

ANCIENT CONNECTIONS, MODERN GAPS

Table and Temple in Church and Academy

Happy are those whom you choose
 and bring near to live in your courts.
 We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
 your holy temple.

—Psalm 65:4

The Eucharist. It is a celebration in which God is specially present. It is a remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ, a communion celebration in which the new covenant relationship between God and God's people is renewed, and a foretaste of the feast to come. Remembrance; communion and covenant renewal; hope—such phrases and images point to central meanings of the eucharistic rite which Christians celebrate around the communion table.

And yet there are still more ways to describe it: it is a thanksgiving to the Father, a calling on the Spirit, a meal of the kingdom, a communion of the faithful, a rite in which Christ is truly present, a means of grace and blessing. Many meanings and images are used to understand and explain this central Christian sacrament. This plurality of images and meanings is quite rich and evocative, but it can also cause confusion. It raises questions: Which meanings are central? How are such meanings grounded in Scripture and tradition? These questions have received a variety of answers over the centuries. I think the Jewish temple provides the key to answering them well.

The temple. It was a place where God was specially present to God's people. It was a place where Israel regularly gathered and at the three principal yearly celebrations, the three pilgrim feasts, remembered God's deliverance of God's people, celebrated and renewed the giving of the covenant on Mount Sinai, and looked forward to the great feast to come. Remembrance; communion and covenant renewal; hope—such were some of the central meanings of the most important worship celebrations at the temple.

It is not difficult to see that the core meanings of these central celebrations of the people of God in the Old and New Testaments have strong parallels. The core meanings of the most important Old Testament celebrations are similar to those of the most important celebration of the New—it is as if those Old Testament motifs have been combined and transposed into a different key. I will argue that examining these transposed motifs is the best way to determine the Eucharist's central meanings. Highlighting these relationships and drawing bold lines of connection from the table back to the temple is the main task of this book.

But what precisely is the nature of those connections between table and temple?

One way in which the gap between New Testament eucharistic worship and Old Testament temple practices can be bridged and connected is by *typology*. Typology involves understanding certain Old Testament people, places, events, or practices as “types,” “figures,” or “shadows” of New Testament ones. The Eucharist is a prime example of a New Testament practice that can be understood to be “prefigured” in the Old Testament. Indeed, many early church writers allude to or draw out such typological relationships.

But if this is the case, and the central celebrations of the Old and New Covenants are as intimately related as I am arguing they are, why do these connections not figure more prominently in discussions of the Eucharist? In most modern discussions of the Eucharist and its origins such typological relationships have not played a large role. Often mentioned in passing, such relationships do little work in grounding, organizing, or explicating what is happening in the eucharistic celebration. Many, if not most, modern theologians have found such typological relationships unhelpful, almost quaint, and not up to the standards of modern readings of Scripture. Moreover, there have been several Protestant and modern prejudices against the religion of Israel centered at the temple that have obscured such connections and created a large

gap between temple and Eucharist in discussions of the origins and meanings of the Eucharist.

But consider Eusebius of Caesarea. This important Palestinian bishop and teacher of the early church writes in his treatise *The Proof of the Gospel* that “we . . . have received both the truth and the archetypes of the early images.”¹ In saying this, he is claiming that Jesus Christ and the practices which Christ handed on to his disciples—he refers to practices such as the Eucharist and baptism—are “the archetypes” of the images found in Israelite religion. That which went before—prophecies, the temple, the law, the worship rituals of Israel—are images, sketches, or shadows of the things that came after them. And for Eusebius, these typological relationships demonstrated the truth of the gospel.

But how can this be? What does it mean to call something that came a thousand years before the gospel a “sketch” or “shadow” of the gospel? And what kind of “proof” is this?

For Eusebius, the answer to these questions rests on several deep theological assumptions. The New Testament, or New Covenant—meaning both the biblical *writings* that witness to Christ and also the *way of life* inaugurated by Jesus Christ as he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to the glory of the Father—is for Eusebius a new revelation. In fact it is the greatest revelation of the relationship that God desires with humanity. This relationship between God and humanity is incarnated in the person or “body” of Jesus Christ; his divine-human person is the prototype of the new humanity in proper relationship to God. He is the true archetype for the many biblical types in which the relationship between God and humanity is imaged.

Another assumption he makes is that Christ called others to participate in his renewed humanity in proper covenantal relationship with God. This renewed relationship, this renewed way of life, is imaged in and enabled through Christ’s teachings and through the practices that Christ handed on to his disciples, the most central practices being baptism and the Eucharist. Furthermore, this new relationship between God and the people of God, this new covenant, was imaged or sketched out in the institutions, laws, prophecies, and ceremonies of Israel, as recorded and witnessed to in the Old Testament. Such theological assumptions would have informed Eusebius as he read the saying

1. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Demonstration of the Gospel* (PG 22:89a), lib. 1, c. 10. Eusebius lived from 260/265 AD to 339/340 AD.

of Jesus Christ, “Do not think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17).

In this book I will travel down paths like those that Eusebius trod. He and many other Christians throughout the ages have understood there to be a “typological” or “figural” relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, a relationship in which Christ is the linchpin. They have understood this to be in fact a central Christian way to read Scripture and to understand the history of God’s interactions with God’s people, and an important way to understand, in particular, the Eucharist.

The main task of this project is thus to draw bold lines connecting Christian worship centered on the reading of the Word and celebration of the Eucharist with Old Testament tabernacle and temple worship.² In this way our understanding of the Eucharist and our practice of the Eucharist can be more solidly grounded and deeply enriched.

