1. Introduction

1.1. Among the words on the kingdom of God attributed to Jesus in Mark and Q, the saying "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" in Mark 14:25 has drawn the attention of many. It is one of the few sayings that speak about Jesus' presence at the future manifestation of God's sovereign rule in his creation, and that, at the same time, hints at his death. The part to be played by Jesus is, however, very modest and the saying does not specify how Jesus, after his death, will be able to participate in the eschatological meal. Because of this lack of specifics Mark 14:25 is thought to be early, perhaps even genuinely Jesuanic. J. P. Meier speaks for many when, applying the criterion of discontinuity, he writes: "Mark 14:25 reflects christological, soteriological and eschatological ideas—or the startling lack thereof—that are at variance with almost any stream of early Christian tradition but are perfectly understandable in the mouth of the historical Jesus."¹

1.2. The purpose of the present essay is to take a closer look at this saying and to determine its contribution to our knowledge of the earliest Christian eschatology and christology, and, if possible, also of Jesus' own expectations concerning his participation in the joy of the future kingdom of God.² I shall concentrate

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² See also M. de Jonge, "Jesus' Rôle in the Future Breakthrough of God's Kingdom," in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum
on Mark 14:25 as such, with the parallels in Matt 26:29 and Luke 22:18. We must allow for the possibility that it circulated independently and that its present position in the context of Jesus’ last supper with his disciples, immediately after the words connected with the cup in v. 24 “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured for many” is secondary. Of course, v. 25 presupposes a meal with bread and wine of Jesus together with his disciples at the end of his mission. It reflects a farewell situation in which Jesus speaks about the future meal in the kingdom of God, probably in the light of his impending death. This verse does not necessarily presuppose a supper as described by the Synoptics (and Paul in 1 Corinthians 11) at which Jesus instituted a solemn celebration with bread and wine by his followers after his death.3

2. Text, vocabulary and syntax

2.1. The text as printed in the 27th edition of Neste-Aland’s Novum Testamentum Graece and the fourth edition of the Greek New Testament (both from 1993), which is based on A B Δ f1 f13 and a host of other witnesses, is likely to be nearest to the original.4 The omission of οὐκέτι in a number of important witnesses (amongst which K C L W Ψ) avoids the awkward οὐκέτι οὐ μη and gives a smoother text (cf. Matt 26:29 οὐ μη ... ἀπ' ἀρτι and Luke 22:18 οὐ μη ... ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν). The variant οὐ μη προσθῶ πειν in D and some Old Latin MSS (cf. 565 οὐκέτι οὐ προσθῶ πειν) has drawn attention as a Hebraism.5 But also this variant may be an attempt to avoid the difficult negation, this time by using a construction


3 So I shall pass over many questions (in themselves interesting) raised by scholars in connection with Mark 14:22–25 and par., e.g. the nature of the last supper, the original form of the words connected with bread and wine, and the origin and nature of the liturgical meal (or meals) in the communities of Jesus’ followers.

4 For details about variants see the apparatus on our verse in Greek New Testament.

5 On this see e.g. J. Jeremias, Die Abendmahlswoerte Jesu (Göttingen 1967), pp. 174–175. He thinks that the readings found in B, D and Θ (see below) represent variants of equal value (“gleichwertige Überlieferungs- und Übersetzungsvarianten”); see also M. Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (Oxford 1954), p. 214 (and 296).