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THE LORD'S SUPPER REVISITED

The Absence of *Agape* Context in the Lord's Supper Today

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Abstrak

Perayaan Perjamuan Kudus telah mengarungi perjalanan sejarah selama lebih dari dua ribu tahun sejak Kristus menginstitutionalkan praktik tersebut. Namun, cara Perjamuan Kudus dipraktikkan saat ini di banyak gereja Reformed mungkin asing bagi kekristenan abad pertama. Memang benar elemen-elemen penting dari kebiasaan paling awal, yaitu konteks *agape*, telah menghilang di masa kini—sebuah fakta yang berkaitan erat dengan gagasan spiritualitas kontemporer. Studi ini mengamati hilangnya hidangan atau jamuan dalam perayaan Perjamuan Kudus dewasa ini, khususnya di gereja-gereja Reformed/Injili di Indonesia. Menunjuk pada Perjamuan Terakhir Yesus, perayaan Paskah, serta kebiasaan Kristen awal dalam memecahkan roti yang mengacu pada *agape* (perjamuan kasih atau makan bersama), tulisan ini menekankan pentingnya konteks makan *agape* dalam perayaan Perjamuan Kudus. Perkembangan Perjamuan Kudus, sebagaimana dapat ditelusuri secara historis melalui Gereja Katolik Roma dan Reformasi Protestan di Abad Pertengahan, mempersaksikan pergeseran-pergeseran dari roti dan anggur menjadi suatu santapan sakral dan makanan simbolis. Tulisan ini mengusulkan sebuah pandangan non-dikotomis terhadap hidangan Perjamuan Kudus dengan memadukan yang sekuler dan yang sakral—perjamuan makan yang sesungguhnya dan makanan simbolis. Akhirnya, tulisan ini menunjukkan bagaimana pemulihan *agape* sebagai latar belakang Perjamuan Kudus memiliki arti penting bagi spiritualitas bersama.

Kata-kata Kunci: Perjamuan Terakhir, Perjamuan Kudus, Ekaristi, *agape*, perjamuan kasih, hidangan

Abstract

The celebration of the Lord's Supper has traversed the course of history for more than two thousand years since Christ instituted the practice. However, the manner in which Holy Communion is practiced today in many Reformed churches would be foreign to that of first-century Christianity. Indeed, crucial elements from the earliest custom, namely the agape context, are missing in the present—a fact that has bearing upon contemporary notions of spirituality. This study observes the absence of a proper meal in the celebration of the Eucharist today, especially in the Reformed/Evangelical churches in Indonesia. Pointing to Jesus' Last Supper, the observation of the Passover, as well as the early Christian custom of breaking bread in reference to agape (love meal or communal meal), this essay argues for the importance of the agape meal context in the ongoing celebration of the Lord's Supper. The development of the Lord's Supper, as historically traced through the medieval Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation, bears witness to the shifts of bread and wine into being both a sacred meal and a symbolic meal. This article promotes a non-dichotomous view of the meal to incorporate the ordinary and the sacred—a real meal and a symbolic meal, together. Finally, this paper demonstrates how retrieval of the agape setting of the Lord's Supper bears significance for collective spirituality.

Keywords: Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Eucharist, *agape*, love meal, meal

Introduction

The Lord's Supper is one of the most vital elements in Reformed Christianity. However, those parts of the global church that trace their history to the Magisterial Reformation bear witness to two extreme attitudes nowadays in approaching the Lord's Supper: one that over-sacralizes the ceremony as something mystical or magical, and another that simply takes it as ritualistic or memorializing. While both notions are reasonable, as Ben Witherington puts it, “the truth about this ceremony lies somewhere in-between.”¹

Luis M. Bermejo sees the Eucharist as involving two important dimensions: first, not only as a meal—a fact greatly stressed in the New Testament—but, moreover, as a sacrificial meal.² Thus, both ordinary and religious aspects exist in the

¹ Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), x.

² Luis M. Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed: The Eucharist of the Risen Christ* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), 2.

