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THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER

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During the lifetime of Jesus, the Jewish Passover gathered the followers of Moses at Jerusalem for the purpose of offering and partaking of the paschal lamb. They commemorated the Exodus which set the Hebrews free from bondage in Egypt. Today, the Christian Passover gathers the disciples of Jesus Christ in communion with their Lord, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It unites them with his life, death and resurrection which have freed them from sin and death. There is a continuity from one festival to another, but there is also discontinuity in passing from the old to the new covenant through the mediation of Jesus, our Passover.[1]

The *Poem of the Four Nights,* contained in the *Targum*, the Aramaic Version of the Hebrew Bible used in the liturgy of the synagogue, aptly conveys the meaning of the Passover during the lifetime of Jesus Christ. In this work, the Passover is at one and at the same time a memorial of creation, of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, of the deliverance from Egypt and finally a prophecy of the last day when God's glory will fill the earth for eternity.[2]

The last of the four nights evokes the Passover in eschatological terms. Because of God's divine intervention on behalf of Israel in times past, Israel developed the hope for God's decisive intervention in the future. The mission to realize this final intervention was attributed to the Messiah. This idea was so deeply impressed on the consciousness of the Jews that they awaited the Messiah on each Passover night.[3] At the appointed time, the divine intervention of God through Jesus, the Messiah, came to pass. Jesus is the New Pasch. As a faithful Jew, he participated in the celebrations of the feast of the Passover. His mission was to perfect the Passover and to bring it to its final and definitive fulfillment.

This article is a presentation of the Christian understanding and experience of the Passover. It consists of a discussion of the following sub-topics: first, the typological sense of Scripture or Spiritual Exegesis; second, the New Testament witness to Jesus, our Passover; third, the Passover traditions of the early Church; and last, the Passover character of Christian life.

The Typological Sense of Scripture

Today, promise and fulfillment are considered decisive elements in the understanding of NT texts, and in fact, of the whole plan of salvation.[4] In this plan of salvation, the OT prepares, prophetically proclaims and prefigures the Christ-Event. When situated in the context of the Old Testament writings, the NT becomes more understandable. Without the interpretative key of the OT, many NT passages such as the Passover meal, the paschal lamb and the cup of the new and everlasting covenant would remain esoteric and obscure.[5] The books of the Old Testament acquire their full meaning in the New Testament and in turn shed light on it and explain it.[6] Through history, the Old Testament brings out what cannot be seen in the New Testament and perfects one's understanding of it. God still reveals today through Old Testament texts and the promises

contained in them are not exhausted by the fulfillment in the New Testament. Hence, the Old Testament is needed to understand the New Testament. Readers can understand and grasp the thought of the New Testament writers more fully and authentically if they try to enter with sympathy into those writers' approach to the ancient Scriptures.

The science of the similitudes between the two Testaments is called typology.[7] Its foundation is in the Old Testament itself[8] and the New Testament simply shows that it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[9] Thus, the NT writers, as well as Christian commentators from the earliest times, treated the Old Testament as a book about Christ in which every part contributed harmoniously to the pattern of typology and prophecy.[10]

"God, the inspirer and author of both testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New."[11] Thus, the science of typology is founded on the unity and continuity of Scripture as a whole.[12] It is based on the possibility of a secondary sense of Scripture which goes beyond the literal sense, i.e., a sense that by definition, transcends what the human author intended, arising from the fact that the Bible is a unique book, having God as its principal author. Thus, God progressively manifests in the Bible the mystery of salvation, whose culmination is Christ. The typical sense is that deeper meaning which the divine author has given to the things (person, places or events) of Scripture in view of the more perfect realities which they foreshadow. It is used in the strict sense when the more perfect realities which are prefigured are limited to the mystery of Christ and the Church on earth. It is used in the broad sense to indicate any meaning which God intends to express, through the realities of biblical history in as much as they prefigure other things not limited to the mystery of Christ and the Church on earth.[13]

There are some clues which indicate that typology, so necessary for the Christian understanding of the Gospel, was a process initiated by Christ himself. He evidently interpreted His life and work through the medium of that pattern. Behind his statement that "the Son of Man must suffer many things" was his Jewish understanding that the modes of God's self-revelation in the history of his people defined his own mission as the culmination and definitive fulfillment of that self-revelation. His saving deeds were seen as the moment which brought complete and final significance to the whole course of the covenant history which preceded it.[14] Finally, the typology of the Old Testament is accomplished not only in the person of Christ, but also in the Church. Besides Christological typology, there exists a sacramental typology. This means that the *mirabilia dei* of the Old and New Testament take place in our midst through the whole reality of the Church, but in an especially intense way through the peak moments of sacramental celebrations.[15]

The value of typology is evident even if the patristic pattern of typology must be used with much caution.[16] Nevertheless, the indispensable place of typology as such cannot be denied, for without knowing and accepting it,

> . . . how, without an understanding of spiritual exegesis, is one to take a real part in the liturgy of the Church, which abounds with it?. . . . To meditate on Scripture is to practice such an exegesis. No doubt the bare literal sense of the OT is itself of value; but if one sees in it no foreshadowing of Christ, then one reads it as a Jew, not as a Christian. Again, how can one meditate on the life of Jesus as on events that have no meaning for us in our heart of hearts? Of course we cannot take liberties as the ancients did and we must keep spiritual exegesis pruned down to its essentials. But no one can preach as a Christian on the two Testaments without making use of spiritual exegesis.[17]

The method of typology enables Christians to discover the links between the Jewish Passover and Jesus Christ, our Passover, in the New Testament.[18]