In the following chapters, I begin with the temple, exploring the central meanings and practices of Israelite worship at the wilderness tabernacle and Jerusalem temple. We find in these practices, commanded by God at Mount Sinai, foundational patterns of worship that are appropriate responses to the creating and saving works of God. Moving then to New Testament and early church authors, we find that these foundational patterns were not abandoned by the earliest Christians, but rather transformed in light of the incarnation and work of Jesus Christ. The fact that such connections between table and temple are consistently being drawn by the leaders of the early church is an important data point for those who seek to follow in the apostolic tradition. Such early traditions and ways of thinking have great authority for most Christians (including me). But the ultimate payoff of seeing such connections is that they help to ground, structure, renew, and enrich contemporary eucharistic theology and practice, especially contemporary Protestant practice. Such typological connections can pressure and guide our thinking, sparking the imaginations of Christians in church and academy who discuss and decide upon best eucharistic practices. They can also deepen the faith, imagination, and practice of all those who celebrate the Eucharist together.

2. While certain distinctions between the earlier tabernacle in the wilderness and the later temple in Jerusalem are important to make, throughout this book I assume in general that the theologies surrounding the tabernacle and temple and their main acts of worship are similar enough to be interchangeable unless otherwise noted.

How This Book Is Organized

The book as a whole is structured around what I consider the most central, encompassing, and enduring figures, images, and types related to the temple and its worship.

After explaining the context and method of the project in Chapters 1 and 2, in Chapter 3 I turn to the image or figure of the temple itself, the “house” where the Name of God dwelt. Israel’s understanding of the purpose of that building and place, how God and God’s kingdom were present there, and humanity’s role there helps to guide our thinking about what Christian worship is and how God might be present in worship. The temple’s role in Israel provides a foundation for understanding what is happening in worship centered on Word and Table. Chapter 4 examines the connections drawn in the New Testament and the early church between the temple and Christian worship. Chapter 5 asks how such connections might guide or pressure contemporary reflection upon and practice of Christian worship, especially with respect to our sacramental practices. This movement from Old Testament foundations, to New Testament connections, to the pressure these connections put on contemporary thought and practice is repeated for each of the main worship rites at the temple in each of the following chapters.

I use the word “pressure” throughout the book to indicate the kind of multifaceted force that these images and types exert on our thinking, a force that molds and shapes our thinking in certain ways, somewhat like the pressure the hands of a potter exert on wet clay. I take that word-image from an article by C. Kavin Rowe who in turn takes it from the work of Brevard Childs. Rowe argues that not only the text, but ultimately God speaking through the text is at work to mold and shape Christian thinking and practice. Rowe writes that “the two-testament canon read as one book pressures its interpreters” to make certain kinds of theological judgments about trinitarian theology.³ I think the two-testament canon read as one book also does so concerning eucharistic theology and practice.

Chapters 6 through 10 address connections between the main, prototypical practices of worship at the temple and the Eucharist. These are outlined in

3. C. Kavin Rowe, “Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” *Pro Ecclesia* 11, no. 3 (2002): 308.

the Old Testament liturgical calendars in Numbers 28–29 and Leviticus 23, which themselves follow the enduring structure of Israel’s corporate worship first seen in Exodus 23 (introduced in chapter 6). These passages specify the daily, weekly (Sabbath), and monthly services (chapter 7), and the three yearly pilgrim feasts which every Israelite male was required to attend (chapters 8, 9, and 10). The three feasts or festival seasons are *Pesach* (Passover), *Shavuot* (the Feast of Weeks), and *Sukkot* (the Feast of Booths).⁴

The daily, Sabbath, and monthly services feature Israel’s thanksgiving for and commitment to God’s regular creational order. God is celebrated as creator, and Israel as a representative of all humanity takes its rightful place as a “priest” of all creation in these regular services. In contrast, each of the three pilgrim feasts commemorates God’s saving work with Israel: the deliverance from Egypt, the gift of the Law covenant at Mount Sinai, and the future fulfillment of all those covenant promises and hopes. Together, these feasts provide a sweeping portrait of this saving history.

I draw the book to a close in Chapter 11 by drawing out several important practical implications for contemporary practice of the Eucharist.

This multifaceted view of the temple and its central practices provides a helpful and trustworthy framework for understanding the Eucharist. Understood in this way, the Eucharist is like a fractal. It is a beautiful jewel. It is a microcosm. It is a complex and multifaceted celebration in which the full pattern of God’s creating, reconciling, and redeeming work, centered on the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, can be seen and comes into ritual focus.

Such a project is quite timely, given recent developments in both the church and the academy. In the church—at least in mainline and evangelical Protestant churches in English-speaking countries—there has been a renewed hunger for the sacraments in general and a renewal of eucharistic liturgy. At the same time there are continued confusion about and contradictory understandings of its central meanings. In the academic context, for the last several hundred years, common prejudices which are discussed below have made a project such as this unattractive and implausible for most modern Protestant theologians, biblical scholars, and historians. But those prejudices have been

4. Details about terminology, such as the distinctions between the names for festival seasons as a whole and the individual gatherings or services (which often were feasts) that were parts of the larger seasons, will be discussed in those chapters.

decisively challenged in recent decades. Growing bodies of literature highlight the Jewish background of New Testament beliefs and practices; they specifically highlight the importance of the temple and its worship for understanding both the Old Testament and the New. All this creates a new openness to figural readings of both Scripture and the practices of the church.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will examine those two contexts more carefully. I will both highlight reasons for the modern gaps between table and temple, and also describe new possibilities in both church and academy for bridging that gap. In the following chapter, I will explain in more detail my methodological assumptions concerning figural reading, the bridge that can reconnect table and temple in our understandings. Then, in the following chapters, the real work begins.

The Church Context: Gaps between Eucharistic Theology and Practice

Hungry, but confused. These two adjectives, paired in this contrasting relationship, go far in describing current Protestant eucharistic practice and doctrine.

