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***Ego Eimi* Formula and a Sense of Continuity in John's Gospel**

**Chapter Sixth (Jn 6: v.20, vss.35-58)**

by

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A paper Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology & Seminary of  
Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of the Master of Systematic Theology

**School of Theology & Seminary  
Saint John's University  
Collegeville, Minnesota**

**April 2009**

This paper was written under the direction of

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**Charles A. Bobertz, *Ph.D.***

John Changjin Bai  
has successfully demonstrated the use of  
English  
in this paper.

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**Charles A. Bobertz, *Ph.D.***  
04/06/2009

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**(Jn 6: v.20, vss.35-58)**

This paper examines John's Gospel chapter six (vs.20, vss.35-58) in light of the formula "*ego eimi*" ("I am") that occurs four times within it. The formula shapes the content of chapter six and gives continuity to the two sections (vss.35-50 and vss.51-58) that have generated theological disagreements. My goal is to demonstrate that the sacramental perspective implicit in the first section is made explicit in the second with *ego eimi* being the hinge in vs.51. *Ego eimi* will be shown as revelatory and as developing the eucharistic and sapiential themes of chapter six (vs. 20, vss. 35-58).

This paper may not be duplicated.

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04/06/2009

## ***Ego Eimi* Formula and a Sense of Continuity in John’s Gospel Chapter Sixth**

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This paper examines John’s Gospel chapter six (vs.20, vss.35-58) in light of the formula “*ego eimi*” (“I am”) that occurs four times within it. The formula shapes the content of chapter six and gives continuity to the two sections (vss.35-50 and vss.51-58) that have generated theological disagreements. Rudolf Bultmann and some biblical scholars believe that an ecclesiastical redactor added verses 51-58 to correct the chapter by introducing a non-Johannine sacramental theme that would make the discourse more acceptable to the Church at large.<sup>1</sup> Contrarily Michael Dauphinais insists that the two sections are one complete discourse with some degree of nuance—the Eucharist must be received in both a sacramental way and a spiritual way.<sup>2</sup> Oscar Cullmann will maintain that the gift of Jesus given as the bread of life need not to be restricted to the single act of feeding five thousand nor to the historical incarnation but after his death it is given evermore---as Bread of Life Jesus will never be withdrawn from his own.<sup>3</sup> Cullmann’s method of interpreting the Gospel according to John is based on the connection between Jesus the historical revealer and Jesus the one who is present in the sacrament. Therefore, keeping these two sections together is essential to come to a full understanding of the Eucharist implied by the evangelist.<sup>4</sup> I believe that the sacramental perspective implicit

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1966), 286.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Dauphinais, “And They Shall All Be Taught by God: Wisdom and the Eucharist in John 6” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, edited by Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington: Catholic U. Press, 2005), 312-317.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian worship*, (Bristol: Wyndham Hall Press, 1987), .96.

<sup>4</sup> Cullmann, 94-95.

in the first section is made explicit in the second with *ego eimi* being the hinge in vs.51. At this point *ego eimi* is revelatory, and it develops the eucharistic theme. And two sections combine the continuity of sapiential and eucharistic themes through the use of *ego eimi*.

In our contemporary culture, one would generally think that the phrase “I am” is a common one with insignificant content. However, twenty nine times *ego eimi* is used in John’s Gospel, twenty six times from the mouth of Jesus. When one compares these numbers with the synoptic accounts (five times in Matt, three times in Mark and four times in Luke), one can see that the phrase may hold a good deal of theological weight for the evangelist. In John’s Gospel the short phrase *ego eimi* becomes the conscious and theologically significant expression of a highly compressed formula.<sup>5</sup>

According to literary interpretation, “*ego eimi*” is an emphatic construction in the Greek of John’s Gospel. The normal way which one would write “I am” in Koine Greek (the form of Greek in which the New Testament was written) is “*eimi*” (the first person pronoun, I, is implicit in the form of the verb). The result is literally something like “I myself am!” or “I am He” or “I am the one.” But we will see that the peculiar construction seems to have meaning beyond a simple emphasis on the pronoun.<sup>6</sup>

In this short paper, I can not examine the whole meaning and historical developments of “*ego eimi*” in the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures and in John’s Gospel, but Raymond Brown, Rudolf Schnackenburg and Robert Kysar have developed instructive categories