The NT Witness to Jesus, Our Passover

In reading the texts of the New Testament, from the Gospels to the Apocalypse, one encounters again the essential themes of the Passover expressed in a new way. The mysteries of Jesus Christ are proclaimed through them. "To these realities, the writings of the New Testament stand as a perpetual and divine witness."[19] What do they proclaim concerning Jesus, our Passover? According to the Gospels, the whole life of Jesus was a journey towards the Passover which took place in Jerusalem. Jesus moved consciously towards the holy city. The Synoptics bring out the connection among Jesus' farewell meal, an OT Passover meal of the Jews and the Eucharistic meal. Finally, Jesus died as our Paschal Lamb, our Passover.[20]

The Paschal Journey of Jesus

At the age of twelve, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem with his parents in order to take part in the Passover celebrations (Lk. 2:41-50). Jesus remained in Jerusalem while his parents returned to Nazareth. Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple, in the midst of the doctors of the law, "listening to them and asking them questions." Jesus asked questions.[21] It is possible to presume the kind of questions he might have asked, considering the context of the Passover feast just celebrated. The Passover meal began with a question posed by the youngest member of the family: "What is the meaning of this feast?" Jesus listened to the answer of the doctors of the law, a profound and rich teaching. Thus, Jesus will receive an education completely Jewish. He will choose to live in solidarity with the chosen people especially during the great national solemn feasts. Each year, he will participate in the joy of the paschal

celebration.[22] In this Lucan Christological scene, the glorious destiny of Jesus, that of bringing the Passover to its definitive fulfillment, already seems to be projected upon him. This very first Passover journey of Jesus mysteriously announces his final one.[23]

Luke 4:16-21 presents Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, reading a text from Isaiah 61:1: "He has sent me . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoner." This text concerns him personally for he who announces the good news is the Good News. It also concerns his listeners to whom the good news of freedom promised by the prophets is addressed. Its full realization will take place in the final Passover of Jesus.[24]

This final Passover took place in Jerusalem. In the predictions on his coming passion, death and resurrection, Jesus made a special reference to Jerusalem on at least one occasion.

> We must now go up to Jerusalem so that all that was written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man may be accomplished (Lk. 18:31; cf. Mk. 10:33; Mt. 20: 18-19).

He was making this journey to celebrate the Passover in the holy city to which every Jew was expected to go at least until everything stopped with the destruction of the Temple and the termination of the Temple sacrifices in 70 A.D.[25]

In the Lucan Transfiguration scene, Moses and Elijah appear in glory and speak to Jesus "of his passage, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem" (Lk 9:31). The Greek word translated as "passage" is in fact *exodos*.[26] Now, from the Transfiguration onwards, the final Passover begins. Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem, leading an uncomprehending and reluctant company of followers who were to be the New Israel through the waters of death, baptized with his baptism.[27]

The Paschal Context of the Last Supper

The triple synoptic tradition (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:2-16; Lk. 22:7-13) prefaces the last supper with an account of the preparations for the paschal meal: "On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, his disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?'" (Mk. 14:12). In the mind of the evangelists, therefore, the Last Supper was celebrated in the context of the Jewish Passover.[28] John on the other hand, places the meal "before the feast of the Passover" (Jn. 13:1). Jesus' death the following day coincides with the sacrifice of the lambs in the temple before the Passover meal. Finally, Paul's account of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11:23-26 contains no reference to the Passover meal. However in 1 Cor. 5:7, Paul asserts that God's action in Jesus is a Passover sacrifice in which a new journey is involved, the one that goes from death to life.[29]

It may not be possible to determine the exact relationship between the Jewish Passover meal and the Last Supper. But, perhaps, becoming aware of the major discrepancy concerning the date of the Supper may prove illuminating.[30] For the Synoptics, the Supper is a Passover meal, taking place on the first evening of Passover, while the lambs are being slaughtered in the temple. In John's account, the death of Jesus takes place at the hour of the sacrifice of the Passover lambs, and the Supper is held the previous night, a day earlier than in the Synoptics. Though Jesus' death is related to the Passover in John, the Last Supper is not a Passover meal. Paul is non-committal on the dating of the Supper except to say that it took place "on the night he was betrayed."[31]

Whether or not the Last Supper was a paschal meal, one is on firm ground in recognizing, at least, the paschal context and character of the Last Supper.[32] The Last Supper narratives bring out how the "Pasch is fulfilled" (Lk. 22:15) through the institution of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Jesus. The manna, the quails and the

water from the rock are now realized in him, the Bread of Life, for his flesh given as food and drink opens up eternal life for those who believe. The body "given for you" and the blood "poured out for you" (Lk.) or "for a multitude" (Mk./Mt.) are an announcement of the redemptive death of Jesus, who presented himself as a sacrifice in the light of the sacrificial victims whose blood sealed the first covenant, and of the paschal lamb of Exodus 12. In order that they may do it "in memory of me," Jesus enclosed within food the riches of this sacrifice. Like the Passover meal, the sacrifice is a memorial of Jesus, who, at the beginning of the Supper, stated: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," thus setting the Passover atmosphere of the Supper. Finally, just as the Paschal rite effected a transition from captivity to freedom and from death to life, the transition effected from the bread to the body and the wine to the blood, reproduces sacramentally the transition from the old world to the new world to which Jesus passed over, in going from this world to the Father through his Paschal Mystery. In his Passover, the messianic age has truly arrived.[33]

Although there are conflicting interpretations of the timing of the Last Supper, its occurrence in proximity to the Passover feast, and the references of Jesus to Passover and covenant themes, surround the farewell meal of Jesus with Paschal overtones which are permanently embedded in the memory of the Church. The theological interpretation rooted in the memory of the Last Supper grounds and confirms our understanding of Jesus, our Passover.