The Eucharist has not typically been at the center of Protestant worship, spirituality, or theology. As recently as 1989, James F. White wrote: “The eucharist is usually not the most important service for Protestants, at least not in terms of frequency. Most Protestant worship, historically and at present, has not made the eucharist its central service. . . . For major segments of their history, churches that now have weekly celebrations were quite content with only occasional ones.”⁵ Chuck Fromm, the editor of *Worship Leader* magazine, made a similar point in a 2008 conversation he had with Robert Webber. Fromm said to Webber, “Bob, face it, the Eucharist was the focal point of God’s presence in the ancient church, the Reformation made the Word the center of God’s presence, and today the presence of God is found in music.”⁶

However, as White also notes, there is a growing hunger for the Eucharist within many Protestant churches and traditions today. The great increase in

5. James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 14.

6. Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 133.

the frequency of eucharistic celebration in many churches is one indication of this. Using my own denomination, the PC(USA), as an example, around 80 percent of those surveyed in 2009 were part of congregations that celebrate communion either monthly or weekly. That is almost double the 41 percent of churches celebrating monthly or more in 1989.⁷ In addition, one third of PC(USA) ministers in 2009 said they would like to have their congregation celebrate weekly.⁸ Those numbers represent a historic shift.

As part of this change, the current Book of Common Worship of the PC(USA), the book that officially guides the worship of most Presbyterian churches in the United States, states that the Eucharist should be a standard part of a typical Lord's Day service. Not quarterly, not monthly, but rather weekly eucharistic celebration is considered the norm.⁹ While the facts on the ground do not match this norm, the mere existence of this norm is further evidence of the growing appreciation for the Eucharist within large segments of Protestant churches.¹⁰

The fact that this hunger for and increased frequency of eucharistic celebration are relatively recent phenomena leads to a second observation: our written liturgies and our genuine receptivity to eucharistic practice have progressed at a greater pace than our eucharistic theology. This leads to some confusion. Many of the *liturgical resources* available today are fruits of the modern liturgical renewal movement which blossomed among mainline Protestants starting in the 1960s,

7. In 2009, "Three-quarters of panelists (members, 72%; elders, 78%; pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 72%) are part of congregations that celebrate the Lord's Supper every month. . . . Fewer than one in five panelists in each group (members, 6%; elders, 5%; pastors, 9%; specialized clergy, 16%) are part of a congregation that celebrates the Lord's Supper every week." PC(USA), Office of Research Services, "The Presbyterian Panel: The Sacraments: The February 2009 Survey" (Louisville: PC[USA], 2009), 1. In 1989, 40% of congregations celebrated monthly and 1% weekly, in PC(USA), "How Frequently Do PCUSA Congregations Celebrate the Lord's Supper?" (Louisville: PC[USA], 2007).

8. PC(USA), "The Presbyterian Panel," 1.

9. PC(USA), Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 8–9.

10. On a more anecdotal level, I have seen this increased hunger and appreciation for the sacraments at the Reformed Church in America seminary where I now teach, Western Theological Seminary, in Holland, MI. Every year, each graduating student participates in an exit interview. In the last decade, the aspect of our seminary community that students mention more than any other is our weekly celebration of the Eucharist as a community. They find it deeply formative and say they will greatly miss it when they leave seminary.

and which itself draws heavily from the texts and practices of the early church. However, the eucharistic *theology* that still shapes Protestant churches and finds its way into basic theological textbooks often centers on Reformation-era points of division about the Eucharist—and perhaps not even the best understanding of them.¹¹ This is a situation of instability. Our eucharistic imagination—the thought forms, metaphors, and theological substructure through which we view our performance of the Eucharist—is insufficient for comprehending the written liturgies and communion prayers that are commonly used.

For one significant example of the lack of fit between our theological imagination and our practice, consider the *Sanctus*. In many celebrations of the Eucharist in mainline Protestant churches, the congregation sings or says these words: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Using these words as part of the eucharistic prayer goes back to very early Christian celebrations. Why these words? They first occur in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah has a vision of angelic beings calling these words to one another as they encircle the throne of God at the temple.¹² If the Eucharist is understood primarily as a memorial meal in which Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross is remembered—a common view of many mainline Protestants and evangelicals—why would we join in this angelic song set in the holy of holies of the temple, implicitly imagining that we too are coming into the presence of God seated on his throne?¹³

11. For example, Alister McGrath’s *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 508–33. However, Protestant authors such as Martha Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), and Peter Leithart, “Embracing Ritual: Sacraments as Rites,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 40 (2005): 6–20, are exploring what is taking place in the sacramental encounter of the Eucharist in fuller dialogue with contemporary liturgical and ritual studies, and going beyond traditional questions of real presence. See Leithart’s quick review of recent Protestant and evangelical books on the Lord’s Supper in his article.

12. Cf. Ezek. 1:1–28; 10:1–22; Rev. 4:1–11. For a history of these words, see Bryan Spinks, *The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Cf. Rachel Elijor, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, trans. David Louvish (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), who points out the prominent place this scene and these words have in Qumran worship and Jewish mysticism (e.g., pp. 16, 33).

13. Because such words, which were part of the Christian Eucharistic liturgies through most of Christian history, do not in fact fit very well with common Protestant ways of

Other churches that structure their eucharistic celebrations more spontaneously, so-called “non-liturgical” churches, often pull the participant in a variety of directions. The music, the way the bread and wine are handled, and the words that are used by the presider often present a mosaic of possible meanings that often do not create a coherent whole.

So, we find ourselves amidst a “cacophony of evangelical and Reformed sacramental theologies,” using liturgical resources that those theologies cannot comprehend.¹⁴ We are hungry for the Eucharist once again, but we lack a coherent Protestant eucharistic imagination. This project of understanding the Eucharist in light of the worship of the temple can help ground, organize, and enrich our doctrine of and imagination concerning the Eucharist. It does so in a way that is biblically grounded and that resonates well with early church liturgies and practices.