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<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John: Vol. 2*, translated by Cecily Hastings, Francis Mc Donagh, David Smith, and Frichard Foley (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 79.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel*, Third Edition (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 58. Brown, 533-538.

to interpret the formula “*ego eimi*” in John’s Gospel. Below are summaries of Schnackenburg’s version of these four categories:

1. The most frequent use of the formula as a metaphor (an explicit predicate) which Jesus describe himself as the bread of life (6:35,48), the living bread (6:51), the bread which has come down from heaven (6:41); the light of the world (8:12); the door of the sheep (10:7,9); the good shepherd (10:11,14); the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth and the life (14:6); the (true) vine(15:1,5). All these symbolic terms are clearly Christological and soteriological in John’s Gospel.<sup>7</sup>

2. The absolute use the formula without any addition: 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8. There is a distinction here. First, in the walking on the lake (6:20) and Jesus’ arrest (18:5, 6, 8), the phrase is first an identifying formula. The disciples are frightened by their experience at night on the lake, and Jesus makes himself known through the formula, and adds the “Do not be afraid”. His “It is I” or “I am” tells the soldiers who want to seize him that he is the person they are looking for “Jesus of Nazareth”. On both occasion, these phrases are unique express Jesus’ epiphany authority. Second, 8:24, 28 and 13:29, there is a completely different use. The formula here concentrates in itself the full content of faith (8:24; 13:19) and knowledge (8:28). In these passages the formula has a unique and particular claim. There is a slight difference in 8:58, which, in relation to Abraham’s coming into existence, refers to Jesus’ pre-existence, his eternal being. All these passages are linked by Jesus’ claim to a totally unique mode of being which transcends human categories to the divinity and power of God.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Schnackenburg, 79-80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 80-81.



3. The formula does not appear in such a “pure” form, but it is certainly theologically related to the formula in John’s Gospel, such as 4: 26 “I am he, who speaks to you,” Jesus identifies himself as the Messiah whom the Samaritan woman expects. And the same use in formula in 8:18, 23, 28, which Jesus describes as the witness with his Father to give admissible evidence. And also related to the formula is the expression “where I am”, these refer to Jesus’ heavenly destination (7:34, 36; 12:26, 14:3 17:24). Formally and linguistically these passages do not belong to the formula, but theologically they have the same meaning.<sup>9</sup>

4. Of other uses of the formula, only two passages in the gospel have no connection with Jesus’ self-identification. They are the reply of the man born in 9:9 (“I am the man”) and Pilate’s question in 18:35 (“I am not a Jew, am I?”). John the Baptist’s denials “I am not the Messiah” (1:20, 3:28) also are irrelevant to a consideration of Jesus’ particular form of expression, but the origin and meaning of this formula are rich and significant, when they compare with Jesus’ self-identification.<sup>10</sup>

In concluding this discussion, we understand that these three scholars<sup>11</sup> all point out that the Johannine “*ego eimi*” saying are completely and utterly expressions of John’s Christology and doctrine of salvation. They stand and alongside other expressions of Johannine Christology (Son, Son of Man, Lamb of God) but have the particular advantage of making the saving character of Jesus’ mission in impressive images and symbols. The images of “I am” style express his role in revelation and salvation in an incomparable way.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Schnackenburg, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, 533-538, Schnackenburg, 79-89, Kysar, 56-60.

<sup>12</sup> Schnackenburg, 79-89

As Robert Kysar points out

the Fourth Evangelist uses the tantalizing Greek construction (“*ego eimi*”) in full knowledge of its religious significance, both Hellenistic and Jewish. He or she uses it to employ it to assert Jesus divinity and to claim that Jesus is the only source of truth and full human existence. When Christ speaks, it is God who speaks. All of this seems quite consistent with the view of Jesus we have seen emerging in the other parts of the Gospel. It is consistent with the prologue to the Gospel, with the insistence that Christ more than the Jewish Messiah, and with the Son of Man and Father-Son relationship passages. What it specifically does is underline the function of God and Christ? That is, it says in effect that so far as human concerns go, Christ and God are one and the same. The words of Christ are God’s words. The actions of Christ are God’s actions. The human response to Christ is the response to God. For all human purposes then, the Christ figure is God.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the fourth Evangelist points out that the consistent and mysterious “*ego eimi*” (“I am”) sayings are completely and utterly expressions of Christology and soteriology. We may understand that Jesus reveals God’s divinity in the world and Jesus himself is the revealer. We hold these main points of the formula in John’s Gospel while examining the formula “*ego eimi*” in chapter 6:20 and 35-59.