Jesus, the True Paschal Lamb

Exodus 12 recounts that after God decided to deliver his captive people from Egyptian slavery, he ordered each family to immolate a lamb "without blemish, male and one year old" to eat at night and to use its blood to mark the lintels over the door. Thanks to this "sign," the Hebrew slaves were spared by the angel of death who exterminated all the first-born of the Egyptians. The blood of the

lamb had a redemptive power, providing protection, assuring freedom and enabling the Israelites to become a people sacred to Yahweh.

Christian Tradition has seen in Christ "the true Lamb" of the Passover. His redemptive mission, fully described in the baptismal catechesis which underlies 1 Peter, is echoed in the Johannine writings and the Epistle to the Hebrews.[34] Although it is necessary to recognize that there is a wealth of Old Testament background to this image of the lamb, with the paschal lamb as only one element among many, St. Paul makes an explicit and unambiguous reference to its relation to Christ when he writes:[35]

> "Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves, as it were; Christ our Passover has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Thus, in the Exultet of the Easter Vigil Liturgy, the deacon can proclaim, "This is our Passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb is slain, whose blood consecrates the homes of believers."[36]

How do the Johannine texts ground and develop the image of Jesus as the true Paschal Lamb? Three texts in the Gospel present Jesus under the image of the Paschal Lamb (Jn. 1:29; 1:35-36 and 19:33-36). Several texts indicate the paschs that occurred during the public life of Jesus (Jn. 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:5; 12:1 and 13:1). A final set of texts in the Gospel elaborates details of the last Passover of Jesus (Jn. 18:28; 19:14; and 19:31).[37] The above texts, the wider paschal background of the fourth Gospel[38] and, more importantly, the way the whole narrative of the Fourth Gospel is inserted between two proclamations of Jesus as the Lamb of God, justify the identification of the Gospel as a "Paschal Gospel."[39]

At the very beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist introduces Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). It is known through 1 Cor. 5:7, that at an early date in the history of the Church, the Lord's sacrificial death commemorated at the Christian Eucharist was compared to that of

the lambs slain for the paschal feast. John may have been strongly influenced by this Christian application of the Jewish Passover. He has added to the comparison of the Lord with the paschal lamb a reference to his work in removing the world's sin. The Baptist's reference to the Lamb of God taking away the collective sin of the world expresses the contrast between the universal redemptive work of the true paschal lamb and that of the Passover lambs, whose death benefited only the children of Israel.[40] In addition, Jesus, the Sinless One, fulfilled the requirement of being the Lamb "without blemish" who delivered sinful humanity at the price of his blood, forming them into the new "royal priesthood," the new "consecrated nation" prefigured in Exodus 19.6. At the climax of the account of Jesus' exaltation, the final clear reference to the Lamb of God is found. Johannine chronology sets the death of Jesus the night before the feast of Unleavened Bread (Jn. 18:28), thus on the day of the Passover, in the afternoon (Jn. 19:14), at the very hour when, according to the prescriptions of the Law, the lambs were being immolated in the temple. After his death, they did not break his legs. The evangelist sees in this fact the realization of a ritual prescription concerning the paschal lamb (Jn. 19:36; cf Ex. 12:46). The paschal lamb had to be a perfect specimen. This, Jesus was. From his pierced side blood and water flowed, symbols of the salvation that Jesus fully brings and of which the paschal lamb of Exodus 12 is an imperfect image.[41]

In the Book of Revelation, the weakness of the immolated Lamb is transformed and invested with the divine majesty and power of the Victorious Lamb. In John's vision of the eschatological Passover, the Lamb who is slain has purchased all humankind for God through his blood and made them a king of priests. The slain Lamb is therefore worthy to receive the scroll and to break open its seals (Rev. 5:5-10).

Jesus, the Lamb leads the eschatological war against the united powers of evil, and is eventually consecrated King of kings and Lord

of lords at his victory.[42] At the end, the marriage of the Lamb and the Bride takes place in a festive atmosphere, which conjures images of the many Passover celebrations that have marked Israel's history. Those who have been invited to the wedding feast will live in the new heavens and new earth, nourished by life-giving waters, illumined by the Light who is the Lamb Himself.[43]

The New Testament witness to Jesus expressed in the Last Supper accounts and in the Johannine Paschal symbolisms will be further developed by the Fathers of the early Church.[44] Melito of Sardis gives us an excellent example of reflections on Jesus, our Passover.

> He is the Passover of our salvation; he was present in many so as to endure many things. In Abel he was slain; in Isaac bound; in Jacob a stranger; in Joseph sold; in Moses exposed; in David persecuted; in the prophets dishonored. He became incarnate of the Virgin. Not a bone of his was broken on the tree. He was buried in the earth, but rose from the dead and was lifted up to the heights of heaven. He is the silent lamb, the slain lamb, who was born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock and dragged away to slaughter. Towards evening he was sacrificed, and at night he was buried. But he who had no bone broken upon the cross, was not corrupted in the earth, for he rose from the dead and raised up man from

The Passover Traditions of the Early Church

The Christian Passover began to be celebrated after the death and resurrection of Jesus, when the primitive Christian community no longer celebrated the Passover in expectation of the coming of the Messiah, but as a memorial of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus while awaiting his return in glory. A change of meaning took place in the understanding of the Passover. Because Jesus suffered, died and

rose in Jerusalem on the occasion of a Hebrew Pasch and at the very hour of the sacrifice of the Paschal lambs at the Temple, the immolation of Christ was eventually seen as the realization of all the figures and expectations contained in the Ancient Pasch. In the light of the Incarnation, the NT authors re-interpreted all the events of Jesus' life as the definitive realization of the Ancient Pasch. The early Church gradually formulated its understanding of the Christian Passover.