Eucharist, as attested in the records of Jesus' Last Supper. According to several accounts, Jesus observed the Passover meal with his disciples and thereby instituted eucharistic practice.³ For the next several decades, the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper by gathering and breaking bread in houses, an activity known in certain communities as the *agape*—or *love feast*.⁴

Today, however, the Lord's Supper has become a ceremony without a meal—indeed, a celebration without a feast. The irony in many Protestant churches is that the so-called “supper” only involves a morsel or wafer of bread (the host, in Catholic practice) and a small cup of grape juice or wine (at times withheld from the laity, in Catholic practice).⁵

In the absence of any actual meal, the ceremony of Holy Communion becomes increasingly detached from the concerns of the ordinary. As such, the Lord's Supper becomes difficult to understand, trading its quotidian significance for a detached sacredness.⁶ A merely vertical orientation focuses myopically on “individual inward reflection, meditation and relationship with Christ ... at the expense of the horizontal dimension of relationship with fellow believers” that may otherwise contribute to a greater sense of solemnity.⁷ What to do when the Eucharist lacks a sense of joy, even thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) for Jesus' sacrifice that results in the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28)? As the sacred is separated from the secular, the ceremony devolves to become an esoteric ritual wherein the concerns of the physical and the spiritual planes remain bifurcated in their respective realms. Symbols and lived reality grow ever more apart, and worshipers return home after participating in Holy Communion without

³ Despite disagreements on whether Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, the fact that it was celebrated during the Passover week and eaten with elements associated with Passover observance suffice to claim both that his instituting act was a proper meal and that Jesus offers new meaning to Passover. See Robin Routledge, “Passover and Last Supper,” *Tyndale Bulletin*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2002): 203-221; Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans., Norman Perrin (London: SCM, 1966), 62-84.

⁴ The details concerning the early church's practice of the Lord's Supper remain controversial. What is important for the purposes of this study is the view that, despite the variety of practices that arose in different communities, all of them involved some aspect of a communal or fellowship meal. See discussion in Chris D. Balzer, “The Lord's Supper: Meal or Sacrament?,” *Reformed Theological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (2002): 117-130.

⁵ These conventions are also observed in most Protestant churches in Indonesia by Rasid Rachman, “Roti dan Roti Tak-Beragi: Elemen Perjamuan Masa Lalu yang Masih Berlaku hingga Kini,” *Theologia in Loco*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (2020): 87.

⁶ See George May, “The Lord's Supper: Ritual or Relationship? Making a Meal of It in Corinth, Part 1: Meals in the Gospels and Acts,” *Reformed Theological Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2001): 138-150.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

experiencing a realized sense of community.⁸ As such, the absence of the *agape* setting for the Lord's Supper today has undermined its significance as a communal-spiritual practice. When we approach the Lord's Table as if it were mere ceremony—that is, without it being a proper meal—then it becomes a *ritual without reality*, in that our taking of bread and wine occurs out of context, namely, the *agape* context.

This article focuses on the originating context and subsequent historical development of the Lord's Supper, delving especially into the context of *agape* as love meal and the performative importance of this communal frame both in and for Eucharistic practice today. First, this study considers the mealtime context in which God commanded the Israelites to observe the precedent practice of Passover; thus, it is within this festal context that Jesus in the upper room institutes his body and blood as the Lord's Supper, which the early church would celebrate in the form of a love meal as an act of thanksgiving (hence, Eucharist). Second, looking at the contemporary practice of the Lord's Table by Reformed and/or Evangelical churches in Indonesia, this study notes the absence of any *agape* meal as a casualty to doctrinal history, which thereby undermines significant aspects of those churches' thanksgiving and fellowship. Finally, this essay suggests a more faithful approach to the Lord's Table that retrieves the sacramental significance and spirit of the ceremony. Implications of such interventions for the Christian notion of spirituality are also discussed.

The Passover Meal

The Christian practice of Eucharist is often identified as a transformation of the Jewish Passover following Jesus' institution of the Last Supper.⁹ Tracing back to God's commanding its observance by the people (Exod 12), Jewish religious life revolves around the yearly Passover celebration.¹⁰ Initially, the Passover consisted of two separate feasts: Passover proper (a springtime feast in which a young lamb was sacrificed for good fortune) and Matzoth, or Unleavened Bread (an agricultural feast in which the firstfruits of the crop were offered).¹¹ After the exodus, these feasts

⁸ See George May, "The Lord's Supper: Ritual or Relationship? Making a Meal of It in Corinth, Part 2: Meals at Corinth," *Reformed Theological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2002): 17.

⁹ Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 4. However, there are scholars who assert that Jesus was not eating the Passover meal during the Last Supper, but it was a special banquet in preparation for his death which emphasizes eschatological aspect.

¹⁰ Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

became a commemoration of the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Being conscious of the divine providence, the religious feast became highly ritualized in its aesthetic, yet it was filled with joy and thanksgiving.¹² Note that the word “feast” is used to denote that it is not simply the eating of a meal. Instead, it is a moment of festivity for the people to rejoice over the freedom given.