*Ego eimi* formula occurs for the first time immediately after the multiplication of loaves in chapter 6:20 that point out that Jesus is the promise of salvation, the Jewish Messiah and with God’s power and God’s self-revelation. The Johanne account of Jesus walking on the water (6: 16-21) is the only passage in chapter six with a synoptic parallel (Matt 14: 22-23 and Mark 6: 45-52); it seems somewhat out of place between the multiplication of loaves (6:1-15) and the bread of life discourse (6:22-59), that is, until one considers the significance of Jesus statement: “It is I or (I am). Do not be afraid!” (*ego eimi me phobisthe* - 6:20). The evangelist carefully places the formula here to evoke a certain Jewish worldview associated with the divine name. “*Ani hu* (I [am] He)” in

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<sup>13</sup> Kysar, 56-60

Hebrew is translated into “*ego eimi*” in Septuagint Greek.<sup>14</sup> The evangelist’s placement of “*ego eimi*” at this point would have served as a clue to the revelatory worldview associated with the phrase:

In the mind of the evangelist, and to the ears of his primitive Christian audience, this saying can hardly have only the sense of an identification; it also has the same associations with authority and the promise of salvation as in God’s self-revelation in the Old testament (cf Is 43:1-3, 11).<sup>15</sup>

Schnackenburg points out that 6:20 is an identifying formula Jesus uses to express himself as the absolute revelation of God; there is no addition added to the formula.<sup>16</sup> Kysar insists that this special meaning is obviously intended in the so-call absolute “I am” saying, without any predicate with which Jesus identifies himself as heavenly almighty Father. In 6:20 (“It is I or I am. Do not be afraid!”) the disciples are frightened by their experience at night on the lake, and Jesus makes himself know through the formula, and adds “Do not be afraid”. Later his “It is I” (18:5) tells the soldiers who want to seize him that he is the person they are looking for (“Jesus of Nazareth”); it is a unique expression of authority as can be seen from the epiphany on the lake and the collapse of the soldiers on hearing his words. This authority is taken further in “I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he” (8:24), and “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize then I am he” and 13: 19 and 8: 28, 58. All these passages are linked by Jesus’ claim to a totally unique mode of being that transcends human categories to reach divinity of God.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Brown, 536.

<sup>15</sup> Schnackenburg, 87.

<sup>16</sup> This absolute formula can also be seen in 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Schnackenburg, 79-89.

*Ego eimi* (6:20) also is theological language and becomes an introduction of the bread of life discourse.<sup>18</sup> Jesus first uses *ego eimi* in 6:35 to compare himself to the bread of life: “Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty;” the multi-layered implications of the phrase are at the front of the reader’s mind. The revelation of Jesus is not only a ‘spiritual’ revelation but of the Person of the historical Jesus who not brings the revelation but is the revelation.<sup>19</sup> If the evangelist had not set us up with the startling claim *ego eimi* as Jesus demonstrated his power over the sea, this authority claim could slip past the reader as a simple use of first person singular.

Schnackenburg insists that the most frequent use of the formula “*ego eimi*” is a metaphor with which Jesus describes himself as an explicit predicate, such as, the bread of life (6:35, 48), the living bread (6:51), the bread which has come down from heaven (6:41); the light of the world (8:12); the door of the sheep (10:7, 9); the good shepherd (10:11, 14); the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth and the life (14:6); the (true) vine (15:1, 5). The fact that these metaphors make a total of seven may be an accident, but a teacher brought up in the tradition of Judaism might also have chosen this “perfect” number deliberately. We may recall John’s frequent use of symbolic day.<sup>20</sup> Judged by the criterion of symbolism, “the resurrection and the life” (11:25) and “the way, the truth and the life” (14:6) have a more abstract and artificial ring, as though they have been developed out of the intellectual context specifically for Johannine theology. On the other hand, the list does not include Jesus the spring of water and passages, he

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<sup>18</sup> Schnackenburg, 87.

<sup>19</sup> Cullmann, 95.