The Christological Response

At the beginning of the Hebrew Paschal Supper, the question is asked: "What is the meaning of this rite?" The early Christians gave two kinds of responses from which the two principal Passover traditions of the early Church developed: the Christological and the Anthropological.[46] The Christological response is based on the interpretation of the Pasch in terms of *pathein/paschein:* to celebrate the passion of Christ or to make a liturgical commemoration of the passion of Christ. The Christological tradition is best represented by Melito of Sardis who writes:

> The word "Passover" *(pascha)* has its origin in an event, and the expression "celebrate the Passover *(paschein)*, derives from the word meaning "to suffer" *(pathein)*. Let us consider, then, who it is who suffers, and who it is who sympathizes with the sufferer, realizing that the Lord is present on earth to unite himself to him who suffers, and thus to lead him to the heights of heaven.[47]

The Anthropological Response

The Anthropological tradition was born in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century through Clement and Origen. Both situate the human person at the center of the Pasch as its subject and main protagonist. In this new perspective, the whole Christian life of the Church is seen as a passage, which starts with the acceptance of faith and ends with the departure from this world. All the people of God follow Christ who, by his death and resurrection, passed

beyond the limits of death and opened heaven to all His faithful followers.

The *pascha/passio* accentuates the realization of the salvific plan of God, fully and definitively realized through the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, with whom Christians are in solidarity through the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. The *pascha/transitus* underlines what Christians still have to accomplish.[48]

These two traditions flourished at the beginning of the Church. To the question "what is the significance of the rite?," the first replied: "The passion of Christ"; the second: "The passage of man." The christological Pasch is based on immolation; the anthropological one is based on passage. The two traditions identify the two protagonists: Christ and man. They also manifest the two poles of salvation: Grace, or the initiative of God, and freedom, or the human cooperation to grace.

The Augustinian Synthesis

It became the work of Augustine to forge a true theological synthesis between these two perspectives.[49] Facing the problem of the significance of the Christian Passover, he reconciled the two perspectives by a profound reading of two texts of the Gospel according to St. John:

> Before the feast of Passover, Jesus realized that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father (Jn. 13:1). . . . [T]he man. . . who hears my word and has faith in him who sent me has passed from death to life. (Jn. 5:4)

In the above texts, the synthesis between passion and passage, between the Pasch of God and the Pasch of man, between grace and freedom and between the passion and the resurrection, are finally achieved. After Augustine, the Christian Passover will be understood

as the passage of Jesus from this world to the Father through the way of the passion and resurrection. The Pasch is a *transitus per passionem.* It is through his passion and death that Jesus passes over into the glory of the Resurrection. The Messiah had "to undergo all this so as to enter into His glory" (Lk. 24:26). These words express the very quintessence of Johannine theology. More important, the unity between the Pasch of God and the Pasch of man is achieved. In Jesus, the two Paschal protagonists, God and man become one, because in Jesus, humanity and divinity are united in one Person. The cause and object of salvation meet each other. Grace and freedom are integrated fully in Jesus Christ. The new and eternal covenant is born in him. Now, nothing can ever separate God and man because the two contracting parties of the covenant become one sole Person in Jesus Christ. This insight of Augustine brought the process of Christianizing the ancient Passover to a close.[50]

A final question must be addressed. Is the Passover unique to Jesus Christ? Is He the only one who passes from this world to the Father? How about the people of God? In confronting this question, Augustine creates another synthesis between the Passover of the Head and the Passover of the Body. With, through and in Jesus, the Head, the members of his Body also realize the Passover. The Passover of Jesus becomes that of his Body, the Church. The Church announces and participates in the Passover of Jesus. Constantly, the Church lovingly seeks to understand the passage of Jesus which is her very own mystery.[51] The Pasch of Jesus is not a solitary passage but a collective passage of all humanity, for at the cross, the Church is born.[52] The grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, bears the fruits of freedom for the members of his Body, the Church. The fourth and final part of this article brings out the implications of the Augustinian synthesis for Christian life.

The Passover Character of Christian Life

The wonders wrought by God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming humankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved his task principally through the paschal mystery. From the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross, there came forth the wondrous sacrament which is the whole Church, the Body of Christ.[53] By Baptism, Christians are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with him, are buried with him and rise with him (cf. Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2: 6; Col. 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:11). In like manner, as often as they eat the Lord's supper, they proclaim the death of the Lord, until He comes (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26), celebrating the Eucharist in which the victory and triumph of his death are again made present.[54]

Christian life has a paschal character.[55] It is the sacramentally existential participation in the Passover mystery of Jesus Christ, in whose life Christians share through Baptism and the Eucharist.[56] The sacraments offer the real possibility for the participation in the Passover of Jesus Christ the High Priest, whose saving deeds occurred in history, but who now bestows on believers the grace-filled participation in the divine life that flows from his redemptive work.[57] The Risen Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes present to believers with the full reality of the saving work he accomplished in history.[58]

Baptism

The Passover of a Christian originates from and participates in Christ's Passover. St. Paul brings out the identification of the Christian with Christ precisely in the act of the Christian's Passover—his *transitus per passionem*—through Baptism.

> Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death

> we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5).

The Passover of Christ is prefigured in the Jewish Passover events. The whole narrative of the deliverance from Egypt is a figure of the Redemption. The New Testament, in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew, shows us that these works of God are accomplished in Christ for in him, the true "deliverance" is accomplished. This "deliverance" is effectively applied to human persons through baptism.[59]

The relationship among these three levels of history—figure, reality and sacrament—becomes strikingly clear in terms of the following observation. It was during the time of the Pasch, which for the Jews was the commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt, that Christ accomplished our redemption through his death. It is during the same time of the Pasch, Easter night, that Baptism is ordinarily received. The one and the same redeeming action of God is accomplished on three levels of history—the Jewish Passover, the Paschal Mystery of Jesus and Christian baptism.[60] A discussion of the typological significance of the crossing of the sea in relation to Jesus and Christian Baptism can confirm and illumine these relationships.