The Academic Context: Prejudice against and Recovery of the Jewish Roots of Christianity and Christian Worship

Alongside this growing hunger for the Eucharist in the church are a new openness to and recovery of the Jewish background of Christianity in the academy. More specifically, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of Israelite worship at the temple within the context of Old Testament theology. This has only recently been the case. In fact, we find in our history as Protestant Christians several factors that have resisted such Jewish roots—meaning both the explicit words and structures of Israelite worship,

imagining what we are doing, many Protestant celebrations of the Eucharist leave them out. Yet even Luther, who took out almost every other biblical reference that appeared sacrificial other than the words of institution from the 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, still retained the Sanctus. William Cavanaugh explains the logic of Luther’s reforms in “Eucharistic Sacrifice in the Social Imagination in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001): 585–605. Cavanaugh’s main critique of Luther is that his “reaction against late medieval practices often shares in some of the problems associated with those practices” (595), namely an understanding of sacrifice which “precludes mutual participation” (597). As will be argued below, it is important that the recovery of a temple imagination should not simply recover the notion of sacrifice for the Eucharist, but should recover a *better* notion of sacrifice.

14. The phrase is Peter Leithart’s, “Embracing Ritual,” 20.

as well as the underlying theology and spirit that undergird Jewish forms of public worship centered in temple and synagogue. The past few centuries in particular have witnessed great resistance within academia to acknowledging those Jewish roots. Retelling this history is important for understanding forces which have obscured our ability to see the connections between the temple and the Eucharist.

Walter Brueggemann, in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, names several of these forms of resistance.¹⁵ The first is that Christian interpreters of the Old Testament, who have dominated Old Testament scholarship, have often operated with a “largely hidden and unacknowledged” propensity toward supersessionism, here meaning that the work of Christ has *superseded* Old Testament worship traditions, making them obsolete and thus unimportant.¹⁶ Furthermore, the anti-Judaism that often accompanied certain forms of supersessionism created even more pressure to devalue the Jewish roots of Christianity.¹⁷ Even when acknowledged as types, the reigning understandings of typology itself devalued the Old Testament practices which foreshadowed those of the New.¹⁸

A second largely unacknowledged prejudice against Old Testament temple worship comes from the fact that many of the most important Old Testament scholars were, and are, Protestants. Many of the historic and modern

15. While I greatly appreciate what Brueggemann writes about the temple in his magnum opus, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), it is telling that he begins his work on the temple and “The Cult as Mediator” on p. 650. In other words, Brueggemann, who is well-known for his work on the prophets, still decenters priests and the cult, the worship life of the temple, in his exposition of the theology of the Old Testament as a whole. He certainly is aware of this propensity to “sideline the worship materials of the Old Testament” and sees it as a problem (p. 653), but he has not yet fully incorporated that material into the center of his own project of giving an overarching theology of the Old Testament.

16. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 651. There are several ways “supersession” has been defined and understood. Such definitions are undergoing lively contemporary debate.

17. For example, F. F. Bruce, explaining the countercultural significance of Leonhard Goppelt’s well-known book on typology, writes, “It was first published in 1939, at a time when it was politically expedient in Germany to play down the importance of the OT for Christianity. The author was concerned to show how essential the Old Testament was for the life and faith of the church, and how Christians could read it with understanding and profit.” Back cover of Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

18. See pp. 21–46 below for a discussion of various understandings of types and figures.

prejudices, stereotypes, and theological pairings by which Protestants have understood their differences with Roman Catholicism—dualities such as grace versus works righteousness, “democratic” congregationalism versus “monarchical” priestly hierarchy, modern versus primitive, life-giving charismatic leadership versus death-dealing institutionalized authority, scientific versus magical, heartfelt spontaneity versus unfeeling “dead” ritualism—were translated into prejudices against and dismissals of the Old Testament priesthood and temple worship. As Brueggemann admits, “This general Christian attitude toward the Old Testament is intensified by classical Protestantism, which has had a profound aversion to cult, regarding cultic activity as primitive, magical, and manipulative, thus valuing from the Old Testament only the prophetic-ethical traditions.”¹⁹

For example, Ludwig Koehler, an influential twentieth-century Protestant Old Testament scholar, writes in his *Old Testament Theology*: “There is no suggestion anywhere in the Old Testament that sacrifice or any other part of the cult was instituted by God. It is begun and continued and accomplished by man; it is works, not grace; an act of self-help, not a piece of God’s salvation. Indeed, the cult is a bit of ethnic life. Israel took it from the heathen.”²⁰ Given such presuppositions of leading Protestant scholars, it is little wonder that they paid little appreciative attention to temple worship. They have instead laid emphasis on the prophetic literature and the importance of historical events, even though temple life was equally formative for Israel.²¹

Finally, modern academic methods for reading and understanding the Old Testament itself—approaches that have been standard for over a century, but which have been under increasing critique, such as the history of religions approach and Julius Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis—have created dismissive attitudes toward the temple and its worship.

For example, the history of religions approach seeks to understand the practices and beliefs of Israelite worship through comparison with beliefs and

19. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 651.

20. Ludwig Koehler, *Old Testament Theology* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), 181. Cited in Brueggemann, *Theology*, 152n5. Other examples of such understandings by Protestant scholars are given in Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 101–5.

21. A good example can be found in the mid-twentieth-century biblical theology movement, started in part by G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1952).

practices of other ancient Near Eastern peoples. Such a comparative approach certainly has its merits, but, as Brueggemann notes, given this approach, “It is not difficult to conclude that practices which strike an interpreter as primitive are in fact borrowed, and therefore ‘not really Israelite.’”²² In this way, sacrifices and other practices were often written off as contaminating true Israelite religion, as in the quote above from Koehler.