<sup>20</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*. (New York: Crossroad Press, 1999), 26.

seem to imply this description (cf. 4:14; 6:35; 7:38 and 19:34) without using it. These symbols were familiar to a Palestinian, and can be shown to have had a theological significance in Judaism. This suggestion implies that the evangelist (or the Johannine circle) adopted an existing tradition, but did not follow it slavishly. The language is clearly Christological and soteriological in John's gospel.<sup>21</sup> The evangelist's calculated use of *ego eimi* at this point both demands the readers' attention and sets up a stabilizing force that binds the sapiential and eucharistic theology of the two sections of discourse, to which we now turn.

Historical critics such as Brown and Schnackenburg hypothesize that the two sections in the Bread of Life discourse each have their own theological character. In the first section (6:35-50) Jesus makes revelatory claims to be the "bread of life" (6:35, 48). The second section (6:51-58) is introduced with "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (6:51a). But the evangelist allows the bread metaphor associated with *ego eimi* to evolve into a material claim that continues to carry the freight of divinity and become eucharistic: "The Bread that I will give is my flesh" (6:51b). The basic distinction debated in this passage revolves around the "sapiential" and eucharistic implications of the two sections. Aquinas claims (via Dauphinais) that both sections operate with interconnected themes - equally sapiential and eucharistic. Aquinas uses Aristotelian philosophy to interpret how the eucharistic bread is related to the sapiential Word of Christ.

He (Jesus) has then speaks of his body when he says, and the bread which I will give is my flesh. For he had said that he was the living bread; and so that we do not think that he is such so far he is the Word or in his soul alone, he shows that even his flesh is life-giving, for it is an instrument of his divinity. Thus, since an

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<sup>21</sup> Schnackenburg, 79-89.

instrument acts by virtue of the agent, then just as the divinity of Christ is life-giving, so too his flesh gives life (as Damascene says) because of the Word to which it is united. Thus Christ healed the sick by his touch. So what he said above, I am the living bread, pertained to the power of the Word; but what he is saying here pertains to the sharing in his body, that is to the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>22</sup>

However, I think this position is challenged when one examines the different character of each section, which appears to be two historical “strata” fused together by a remarkably astute redactor. The first section contains the highly significant *ego eimi* statements and is metaphorical. The second section is not metaphorical and Jesus makes abundantly clear at the expense of some disciples that his flesh is real food (6:66). Considered in light of the Docetist threat to the Johannine community, the second section makes sense as a clarification of the first.<sup>23</sup> Jesus is not merely a divine revealer of wisdom (6:51a); he is also the salvation of the world and his flesh is the sacrificial offering (6:51b).

None of the critics I looked at have developed the fact that *ego eimi* bridges the sections but it needs to be kept in mind the phrase does not recur in this second section. But I think the *ego eimi* bridge makes sense when considered in light of Aquinas’ interpretation of the spiritual and material character of chapter 6. At this point, Aquinas’ and Brown’s interpretations of 6:51-59 complement each other nicely. Aquinas’ interpretation is rooted in the principle

He [Jesus] leads them back to the truth by calling their attention to spiritual food, saying, do not work for the food that perishes, but for that which endure to eternal life. First, he mentions its power; secondly, that it comes from him, which the Son of Man will give you. The power of this food is seen in the fact that it does not perish. In this respect we should point out that material things are likenesses of

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<sup>22</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, translated by James A. Weisheipl and Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1980), #959, 381.

<sup>23</sup> Brown posits that this second half may have originally been the “words of institution” from John's Last Supper discourse. Brown, 285.

spiritual things, since they are causes and produced by them; and consequently resemble spiritual things in some way.<sup>24</sup>

In this case the initial *ego eimi* statements (6:35, 48) show how the spiritual nature and its association with divine wisdom point to the “bread of life” as a material likeness. In terms of movement, the spiritual is the source of the material, and so the spiritual (or sapiential) meaning present in the first half of this section brings about the material (eucharistic) meaning present in the second. The spiritual and material meaning co-exist in the bread which “endures to eternal life” (6:27b). In this case the material likeness is unique because it is Jesus Christ in flesh. Cullmann notes that the material side of the sacrament is exaggerated by the use of the Greek verb “to bite into pieces or to gnaw” rather than the usual verb “to eat”. The life element which has come down from heaven is the completely incarnate Christ.<sup>25</sup> Aristotelian philosophy will state that the material is inferior to the spiritual but here it does not apply because in Jesus the material is spiritual.