Baptism has been described as a "birth by drowning," recalling the Passover of the Jews through the crossing of the sea and the Passover of Jesus in Jerusalem which he called "his baptism" (Lk. 12:50).[61] At the blessing of the font during the Rite of Baptism, the celebrant prays: "Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery to be an image of God's holy people, set free from sin by baptism." This setting free became a reality because of the "baptism" of the Son who "willed that water and blood should flow

from his side as he hung upon the Cross." Thus, "all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him in newness of life."[62] The same ritual prayer states how baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the people of God receive the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. At the beginning of the Rite of Adult Baptism, when the celebrant asks: "What will faith give you?," the recipient responds: "Eternal life." The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Pasch.[63]

The thoughts of the patristic writers converge in the way they link the three levels of history through typology.[64] These writers begin with a Pauline scriptural basis, ". . .our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; by the cloud and the sea all of them were baptized into Moses" (1 Cor. 10:2-3). Starting from this Pauline scriptural text, the patristic writers made more precise the comparison between the chosen people during the Jewish Passover and the catechumen at the threshold of baptism. Their writings reveal how the series of episodes in Christian initiation is related to the series of events in the crossing of the Red Sea. St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes:

> You must know that the symbol of Baptism is found in ancient history. In fact, when Pharaoh, the harsh and cruel tyrant, oppressed the free and noble Hebrew people, God sent Moses to deliver them from slavery to the Egyptians. The posts of doors were anointed with the blood of the lamb, so that the Destroyer would pass over the houses which had the sign of the blood. Let us now go from the old to the new, from the type to the reality. There we have Moses sent by God into Egypt; here we have Christ sent by the Father into the world; there is need to free the oppressed people from Egypt; here to rescue men tyrannized over by sin in this world; there the blood of the lamb turns aside the Destroyer; here the Blood of the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, puts the demons to flight; there the tyrant pursues the people even into the sea; here the shameless and bold demon

follows them even to the holy fountains; one tyrant is drowned in the sea, the other is destroyed in the water of salvation.[65]

The themes of life and death reflected in the crossing of the sea episode assume their true significance in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The link between these two and baptism is made explicit specially in the way the Early Church celebrated baptism, surrounded with rich symbols whose immediacy is not easy to recapture today. All these took place on the night of Easter while the whole Church celebrated the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection.[66]

In what way can Baptism, which celebrates the Paschal Mystery of Jesus in its death-resurrection reality, become a lived experience for Christian believers? Baptismal life is the new life according to the Spirit of Christ and through the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. Under the divine influence of the Holy Spirit, Giver of the gifts, Christians bear fruits of the Spirit in the personal, interpersonal, societal and ecclesial dimensions of their life.[67] Baptismal life is a life whose interior, indwelling source of grace is the Holy Spirit promised and handed on by Jesus at the Cross. Allowing the Spirit to move and transform personal beings is a life-long process for the baptized, demanding a persevering resistance and dying to sin in a faithful cooperation with grace.[68] The liturgical text for baptism brings out the struggle at the heart of baptismal life: a constant dying and rising with Christ who crossed the sea of death and rose from the darkness of the tomb.

Eucharist

In the Old Testament, the unleavened bread that Israel eats every year at the Passover commemorates the haste of the departure that set them free from Egypt. The manna in the desert, the water from the rock will always remind the Jews that they live by the bread of the Word of God; their daily bread is the fruit of the promised land, the pledge of God's fidelity to his promises. The "cup of

blessing" at the end of the Jewish Passover meal adds to the festive joy of wine an eschatological dimension—the reconstruction of Jerusalem after the exile.[69]

Through typology, "the events of the old" are perceived to be "figures of the new." Hence, the manna, the quails, the water from the rock which express God's communication of life to his people, prepare for the revelation of the living bread and wine of which they were the promise and the type. Just as God had nourished His people with a miraculous food and drink during the wilderness wandering, so, in Jesus first, and then through his sacramental presence in the Eucharist, God eases the hunger of His people today. The superiority of the Eucharist over the manna, however, needs to be highlighted. Jesus himself taught: "Your ancestors ate manna in the desert but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven for a man to eat and never die" (Jn. 6:49-50). St. Ambrose explains: ". . . the Bread descended from heaven communicates to you the substance of eternal life. It is the Body of Christ. As the light is greater than the shadow, the truth than the figure, so the Body of the Creator is greater than the manna from heaven."[70] The same superiority is attributed to the water from the rock, which is considered a Eucharistic figure.

> The water flowed from the Rock for the Jews, the Blood of Christ for you; the water slaked their thirst for an hour, the Blood quenches your thirst forever. The Jews drank and thirsted once more; when you have drunk, you need never thirst again. That was a figure, this is the truth. If the figure seems wonderful to you, how much more the reality, the figure of which you admire.[71]

It was in the framework of a sacred Jewish meal that Christ instituted the meal of the New Covenant, as it was in the framework of the Jewish memorial of the Passover that he died on the Cross. By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the context of the

Passover feast, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus' passing over to his Father by his death and resurrection, is anticipated in the Last Supper. The Eucharist, celebrated today, fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in glory.[72]

The participation in the reality of Jesus, our Passover, begins with Baptism, but Baptism is but a part, though the first and most important part, of a unified movement of Christian Initiation which achieves fullness in the Eucharist. The baptismal aspects of passage from darkness to light, slavery to freedom, sin to grace, death to life must be seen in the context of this unified movement which causes the baptized to be so completely identified with Christ as to be incorporated into the body of his risen and glorified humanity, participating in his own Passover.[73]

Both Baptism and the Eucharist are paschal sacraments, uniting the Christians to the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection.[74] United once and for all in Christ's death and resurrection by being grafted through Baptism into his Body the Church, believers are sustained, nourished and strengthened by the Eucharist. Through this new Passover banquet and sacrament of unity, the Church, the Body of Christ, becomes truly one with the Risen and Ascended Head. In the Spirit, the Crucified and Risen Lord becomes truly present in the eucharistic meal. It is the Spirit, too, who makes the historical words and deeds of Jesus profoundly understood and alive in the baptized.