The Documentary Hypothesis, a way of reconstructing the compositional history of the Pentateuch associated with the work of Wellhausen, has also contributed to prejudices against the importance of the temple and its worship. The Priestly (P) material of the Pentateuch, the hypothetical source material in which the tabernacle, and by extension, the temple and its worship practices are described and valued, was typically dated as the latest stratum of material that went into the composition of the Old Testament. “Latest” in this context was not a compliment. It suggested an author or authors far removed from God’s revelatory events. Most scholars also described P as “legalistic, punctilious, and religiously inferior,” descriptions informed by the kinds of modern, Protestant, and supersessionist tendencies mentioned above.²³

In addition to the factors Brueggemann mentions, another technical yet quite important factor, in my opinion, has also led to the devaluing of Old Testament worship and its typological relationship to the worship of the New Testament—that of the modern scientific understandings of causation. This additional prejudice against sacramental rites stems more from the worldview associated with Isaac Newton than the theologies of Luther or Calvin. Given a Newtonian scientific imagination, we have lacked categories for, and are consequently suspicious of, special divine action in the sacraments and in worship. Modern people have, of course, tended to be suspicious of any special divine action whatsoever. But even allowing that God is involved with the creation in ways other than upholding the general laws of nature, our understanding of causality has crippled our sacramental imaginations. Modern people tend to think of all causality in terms of “efficient causality”—i.e., we think things “happen” because masses are striking or bumping up against one another.²⁴

22. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 652.

23. See similar evaluations of the tendency to denigrate priestly traditions in Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, ix–x, and Rodney Hutton, *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 1–5, 138.

24. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues* (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1990).

Such a limited modern toolbox for thinking about causality has a difficult time comprehending both typology and the formative action of God through sacramental rites. Yet it is precisely such a typological hermeneutic that allows us to take a middle road between supersessionism and requiring “literal” obedience to the Old Testament law.

Summing up these various factors leading to the devaluing of the temple and its worship throughout much of the past two to three hundred years in modern academic work, Christian supersessionism (of a certain kind), modern Protestant allergies to anything smelling “Catholic,” the reigning paradigms of Old Testament scholarship, and the typical modern scientific worldview have created a toxic climate for serious consideration of the temple and its worship. Brueggemann writes:

I must confess, at the outset, that I have been nurtured, as a Protestant Christian, with the limiting, dismissive perspective noted above. I am, moreover, nurtured in that way as an Old Testament scholar, for critical scholarship has been little interested in the theological intention of Israel’s worship. Therefore, I propose a model for considering this material theologically, but I do so with considerable diffidence, recognizing that we are only at the beginning of a reappropriation of the serious worship of Israel as an important theological datum.²⁵

“Only at the beginning,” yes, but such a reappropriation has gained momentum in the past decades. While much could be said about the ways that all the prejudices Brueggemann mentions are being challenged, let me highlight one: the wide-scale reconsideration of Judaism’s relationship to Christianity.

After the Second World War, Christians reassessed their attitude toward Jews and Judaism. Certainly a great impulse for this was the realization that at least part of the blame of the Holocaust lay at the feet of Christians who, because of their overly negative view of Judaism, helped to create an atmosphere in which such a tragedy was possible.

A shining example of this major shift of Christian attitudes toward Judaism is the Roman Catholic document *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*. This declaration came out of Vatican II

25. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 653.

and was promulgated in 1965 by Pope Paul VI. It was a watershed document. In the United States alone it spurred the creation of over two dozen centers for Catholic-Jewish studies on Roman Catholic educational campuses. It sparked similar documents and discussions in many Protestant denominations.²⁶ It and the ensuing discussions did much to change many Christians' views on Judaism. In it, the pope pointed to the way Christ's work of salvation is "fore-shadowed" in the Exodus, affirming that Gentiles draw sustenance from the "root of that well-cultivated olive tree," Israel, that God does not repent of God's call to Israel, that Jews and Christians share the same "patrimony," and that all forms of anti-Semitism are to be rejected.²⁷

As a result of this wide-scale reassessment, many have called into question older views of supersessionism. This has in turn led to backlash, but also created ongoing contemporary discussions about different kinds of supersession

26. See the website of the International Council of Christians and Jews for the latest statements and news in ongoing Jewish-Christian relations: <http://www.jcrelations.net/>. From my own denomination, see the recent compilation of resources from the Presbyterian tradition in the PC(USA) document *Christians and Jews: People of God* (Louisville: PC[USA], 2010). Noteworthy in that collection is the statement, *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*, written in 2000 by prominent Jewish scholars who were responding to the many statements by Christian traditions in the wake of *Nostra Aetate*.

This paragraph in *Dabru Emet* is especially apropos, in that it mentions favorably the efforts of many Christian theologians:

Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.

27. Second Vatican Council, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra aetate*, 28 October, 1965," in Austin Flannery, O. P., ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), §4.

and the precise relationship between Christianity and Judaism—discussions which often feature an examination of typology.²⁸

Two of the Roman Catholic cardinals who most worked against anti-Semitism both during World War II and in the movements that led to Vatican II, Jean Daniélou and Henri de Lubac, also produced seminal scholarly works that showed the importance of the Jewish background to much of the New Testament and early Christian thought and worship. Daniélou, in his 1956 work *The Bible and the Liturgy*, argued that the worship of both synagogue and temple definitively shaped the early worship of the church. His later book *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* argued that early Christian life and thought drew much more from Jewish thought forms and Jewish patterns of worship than was previously recognized. This was in marked contrast to typical modern Protestant histories of the early church that emphasized the distinctions between Old and New Covenants and the Greek influences on early Christian thought.²⁹ Daniélou and his teacher, de Lubac, also highlighted typology as the central means by which early Christian interpreters understood continuity and discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity.

So, in a variety of ways, Protestants and Catholics since especially the 1960s have been retrieving a deeper sense of Christianity's basis in and ties to Judaism in general, and more specifically the Jewish background of Christian worship practices. While the details of the relationship between Christians and Jews are still being negotiated, stark contrasts between the Old Testament and New Testament implied by frameworks such as law and gospel have in general been called into question. Christians are seeing the continuities between Israelite religion and Christianity much more clearly.

28. For example, see Matthew Boulton, "Supersession or Subsession? Exodus Typology, the Christian Eucharist and the Jewish Passover Meal," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66, no. 1 (Feb 2013): 18–29. From the perspective of an important Jewish scholar, see Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), in which Ochs examines the positive correlation between what he calls "non-supersession" and postliberalism.

29. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956); *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964). While many have critiqued the overly rigid categories of Daniélou's *Jewish Christianity* and even the term "Jewish Christianity," his work has helped redirect the understanding of Christian origins. For such an appreciative critique, see R. A. Kraft, "In Search of 'Jewish Christianity' and Its 'Theology,'" in *Early Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1993), 1–13.

Reconnecting the Eucharist to the Temple

This revolutionary renewed appreciation of the continuities of Christianity with its Jewish roots in the past decades, in addition to the many significant mid-twentieth-century archaeological discoveries that have shed light on first-century Judaism, has substantially affected discussions about the origins and meanings of the Eucharist.³⁰

In the past, within the field of liturgical studies and the history of Christian worship, discussions about the origins of the Eucharist have largely focused on the development of eucharistic rites *after* Christ's Last Supper up until the full and detailed eucharistic liturgies of the fourth and fifth centuries, not primarily on what came *before* the Last Supper. Even so, cultural influences behind and before the Last Supper have played a minor role in the origins discussion. Such influences provided the frameworks of ritual and meaning for the earliest Eucharist celebrations and continued to pressure their development.

Potential influences often considered include Jewish rites, rituals, and prayers from which the Eucharist might have developed. Meanwhile, temple and typology are rarely mentioned. Scholars typically examine Jewish meal rites and rituals set in homes (as opposed to the temple), and the textual traditions of eucharistic prayers (as opposed to types and images). They attempt to trace early Christian liturgies back to those home rituals through exact words and phrases carried over from Jewish prayers.

In such work throughout the twentieth century several Jewish influences have been routinely cited; however, no one source has been convincingly received as *the* Jewish precursor to the Eucharist. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many scholars argued that the Last Supper took over the forms of the Passover Kiddush meal or Kiddush blessing.³¹ Another common opinion was that it was an adaption of a *chaburah* meal, a meal shared by cer-

30. The most important of these discoveries are the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in 1947, and the Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945. See McGowan's summary of "Jewish Evidence" in Andrew McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 10–12.

31. The Kiddush rite was a ritual blessing of the Sabbath in homes which involved blessing the wine and breaking bread.

tain fellowships or societies of Jews.³² Such opinions began to fall out of favor in the mid-twentieth-century due in part to the arguments of Joachim Jeremias who, in his influential *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, argued that the Passover Seder meal was the most likely and most obvious background to the Last Supper.³³ However, in the last few decades theories that either simply identify the Last Supper as a transformed Passover Seder meal or create a simple narrative of development from Passover Seder meal to eucharistic rite have also been called into question.

Andrew McGowan's book *Ancient Christian Worship* is a good representative of such recent work on the origins of the Christian Eucharist. Besides examining claims that eucharistic practices developed from Jewish prayers and meals, he also takes into consideration arguments that place the Eucharist in the tradition of Greco-Roman symposiums or banquets. While he thinks both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions add to our understanding of the context out of which the Christian celebration arose, he also argues that none of these traditions—whether Greek symposium meal or Jewish Passover meal or some other Jewish ritual—can explain the shape or meaning of the Last Supper, much less the Eucharist. He writes:

The Christian meal began as a form of ancient Mediterranean banquet, a varied but recognizable tradition fundamental to social and cultural, as well as religious, life. Banquets did not have a single or simple meaning inherent in their celebration, but might be venues for contest as well as celebration, for struggle as well as solidarity, for experimentation as well as consolidation. The Eucharist appears as a tradition within this tradition, with meanings and values attached, yet not simply one single or simple “word” spoken within that “language” of communal and convivial signification.³⁴

32. Dom Gregory Dix, a leading liturgical scholar, in *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury, 1982), originally published in 1945, argues the background to the Eucharist was not the Passover, but rather *chaburah* meals.

33. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin from the 3rd German ed. (London: SCM, 1966). See pp. 15–89 for a review of his arguments against other options and his own argument that the Last Supper was a Passover Seder meal. The Passover Seder meal was eaten in homes after the Passover celebration at the temple.

34. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 63.

Not only is its meaning not determined by its background, but McGowan notes too that the Eucharist has more than one meaning: “The Eucharist is a field of Christian practice characterized (like early Christian doctrine) by diversity and not just a single idea represented in bread and wine.”³⁵ While trying to find a single meaning is tempting, the evidence suggests there is a “real feast of meanings” included in it.³⁶

McGowan makes little mention of the worship rites of the temple as possible background practices. Instead he understands allusions to the temple made by writers such as Cyprian as a later change to the earlier practice. McGowan notes allusions to the temple were widespread by the year 300 but suggests those widespread allusions developed as a counter-practice to non-Christian Roman sacrifice.³⁷

Bryan Spinks, in his book *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, also sums up many of the latest discussions about the possible background contexts of the Christian Eucharist. Similar to McGowan, Spinks centers his discussion on meal practices in homes and written prayers. He is cautious about claiming direct connections to such precursors. He cautions first about prayers, such as the *berakot* prayers of the Jewish Seder, arguing we know very little for certain about the exact form or wording of Jewish prayers in the first century: “We have scant information as regards the actual forms of Jewish meal prayer in the first century CE and therefore precious little on which to speculate about some evolution of Christian Eucharistic Prayers.”³⁸

Regarding the various forms of meals in both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures of the time, he examines the forms and meanings of those meals and the ways they might have influenced the forms of the Christian Eucharist. Aspects of the Greco-Roman symposium or banquet, for example, seem to have influenced the ways the Passover Seder meal was celebrated. However, he writes that it is not the similarities that are especially significant, but rather “their *differences* and their *theological significance*” that one should pay attention to.³⁹

Along with these more typically examined antecedents, Spinks examines recent claims connecting the Eucharist to the temple and temple-inspired

35. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 62.

36. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 62.

37. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 53–55.

38. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 2.

39. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 5.

practices. Some scholars have argued the Eucharist was influenced by a certain hypothetically reconstructed temple sacrifice, or alternatively, the *todah* sacrifice, or meals of the Essene community led by a priest which prefigured the awaited messianic banquet led by the Messiah who is also Priest.⁴⁰ While Spinks give little weight to these claims, he notes that these claims of possible backgrounds gives “a broad context in which the meals of the Gospels and the distinct Last Supper narratives of Jesus can be evaluated.”⁴¹

Paul Bradshaw is a final example of an important liturgical scholar who argues that the search for the words of the earliest eucharistic prayers in order to arrive at some pristine original understanding and model of those prayers is misguided. He argues the earliest Christian eucharistic prayers show great diversity in theology, imagery, and wording.⁴² In fact, he claims that those earliest prayers “were much less developed and explicit as to their eucharistic theology than were the beliefs of those who used them and preached about them. Thus they provide less than satisfactory models for modern liturgical compilers to imitate than do the more fully formed examples from later centuries.”⁴³

McGowan, Spinks, and Bradshaw all agree that the search for a single Jewish prayer precedent for early Christian eucharistic prayers should be abandoned. It does not seem that there were, in fact, fixed prayers that all Jews used for any celebration. The exact forms of prayers that are recorded in later rabbinic literature were, at least in some opinions, creations of the rabbis to systematize and standardize practices which were diverse at the time of Christ. As Joseph Heinemann writes: “Only after the numerous prayers had come into being and were familiar to the masses did the Sages decide that the time had come to establish some measure of uniformity and standardization.”⁴⁴ As a result, “The widely accepted goal of the philological method—viz., to discover or to reconstruct the one ‘original’ text of a particular composition . . . is out of place in the field of [early] liturgical studies.”⁴⁵

40. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 7–11.

41. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 11.

42. Paul F. Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins* (London: SPCK, 2004), and Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2009).

43. Bradshaw, *Reconstructing Early Christian Worship*, 52.

44. Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*, *Studia Judaica* 9 (New York: De Gruyter, 1977), 37. Quoted in Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 24.

45. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 43. Quoted in Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 24.

In contrast to the philological method, i.e., starting with the exact words of early Christian eucharistic prayers and then attempting to trace those words back to the exact language of Jewish models, this book will focus on types and images. It will connect Christian eucharistic theology and practice, organized around central images and types, back to the central images and types of Jewish temple theology and practice. Indeed, Spinks thinks that highlighting “theological motifs” and tracing these motifs back to Jewish precedents is a more interesting and fruitful project, which is precisely what I am doing by focusing on the “central meanings” of the temple and its rites.⁴⁶

So, as we have seen, the temple has not played a large role in the work of most liturgical historians. But in contrast, there has been a much larger and increasing interest in the temple among Old Testament scholars and biblical theologians. The temple is increasingly understood to have held an important place in the imaginations and writings of first-century Jews, a phenomenon mentioned by Walter Brueggemann above.

One reason for this is the overturning of the many prejudices named above. Another impetus has been the significant archaeological discoveries of writings this past century, most prominently the Dead Sea Scrolls. These have thrown greater light on the thought and practice of first-century Jewish groups. In these writings we find that the temple, worship at the temple, and the priesthood of Israel played a much more important role in Jewish imagination and piety than previously understood.⁴⁷ The result is that temple themes in Old Testament theology and in reconstructions of first-century Judaism are becoming more and more prominent.⁴⁸

Going hand in hand with this, a growing number of Christian theologians and biblical scholars argue that the temple and its imagery are hermeneutical keys for narrating the larger story of God and God’s people in ever more satisfying ways. More scholars are recognizing the importance of temple imagery

46. Spinks, *Do This in Remembrance of Me*, 27.

47. Elior, *Three Temples*. See also C. T. R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

48. E.g., Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985); Samuel Balentine, *The Torah’s Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Peter Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2000); Craig Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989).

in both christology and ecclesiology.⁴⁹ And in this literature, more and more connections are being made between temple worship and the Eucharist.⁵⁰

Among scholars who explicitly highlight the importance of temple motifs and themes for early Christian worship and for the Eucharist in particular, both Margaret Barker and Brant Pitre stand out as persistent and important voices who have written extensively on the topic.

Margaret Barker in many of her books and writings argues that many early Christian theologians and leaders of the church from the very beginning drew deeply from temple traditions in their understanding of the gospel and the practices of Eucharist and baptism.⁵¹ Such traditions of imagination, practice, and understanding are the “unwritten traditions” written about by several early church Fathers that were handed down by Jesus to his disciples and from them to the succeeding generations.

In this regard, Barker often draws on Basil of Caesarea (d. AD 379) who in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* writes: “Concerning the teachings of the Church, whether publicly proclaimed (*kērygma*) or reserved to members of the household of faith (*dogmata*), we have received some from written sources, while others have been given to us secretly, through apostolic tradition. Both sources have equal force in true religion.”⁵² Some of these teachings that Basil gives

49. E.g., G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Kurt Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu: Die Traditionen von Tempelzerstörung und Tempelrenewerung im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2002); Paul Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2006).

50. E.g., Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment*, 120–25; Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 237–50; Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 399–420; Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011); Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

51. Barker, *Temple Themes*; Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); Barker, *The Great High Priest: Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004).

52. St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* (New York: St. Vladimir's, 1980), 27, §66.

as examples of unwritten traditions are signing catechumens with the sign of the cross, praying facing East, “the words to be used in the invocation over the Eucharistic bread and the cup of blessing,” the way to bless the baptismal water and the oil for chrismation, and baptizing with three immersions—all parts of sacramental worship.⁵³ Basil also thinks that if these “unwritten customs” were forgotten, “we would fatally mutilate the Gospel.”⁵⁴ He likens these customs, and the way they are passed on only to the initiated, to the way that Moses and the Levites did not pass on all the knowledge about the practices of the temple to all the Israelites in public writings, but rather passed that knowledge down through unwritten priestly traditions.⁵⁵

But rather than simply pointing to general ways that temple traditions influenced Christian worship, Barker makes the case that the early Christians understood themselves to be carrying on the traditions of the *first* temple, the Temple of Solomon, traditions which had been neglected, abused, and purposely changed during the time of the *second* temple. For Barker, these early Christians understood that in their worship, they, the new spiritual temple, were renewing the true worship of the first temple. Barker even suggests that the Old Testament texts that are the basis of Christian scripture were altered during that time and that Jesus and his disciples used earlier versions, which are now lost.