Although Brown and Schnackenburg are in general agreement as to the different character of the revelatory and eucharistic sections, and a debate centers on whether one can interpret them as a convergence of two complementary theologies or as divergent and the work of an “ecclesiastical redactor” who wanted to weld a sacramental meaning onto a sapiential discourse. For instance, Bultmann insists that the first place 6:51b-58 form a marked contrast to the previous course of the discussion (6:27-50). These verses 51b - 58 refer without any doubt to the sacramental meal of the Eucharist, where the flesh and blood of the “Son of Man” are consumed, with the result this food gives “eternal life”; in the sense that the participants in the meal can be assured of the future resurrection. He continues to point out that the discourse of Lord’s Supper not only strikes one as strange

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<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, #894-895, 356-357.

<sup>25</sup> Cullmann, 99.

in relation to the evangelist's in general and specially to eschatology [the future resurrection], but it also stands in contradiction to what said just before. For here the bread of life which the Father gives by sending the Son from heaven (32f) is the Son himself, the Revealer. He gives (27) and is (35, 48, 51) the bread of life, the water of life (4:10), the light of world (8:12), and as the Revealer gives life to the world (v.33; 10:28; 17:2)—to those, that is, who “come” to him (v.35; 3:20f; 5:40), who believe in him (v.35; 3:20f and 18). In all of this there is no need for a sacramental act, by means of which the believer must make the life his own. Furthermore, the terminology of 6:51b-58 is taken from a quite different circle of ideas from that 6:27-51a. Therefore, according to Bultmann we must inevitably conclude that the vss.51b-58 have been added by an ecclesiastical redactor. It has been added in an attempt by the editor to make the whole discourse reflect the views of vv. 51b-58.<sup>26</sup>

By contrast, Brown insists that the vss.51-58 blend in very well with context of the eucharistic theme. For instance, vss.51-58 picks up some elements in the introduction (25-34) that were not found in vss.35-50, e.g, giving the bread (51-58) and the Son of Man (53, 27). Moreover, the two sections are like in composition and statement. On a linguistic level, the two sections are similar enough to be characterized as an extension of the genuinely Johannine tradition. They contain some obvious Johannine features: “eternal life” (54), “to feed” (8: 18) and “to remain” (56). Moreover, Brown believes that Bultmann's theory is the evidence of a secondary, eucharistic undertone in the multiplication, the transitional verses 22-24, the introduction to the discourse, and the body of the discourse (35-50). This chapter would be eucharistic if vss.51-58 were not part of it; and if vss.51-58 are a later addition, they were added not introduce an

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<sup>26</sup> Butmann, 218-220.



eucharistic theme but to bring out more clearly the eucharistic elements that were already there. Therefore, Brown examine the literary and historical question about vss.51-58, he finds that vss.35-50 and vss.51-58 are two different forms of the discourse on the Bread of Life, both Johannine in the sense that they are made up of sayings passed down in the Johannine preaching tradition. The form of the discourse in vss.35-50, although it has amalgamated to itself some extraneous material, represents a far more primitive and sapiential form of the discourse. The form vss.51-58 represents a more radical rethinking of the discourse in which the eucharistic theme has become. It was added to vss.35-50 at a fairly late stage in the ending of the Fourth Gospel, probably in the final redaction. In addition Brown proposes the hypothesis, because of the absence of the Last Supper in chapter 13, a similarity of institution formula of the vs.51 and the reference of the vss. 51-58 to the Last Supper which supports a scene originally associated with the last Passover of Jesus' life being transposed to the body of the ministry and earlier Passover.

Furthermore, Brown examines a diagram<sup>27</sup> setting vss.35-50 and vss.51-58 side by side and discovers that they are very closely parallel. They have the same beginning and the same ending and blend the themes of the chapter 6 with material from the Last Supper. Sandra Schneider calls this the cyclical repetitive equality or the spiral quality that reminds the attentive reader realizes that he or she is hearing the same ideas, even the same expressions, over and over throughout the Gospel.<sup>28</sup> Brown concludes that the final ecclesial redactor has created a second Bread of life discourse and spelled out the eucharistic undertone already implicit in the chapter 6.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, 288-289.