"Do this in memory of me" (Lk. 22:19). The command of Jesus to celebrate his actions and words "until he comes" is premised upon a faith-understanding of the Eucharist and what it is a memorial of. Instituted in the context of the Jewish Passover, if not actually a Passover meal, the Eucharist means thanksgiving. In the narrative of the Last Supper, the Matthew-Mark tradition uses the verb *eulogize*

(give praise) for the bread and the verb *eucharistize* (give thanks) for the wine, whereas the Paul-Luke tradition uses only *eucharistize*. Both cases deal with the blessing as well as the thanksgiving Jesus addressed to his Father on taking the bread and wine.[75] To celebrate the Eucharist in memory of Christ is, above all, to offer up this thanksgiving and praise anew.[76] The Eucharist is a thanksgiving worship offered to the Father, centered on the mightiest act of God, Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery, and realized through him [Christ], with him, and in him in the unity of the Holy Spirit.[77] The Eucharist, as thanksgiving worship, is not confined to the duration of the celebration. As sacrifice, communion, presence and pledge of future glory, the Eucharist is an encounter with Jesus Christ, our Passover, in the midst of ordinary day-to-day life. He liberates those who believe in him from despair and meaninglessness, fulfills their deepest human hungers and promises his coming in glory through sacramental signs.[78]

The Eucharist is thus the supreme link between the Passover of Jesus and the present life of the Church—between his *transitus per passionem* and that of the members of his Body, the Church. A paschal character is given not only to Baptism but to Eucharistic worship, and through them to the whole Christian life. As sacraments of the Church, they reveal, though in the obscurity of faith, the Christian's point of departure, present journey and final goal. Such is the Passover character of Christian life.

Conclusion

This article begins with the conviction that the Passover developed from a Jewish reality to a Christian one. A presentation of the method of typology, intrinsic to the nature of patristic exegesis as a form of biblical interpretation follows. Next, it asserts that the Jewish Passover prefigured and prophetically announced Jesus Christ, the True and New Passover. By focusing on the Last Supper accounts in the Synoptics, the Gospel according to John and the insights of the patristic writers, the article succeeds in framing

an image of Jesus as the definitive fulfillment of what have been foreshadowed in the Old Testament texts. The final section of the article delineates how Christians participate in the Passover of Jesus Christ through a life indelibly marked by the sacrament of Baptism and nourished by the sacrament of the Eucharist.

NOTES

[1] *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* [DBT], 1973 ed., s.v. "Passover," by Pierre-Emile Bonnard.

[2] Lucien Deiss, C.S.Sp., *It's the Lord's Supper: The Eucharist of Christians* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), p. 35.

[3] *DBT*, Bonnard, "Passover."

[4] *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 1994 ed., s.v. "Testaments, Old and New," by Pierre-Marie Beaude.

[5] *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, 1994 ed., s.v. "Revelation," by René Latourelle.

[6] Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, no. 16, *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 122.

[7] *Sacramentum Mundi* 1, 1973 ed., "Biblical Exegesis," by Henri Crouzel.

[8] The OT paves the way by frequently using symbolic language, by attributing bodily members or human passions to God, and especially by its constant rethinking and further spiritualization, in the prophetic and sapiential books, of the great events in Israel's history, above all the Exodus. Ibid.

That the great events of Israel's past exhibited a certain pattern of God's acts had already been appreciated by some of the Old Testament writers themselves. The prophets from time to time, looked forward to the future for a repetition or recapitulation of the rhythm of divine action evident in the history of the past, e.g., Hosea and the wilderness wanderings, Second Isaiah and the exodus, according to Lampe, "The Reasonableness of Typology," in *Essays in Typology*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woolcombe (Napeville: Alec R. Allenson, 1957), pp. 26-27.

[9]Jean Danielou, S.J., *The Bible and Liturgy* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1956), pp. 4-5.

[10]G. W. H. Lampe, *The Reasonableness of Typology*, p. 18.

[11]Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, no. 16, p. 122.

[12]Lampe, in *The Reasonableness of Typology*, pp. 14-18 contends that the rise of modern critical study broke the chain of continuity that had hitherto existed between the modern biblical readers and those who preceded them during the patristic and medieval ages. Until the onset of modern biblical criticism, the unity of the Bible was the fundamental premise upon which all were agreed. However, the recent years have witnessed the recovery of this unity and continuity of the Scriptures as a whole.

[13]Joseph J. Smith, S.J., "Lecture Notes in Revelation," Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University.

[14]Lampe, *The Reasonableness of Typology*, pp. 26-27.

[15]Danielou, *The Bible and Liturgy*, p. 5.

[16]*New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1993 ed., s.v. "Hermeneutics," by Raymond E. Brown and Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M. A more recent article brings out both the defects and the advantages of patristic exegesis. John J. O"Keefe, "The Peril and Promise of Patristic Exegesis," in *Practical Theology*, ed. Michael Lawler and Gail Risch (Creighton, 2000): 145-161.