Many of her more speculative claims about historical reconstructions and textual alterations I find under-supported and difficult to evaluate.⁵⁶ That being said, the connections she draws between early Christian worship, the explanations of such worship in early Christian authors, and the worship of the temple are quite compelling. Barker has certainly done a great service in bringing to light the importance of the temple for both the religion of Israel and the imagination of the leaders of the early church.

53. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, §66.

54. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, §66.

55. Origen makes the same connections in his fifth homily on the book of Numbers. See Barker, “The Temple Roots of the Liturgy” (unpublished, 2000), 3. www.marquette.edu/maqom/Roots.pdf, accessed December 29, 2019.

56. I am predisposed to not follow Barker toward her conclusions in part because of my commitments to the canonical status of the Old Testament. Specifically, she argues that later Deuteronomistic redactors distorted the older religion of Israel, but that certain Jewish sects and the early Christians carried on and/or recovered those earlier traditions. A quasi-Marcionism of a higher critical kind seems to follow.

Brant Pitre similarly highlights connections between Jewish temple worship and the Eucharist, but with different results. Instead of highlighting those connections in service of a historical project with many revisionist aspects, Pitre finds the connections he researches fill out understandings of both the Eucharist and Jesus Christ that resonate well with traditional Roman Catholic theology and practice. In *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, Pitre focuses primarily on three such connections: the Passover celebration, the bread of the Presence, and the manna that was preserved in the ark of the covenant. It is these aspects of “the faith and hope of the Jewish people” that help one best interpret “Jesus’ words at the Last Supper.”⁵⁷ In *Jesus and the Last Supper*, Pitre amplifies his work on the Jewish background of the Last Supper. He argues that background undergirds the historical plausibility of the Last Supper and provides a central key to historical portraits of Jesus of Nazareth. In doing so, Pitre paints a historical portrait of Jesus that is deeply orthodox, historically rigorous, and yet fresh and full, given the way it emerges from the milieu of Jewish beliefs and worship.

I have great appreciation and gratitude for all the work of Barker and Pitre and understand my investigation corroborates and builds on their work in many ways. In one major way I hope to extend their work. Given my understanding of God’s providential activity in inspiring the final canonical form of the Old Testament, a point at which I differ from Barker, I expect the broadest and most comprehensive images or types of the ideal canonical forms of Israelite worship at the temple and tabernacle to provide the most important background to the Eucharist. It would make sense that the central ritual celebration of the New Testament people of God would be foreshadowed by the central ritual celebrations of the Old Testament people of God. By attending to the structure and patterns of Israelite worship at the temple more fully than Barker and Pitre do, I argue that these central ritual structures found in plain sight and bold print in the canonical texts provide the most satisfying framework of symbols and meanings for illuminating both the Last Supper and the Christian Eucharist.

The theological center of the Old Testament is the Torah, the five books of Moses. At the center of the Torah is the covenant given to Moses on

57. Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots*, 9.

Mount Sinai as recorded in Exodus 19 to Numbers 10. At the center of the covenant are the detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle and detailed instructions for the overall liturgical life of the people of God. The five most prominent symbolic and ritual components of that worship described in those texts are (1) the temple itself, (2) the regularized daily, Sabbath, and monthly services, and the three annual pilgrim feasts of (3) Pesach or Passover, (4) Shavuot or Pentecost, and (5) Sukkoth or the Feast of Booths.⁵⁸ These symbols and practices and their main meanings form the structure of my investigation, my book, and my understanding of the Eucharist itself. I believe this structure can go far in bringing a stable, biblical, and providentially given structure to a Christian understanding and practice of the Eucharist.

In my own research I sought in vain for an early church theologian who spotted and structured their own understanding of the Eucharist around these five components of the temple and its worship, or even around just the three pilgrim feasts. I was excited to find that Hippolytus, an important leader of the church in Rome, in a work of his quoted by Theodoret, did see Christ as the typological fulfillment of the three pilgrim feasts: “Wherefore three seasons of the year typified the Saviour Himself that He might fulfil the mysteries predicted about Him. In the Passover, . . . At Pentecost. . . .”⁵⁹ And yet, even though I did not find a conscious use of the overall structure I am presenting here in early Christian theologians, many, if not most, early church leaders and theologians consistently spotted typological relationships between the Eucharist and one or more of the feasts or celebrations at the temple. So, while my fivefold structure for organizing eucharistic theology cannot claim the historical gravitas of patristic precedent, it is a clear structure found in the Torah, and it is a clear way to organize the many meanings of the Eucharist. The words of Christ at the Last Supper as recorded in the

58. As mentioned above, daily, Sabbath, and monthly celebrations and the three pilgrim feasts are laid out clearly and in this order in Numbers 28–29. Instructions for the Sabbath and the three pilgrim feasts are given in Leviticus 23:1–44 and Exodus 23:12–17. The three pilgrim feasts are commanded in Exodus 23:14–17, 34:18–23 and Deuteronomy 16:1–17.

59. Quoted by Theodoret in Dialogue 2, “The Unconfounded” (*NPNF2* 3:202).

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN TABLE AND TEMPLE

Gospels also resonate with the central meanings of all three pilgrim feasts at the temple (see Chapter 6).

But before drawing out these figurative relationships and showing their implications for doctrine and worship in the following chapters, it will be beneficial first to take a close look at typology and the assumptions that undergird it, this bridge between table and temple.