<sup>28</sup> Schneiders, 28

<sup>29</sup> Brown, 285-287

In addition, Cullmann believes that the Fourth evangelist makes Jesus himself draw the line from the miracle of feeding with material bread to the miracle of the Sacrament. The miracle of feeding emphasized the hints of the sacraments. And Cullmann has also applied this notion to the whole Gospel on the assumption that the subject of the subsequent discourse is the Eucharist, and that the two sections (v. 35 and vss. 51b-58) belong together because of the common metaphorical use of the words for “bread” and “food”. Sacramental faith and faith in the word of revelation are often bound together. The method of the gospel is governed by a theological principle where the faith of the readers is kept in view—there is a movement between seeing and believing as the evangelist sets these two aspects of faith side by side.<sup>30</sup> Against Bultmann, he would argue that a false alternative is set up, in the view of the evangelist, if a saying could be meant either *only* as historical fact or *only* as a reference to a theological (mystical) fact.<sup>31</sup>

If we carefully examine Bultmann’s theory, we find that Bultmann tries to deny the sacramental act in favor of justification. However, Brown strongly protects sacrament, emphasizing that sacramental acts play a special role for justification. Their two theories cause serious questions about the doctrine of justification and of faith and works, each of which has historically divided Protestants and Catholics. I won’t discuss this question, but we should consider why John’s Gospel does not have the narrative of the Lord’s Supper and why the early Christian identified themselves by the Lord’s Supper. However, Cullmann’s method of interpreting the Gospel according to John is based on the connection between Jesus the historical revealer and Jesus the one who is present in the

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<sup>30</sup> Cullmann,, 40-41, 94-96.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 56.

sacrament. Therefore, keeping these two sections together is essential to come to a full understanding of the Eucharist implied by the evangelist.<sup>32</sup> And Brown claims that the first section is sapiential with eucharistic undertones, and the second is fully eucharistic, however, both sections acknowledge a way in which Christ is present.<sup>33</sup>

The two forms of the Bread of Life discourse represent a juxtaposition of Jesus' twofold presence to believers in the *preached word* and in the *sacrament* of the Eucharist. This twofold presence is the structural skeleton of the Easter Divine Liturgy, the Roman Mass, and all those Protestant liturgical services that have historically evolved from modification of the Roman Mass.<sup>34</sup>

I do not believe vss.51-58 to be an ecclesial corrective or to be added. I believe that the sacramental perspective implicit in the first section is made explicit in the second with *ego eimi* being the hinge in vs.51. At this point *ego eimi* is revelatory and it develops the eucharistic theme.<sup>35</sup> However, I would not also agree with Dauphinais' interpreting the two sections as one complete discourse without some degree of nuance. Although Dauphinais uses Aquinas to argue strongly against Brown's "Bifurcation"<sup>36</sup> of the sapiential and eucharistic meanings in these sections, I am inclined to see Brown's and Aquinas' interpretations as complementary, revealing the contributions of the historical-critical method to patristic interpretation and Cullmann's method of interpreting the Gospel according to John is based on the connection between Jesus the historical revealer and Jesus the one who is present in the sacrament. Although Aquinas' canonical, material, spiritual interpretation is thorough and compelling, Brown, Schnackenburg and Bultmann

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<sup>32</sup> Cullmann, 94-95.

<sup>33</sup> An interesting side note that these two presences occur in the Mass as Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist.

<sup>34</sup> Brown, 290.

<sup>35</sup> Schnackenburg, 79.

<sup>36</sup> Dauphinais, 312-317.

may also be correct in their hypothesis of a conflation of two historical strata. One can also see that if the second half of John 6 (vss.35-50 and vss.51-58) is indeed two strata, the redactor has “sealed the joint” well in fusing the continuity of eucharistic and sapiential theme through the use of *ego eimi*.

The purpose of fusing the Eucharistic and sapiential themes serves an eschatological purpose—it is the body of the risen Christ which is present in the Lord’s Supper; we are raised up to life here and now and this is our promise of resurrection. By the birth of Jesus the fullness of God’s divinity has entered the created realm—this presence of the fullness of divinity is given to us sacramentally in the Eucharistic so that we who are human may be divinized now and totally in the future at the resurrection.

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