own (dying and rising) body, will mean the fresh location of worship itself.

Pg 13: The extraordinary claim Paul makes here, especially considering the muddled and fractious state of the Corinthians, is that what one might say about the single, holy Temple in Jerusalem, that it was the unique dwelling place of the one true God, is now to be said of the assemblies of those who meet to worship God through Jesus and in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit within the church has, in other words, taken the place of the Shekinah within the Temple - a replacement all the more powerful when we consider that nowhere in second-Temple literature do we find the claim that YHWH has actually returned to take up residence on Mount Zion.

Pg 16: Ephesians offers the most explicit “new Temple” theology in Paul.

Pg 16: It could hardly be clearer. The Spirit is the Shekinah dwelling in the new Temple, which is the single family of those who are rescued by the Gospel and renewed in the Spirit.