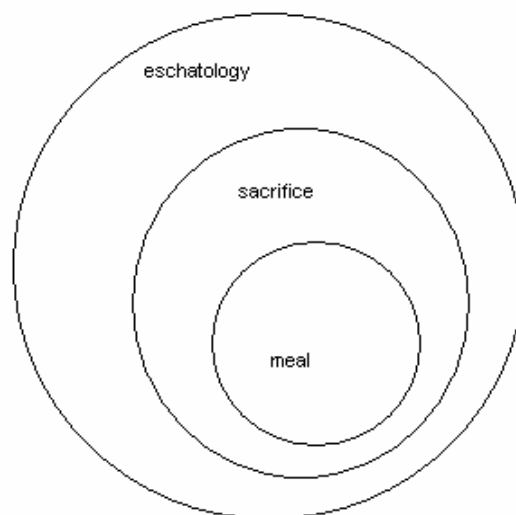


## RECAPITULATION

So far, our research has looked at the context of the New Testament. Using headings of “Jewish”, “Graeco-Roman” and “Early Christian”, descriptions have been given of meals, sacrifice/ritual, and eschatology. The pluriform nature of each of these three headings has appeared repeatedly. The various religious and philosophical traditions, their “schools” and cults, have been brought into the picture.

Albert Schweitzer’s work provided a jumping-off point for much of this work. His stress on eschatology was accompanied by a firm conviction that the language of partaking or presentation was distinct from eschatology. The findings of the previous chapters suggest quite a different picture.

Overlaps between meals, sacrifice/ritual, and eschatology have been pointed out. The three classes are not discrete. Meal traditions may have sacrificial or eschatological connotations. We have departed from Schweitzer’s dichotomy of presentation, partaking and eschatology. It is possible to depict these interrelations in two ways. The first is as concentric circles, but this would imply that two groups were subsumed into a third, for example:

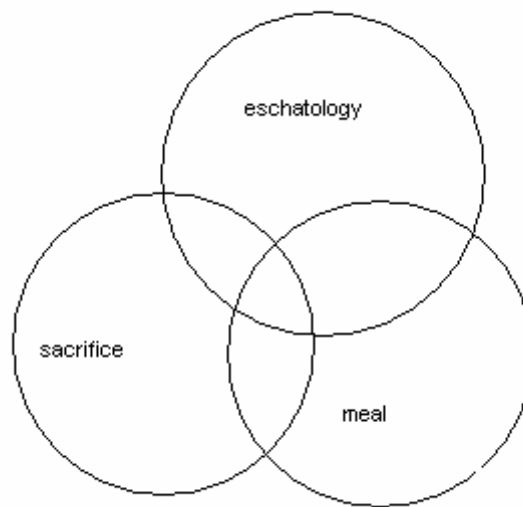


**Figure 2**

This need not be the case. This picture demands that all examples of one set be subsumed into the others, and this is not the case, even if the order of the

groups is re-arranged. It is a moot point, for example, whether Epicureanism, which had a memorial meal tradition, could be described as having eschatology, unless one argues that the palpable absence of futurist thoughts can be so described. Nor is it the case that worldviews containing all three elements would necessarily combine them.

The other is as three circles which overlap in such a way that some elements belong to all three groups, others to two and others just to one:



**Figure 3**

None of these divisions is completely subsumed into any other, and the full range of possible interactions can be noted. This is a more satisfactory way of depicting the inter-relationship between the three sets, borne out by the research of the previous chapters. No set is fully subsumed into another. In this figure, the amount of overlap is purely illustrative and should not be read as a scale drawing.

Methodological points have also emerged. Whilst the headings used are not discrete, but interact with each other, care must be taken in not assuming that similarities imply dependence. Such similarities may arise from shared terminology or common features. The question of how to evaluate such similarities follows: “how close does a parallel have to be to count as a parallel?” (Price 1996, np).

Exact parallels appear few and far between, but nonetheless there appear to be a number of recurring themes which suggest common conceptualities. These include sacrament, communion, purity, and life after death. Whilst shared terminology may reflect common ideological concerns, an ulterior motive or a hidden agenda, this need not be the case. The terminology of the last sentence is revealing in itself. Scholarly paranoia may be as destructive as ideology. Nevertheless, the critic is caught between Scylla and Charybdis of old, the rock and hard place of today: parallel vs. generalisation.

At this point attention now turns to the Supper Narratives themselves. Our task is now to see whether actions, sayings and images within these four narratives can be connected to the wider context, the conceptual map, in which they were written and presented to others as theological statements. Our concern here will be primarily to see if connections can be made between the different features of the narratives and the features identified in the treatments just given of meals, sacrifice/ritual and eschatology. This task will necessarily involve a focus on specific words, actions and constructs. It will also involve a study of the language and style in which these ideas are presented. The idioms and dialect of a saying may allow comment on its possible provenance, or its connection to a particular manifestation of a shared feature.