[17]The application of typology to the Scriptures is called spiritual exegesis, whereas its application to liturgy is called mystagogy. Thus one can speak of a biblical typology as well as a liturgical one. Both are based on the objective correspondence that exists between the several phases of salvation history. See Enrico Mazza, *Mystagogy*, (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co, 1989), pp. 9-11.

[18]Brian Daley, S.J. says that "Patristic exegesis has become fashionable again. After centuries of neglect, even hostile dismissal, on the part of Christian preachers and scholars of virtually every theological hue and stripe, the efforts of early Christian writers to interpret the Bible have recently been watered into life again by a small but swelling stream of conferences, scholarly books, and doctoral dissertations." Whatever the reasons [he speaks of the loss of energy in the post-Enlightenment approach to identifying the meaning of Biblical texts]. A significant number of Christian theologians and Biblical scholar are turning with interest and respect to the exegetical efforts of the Patristic era, in the hope of finding ways of reading the Bible that are both

scholarly sophisticated and imbued with reverent, active, orthodox faith. Brian Daley, S.J., "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable: Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms," in *Communio* 29 (Spring 2002): 185-216. Footnotes 1 and 3 of the article provide a list of a outstanding recent titles and collections.

[19]Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, no. 17, p. 123.

[20]*Sacramentum Mundi*, 4, Fuglister, "Passover."

[21]There is no intention here to presuppose that this is an actual historical event. Rather, one shares the thought of Raymond Brown who identifies this "short story" as a biographical apophthegm which articulates a revelation apprehended by post-resurrection faith, namely, the divine sonship. "To be precise, we are dealing with a biographical apophthegm: the illustration of a saying (in this case, a Christological saying: Lk. 1:49) shaped out of a life setting. The present setting and saying are no less and no more historical than the divine voice and its historical setting at the baptism of Jesus. Jesus was baptized. Jesus had a boyhood—those are historical facts. but in Luke, those historical reminiscences serve as the occasion for the articulation of a revelation apprehended by post-resurrectional faith, namely, the divine sonship. See Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 483.

[22]The exact historicity of these statements in the sense of technical history is not the issue here. What is asserted is their theological implications. Jesus was the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Son of God. As such, he truly assumed a historical existence, was a member of the Jewish race and lived in Palestine during the first century. Belonging to the Jewish religion, it can be presumed that he took part in its customs, traditions and celebrations, the most important of which was the Passover.

[23]Grelot and Pierron, *La nuit et les fêtes de pâques*, pp. 60-61.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Roger Greenacre and Jeremy Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter* (Herefordshire: Fowler Wright Books, 1989), pp. 35-36.

[26]Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[27]S.H. Hooke, *Alpha and Omega* (Nisbet: Welwyn, 1961), p. 181.

[28]Deiss, *It's the Lord's Supper*, p. 33.

[29]*The New Dictionary of Theology*, 1987 ed., s.v. "Paschal Mystery," by John F. Craghan.

[30]This is not the place to sum up the arguments on either side and we do not consider ourselves qualified to attempt to judge between them. The Latin Church, in using unleavened bread for the Eucharist, sided with the Synoptic interpretation. The Greek Church, in using leavened bread, sided with the Johannine one. Pertinent studies include: Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's 1966); Annie Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper*, trans. Isaac Rafferty (New York: Alba House, 1965); L. Johnston, "The Date of the Last Supper," *Sacraments in Scripture*, ed., Thomas Worden, (London: Chapman, 1966).

[31]Jerome Kodell, O.S.B., *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), p. 19.

[32]Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament*, pp. 54-56 summarizes the arguments of J. Jeremias favoring a Passover interpretation of the Last Supper, as well as the counter arguments of Xavier Léon-Dufour, S.J. opposing that interpretation.

[33]*DBT*, 1973 ed., s.v. "Eucharist," by Pierre Benoit.

[34]*DBT*, 1973 ed., s.v. "Lamb of God," by Marie-Emile Boismard.

[35]Greenacre and Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter*, p. 45.

[36]Roman ICEL Text.

[37]Lightfoot remarks that in the earlier Gospels, the Lord's single visit to Jerusalem ends with the Passover, that at which he died. In John's Gospel, not only are three Passovers mentioned, but some of the events that are associated with the sole visit to Jerusalem in the earlier Gospels, are, in John, ascribed to previous visits. Above all, reference in one way or another is continually made, throughout this gospel to the death and resurrection of Jesus, a reference which, in the earlier Gospels, is not explicitly made until the departure from Galilee has taken place. Robert H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, ed. C. F. Evans (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 176.

[38]Durrwell highlights the wider paschal horizon of the Gospel of John. The Word "has set up his tabernacle amongst us" (Jn. 1:14). Christ must be lifted up like the serpent (Jn. 3:14). He has come down from heaven and will become our food, like manna (Jn. 6:48 ff). His followers will be refreshed by him as by the rock in the desert (Jn. 7:37). They will follow him as the Israelites followed the pillar of fire (Jn. 8:12). See F. X. Durrwell, C.S.S.R, *The Resurrection* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1960), p. 37.

[39]Ibid., p. 33.

[40] Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel*, pp. 96-97.

[41] *DBT*, "Lamb of God," by Boismard.

[42] The Book of Revelation describes the different phases of this combat in exalted images. It exhibits the same characteristics as the holy war between Yahweh and Pharaoh's armies. While the angels of God blew their trumpets, the wrath of God poured upon the earth, unleashing catastrophes modeled after the plagues of Egypt. Grelot and Pierron, *La nuit et les fêtes de pâques*, p. 78.

[43] Ibid., p. 79.

[44] Jean Danielou, one of the foremost patristics scholars of our century, has written on how the Fathers of the Church used the themes of the Passover in order to bring out the identity and mission of Jesus Christ. See Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy and From Shadows to Reality* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1960).

