DECLARATION

I declare that MORE THAN A PASSOVER: INCULTURATION IN THE SUPPER NARRATIVES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Fergus John King
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether the theological method currently known as inculturation was used in the Supper Narratives of the New Testament. A methodology is set up in which texts are examined against the backdrop of Graeco-Roman, Judaic and early Christian cultures. This methodology focusses on family resemblances and analogies, rather than genealogy or causal dependence to examine the links between text and context. It also avoids claims for orthodoxy dependent on claims about origins.

Engaging with the claims of writers from Schweitzer, through Jeremias and up to the present, three themes are identified: meals, sacrifice and eschatology. The manifestations of each are examined against the three cultural groups: Judaic, Graeco-Roman and early Christian.

The Supper Narratives (Mk 14:12-26, Matt. 26:17-30 and Luke 22:7-23 and 1 Cor 11:17-34) are then mapped against these themes. Analogies to the cultural groups are then traced.

This process leads to conclusions that the New Testament writers did use a methodology which can be identified as inculturation. It manifests itself particularly through patterns identified by anthropologists as *bricolage* and re-accentuation. A notable example is “sacrificialisation”, in which events and items are invested with a fresh sacrificial significance. Judaic concepts (e.g., covenant and Atonement) and rituals (e.g., sacramentals and Passover) dominate the interpretations of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples. This does not mean that inculturation only took place in relation to Jewish culture. Many of the concepts used (e.g., sacrifice and sacrament) share commonalities with Graeco-Roman thought which allows them to engage with such world-views. This process sees Judaic understandings used as correctives to Graeco-Roman thinking about sacraments. It also sees Jewish concepts used to address Graeco-Roman values, and give an added historical depth (*antiquitas*) to a comparatively recent event.
KEYWORDS

Inculturation*sacrifice*eschatology*ritual meals*
Second Temple Judaism*Graeco-Roman philosophy and religion*
New Testament Last Supper Narratives*

bricolage*re-accentuation* sacrificilisation* *symbolism*
sacramentalism
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<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHB</td>
<td>The Ancient History Bulletin</td>
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<td>JHSC</td>
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<td>JRPR</td>
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<td>NAB</td>
<td>New African Bible, Nairobi: Paulines, 1999</td>
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<td>TG</td>
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<td>TM</td>
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<td>UCP</td>
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<td>WBC</td>
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<td>WJKP</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a Kiswahili proverb, “Mtu ni Watu” (“A person is people”). John Donne was more poetic: “No man is an island”.

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Fergus King
Newcastle
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