[45] Melito of Sardis, "The Paschal Mystery," *The Way 2* (1962): 145-54.

[46] Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M., *Il mistero pasquale* (Padova: Edizione Messagero, 1981), pp. 15-22.

[47] Melito of Sardis, "The Paschal Mystery," p. 149.

[48] *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12, 1937 ed., s.v. "Pâques," by Ireneé-Henri Dalmais.

[49] Cantalamessa, *Il mistero pasquale*, p. 22-30.

[50] *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12, "Pâques," by Dalmais.

[51] Philip Ferlay, "Jesus, notre pâque: théologie du mystère pascal" (Paris: Le Centurion, 1977), p. 6.

[52] See Colman E. O' Neill, O.P., *Sacramental Realism* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), pp. 80-98. The author summarizes St. Augustine's use of the symbol "body" as the theme which unites the spiritual sacrifice of Christians to that of Christ. Behind the symbolism, there is a real personal unity brought about by the Spirit. It is a dynamic unity because it was initiated in the sacrifice on Calvary and is being developed now as Christians are in the process of being re-formed by their obedience to the will of God. The "whole" sacrifice was offered by Christ—but "we ourselves are that whole sacrifice" because we are the living body of Christ.

[53] Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, no. 5, pp. 139-40.

[54] Ibid., no. 6, p. 140.

[55]Christians live out the Paschal Mystery of Christ on the sacramental, moral and eschatological levels. The substructure of each level is faith, love and hope respectively. Sacramental encounter becomes fruitful through the living faith of the recipient. On the moral level, the Paschal Mystery touches our lives to the extent that we are prepared to live the demands of the great commandment of love. When we love in the Christian sense of *agape*, we must die to something within us if we are truly to serve the other. On the eschatological level, we live out the Paschal Mystery in terms of Christian hope. We experience the pull of the future upon the present, challenging us to build a better world, effecting change from within. Dermott A. Lane, "The Paschal Mystery," *Furrow* 30 (May 1979): 286-96.

[56]*Sacramentum Mundi* 4, Fuglister, "Passover."

[57]The whole exposition on the Passover character of Christian life focuses only on Baptism and Eucharist, the two sacraments referred to in Jn. 19:34, although the Sacraments of Initiation includes Confirmation. Because of the patristic exegesis connects Baptism and the Eucharist more directly with Jn 19:34, these two sacraments are more strictly defined as paschal as distinguished from Confirmation which is more pentecostal. It must be remembered though, that the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit. Similarly the participation in Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the reception of the Spirit. Baptism in its full meaning, signifies and effects both. It may be helpful also to remember that what St. Luke sees as the two moments of Easter and Pentecost are brought together as the single event of Easter in the Fourth Gospel. Pascha/ Pentecost form a single unity. Greenacre and Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter*, p. 57.

[58]*The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 1993 ed., s.v. "Mystery," by Thomas D. McGonigle, O.P..

[59] Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, p. 86.

[60]Ibid., pp. 86-87.

[61]*Birth by Drowning* is the title of a verse play by Norman Nicholson (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), telling the story of Elisha and Naaman the leper. "As you deduce," writes Mr. Nicholson in a private letter, "the phrase refers, by implication, to baptism, though this is not specifically the subject of the play." Cited in Greenacre and Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter*, p. 54.

[62] Ralph A. Keifer, ed., *The Catholic Liturgy Book* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1975), p. 59.

[63] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 1994), no. 1222, p. 295.

[64] Danielou quotes Tertullian, Didymus the Blind, Sts. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, Sts. Ambrose, Cyril and Cyprian, Zeno and Aphraates. Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, pp. 89-98.

[65] Cited in Danielou, *The Bible and Liturgy*, p. 96.

[66] The candidates descended to the font in semi-darkness, stripped off all their clothes and were anointed all over with oil to prepare them, like athletes, for their struggle with the Devil. Facing west to renounce the Devil and all his works, they were immersed three times in the waters. They then ascended from the font towards the east, were anointed on the forehead (sealed with the Holy Spirit), clothed in white robes and given lighted candles. Thus dressed and carrying their candles they entered the Church to participate for the first time in the whole of the Eucharist and to receive Communion. When receiving Communion they partook of three chalices; the chalice of wine—of course, but also a chalice of water to signify the washing of the inner man and a chalice of milk mixed with honey to celebrate their entry into the "Promised Land." Refer to Greenacre and Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter*, pp. 54-55.

[67] E.C.C.C.E. *The Catholic Faith Catechism* (Metro Manila: Word and Life Center, 1992), no. 1278, p. 352.

[68] Ibid.

[69] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1334, p. 316.

[70] Cited in Danielou, *The Bible and Liturgy*, p. 148.

[71] De Myst. 48; Botte, 123, cited in Ibid., p. 151.

[72] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1340, p. 317.

[73] Greenacre and Haselock, *The Sacrament of Easter*, p. 56.

[74] The patristic exegesis of Jn. 19:34 points out this truth. John's Gospel records that while the dead Christ hung on the Cross on Calvary, "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; immediately there came out blood and water." Patristic exegetes from Tertullian on developed a strong tradition of

seeing the wound in Christ's side as the birthplace of the Church and the source of the efficacy of the sacraments. Ibid. p. 58.

[75]Deiss, *It's the Lord's Supper*, p. 45.

[76]Deiss spells out in more detail the themes of praise at the Last Supper which are also the themes of the paschal feast. Now these themes are found in the *Poem of the Nights*, those nights that the Jewish Passover commemorated. Ibid., pp. 48-67.

[77] *Catholic Faith Catechism*, no. 1324, p. 368.

[78]This understanding of the Eucharist is a synthesis of Chapter 26 of the *Catholic Faith Catechism*, pp. 363-82.