Thus, the religious dimension comes together with the seemingly secular in the observance of a ritual when accompanied by a vibrant celebration. As E. Kilmartin writes, the Passover during the time of Moses emerged as

a liturgical feast, involving sacrifice and an accompanying cultic banquet, celebrated by the community of the chosen People. Accomplished in the present, it commemorates the deliverance from Egypt in such a way that it re-presents the past redemptive activity and looks forward to the future definitive intervention of Yahweh.¹³

From this definition, we see that a liturgy goes together with a feast. In other words, a cultic banquet shows that a ritual is not in opposition to a meal and that this feast is characterized by a sense of communality. A few themes that emerge from this conviction are discussed below.

Zakar: Active Remembrance

Memorial is a strongly attested biblical notion. In Exodus 12:14, God told the people to keep a feast for a memorial and to appoint the Passover as a “day of remembrance.” The Hebrew verb *zakhar* is not simply “to remember” but “to make a memorial,” which involves recalling God’s acts in history and reenacting them so that the faithful engage in the events as if they were present.¹⁴ For the Jewish people, remembrance is not simply a subjective memory of the past. Unlike our modern sense of memorial as a mental memory or symbol, the notion of “remembrance” in the Hebrew context has an active sense. The Passover event to be remembered is brought into the present, as if the faithful are experiencing the exodus for themselves (cf. Exod 13:8, Deut 6:21). Throughout the generations, God’s people see in each Passover a way of partaking in the original act of salvation.¹⁵ They experience it as a new event, namely, what was in the past arrives in the event

¹² Ibid.

¹³ E. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 46.

¹⁴ John D. Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root: Theology of Hebraic Restoration* (Atlanta, GA: Hebraic Christian Global Community, 2015), ch. 6.

¹⁵ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist: Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 65.

to come. And by keeping the Passover itself, they actively participate in it.¹⁶ This “ensures that the blessings appropriated in the events of history are made authentic for the present.”¹⁷ The celebration of the Passover affirms the identity of the Hebrew people as God’s redeemed people.¹⁸ The dual aspects of remembering the past and making it present are expressed in numerous Jewish rituals.

The following section focuses on the reenactment and celebration of the Passover as a key ritual in the Old Testament. By retaining the sense of “festivity” for this feast within the context of communality, the memory of the past can be experienced by celebrants in the here-and-now.

Feast: Symbolic Presence

The act of eating is crucial for observing the Passover (Exod 12:8-12). In its development from being an ordinary meal to becoming a sacred familial ritual, the people of God observe and maintain the covenant as a feast, for in their act of remembering the people give thanks for their deliverance from death (v. 14).¹⁹ As the narrative unfolds, the people of God are commanded to keep the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, which is to be celebrated as a sign for the people (Exod 13:7-9). The eating of unleavened bread serves as a reminder of when they collectively came out of Egypt. From the perspective of Christian sacramentology, this past event becomes re-presented within the liturgical action and symbols of the faithful.²⁰

As recorded later in the Mishnah, the ongoing importance of faithful Jews eating together is expressed in the *seder* meal that marks the first nights of the Jewish Passover.²¹ The observant Jew takes care to provide all the ingredients eaten, with each element a reminder of the past context when the people of God ate the first Passover.²² According to Gillian Feeley-Harnik, this symbolic reenactment of God’s miraculous salvation was especially rendered

¹⁶ Ibid., 66.

¹⁷ Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha and the Quartodeciman Passover Liturgy at Sardis* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 49.

¹⁸ Douglas E. Neel and Joel A. Pugh, *The Food and Feasts of Jesus: Inside the World of First-Century Fare, with Menus and Recipes* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 230.

¹⁹ Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 56.

²⁰ Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, 44.

²¹ While an exact description of the Passover celebration in the Old Testament is impossible to determine, the Jewish Passover Haggadah, which developed around the same time as the emergence of the early church, may shed some light on how the Passover was celebrated by contemporaneous Jews and, likewise, how the Holy Communion rite developed in early Christianity.

²² For a detailed explanation of each ingredient and its significance, see William Barclay, *The Lord’s Supper* (London: SCM, 1967), 20.

in food.²³ Each ingredient tells certain aspects of the ways in which God had saved his chosen people before and would save them in the future. The host then explains the significance of the meal. Given the family meal setting when conversations are bound to happen, fathers take the opportunity to explain important things to the next generation. The children take part by asking for the rationale behind this feast.²⁴ The father then explains the exodus story in the Haggadah, so that all participants reexperience the exodus of their ancestors.²⁵ Every person thus plays an active role in the *seder*.

The whole Passover liturgy serves to connect the celebrants to the context of the feast. Before the meal, observant Jews extol God by chanting the Jewish *barakah*.²⁶ This stirring praise recalls the salvific acts of the God who delivered their ancestors and will keep covenant faithfulness to deliver the people even now unto eternity. The remembrance of past events evokes a sense of awe and wonder, joy and gratitude. This act of prayer is a realized remembrance, as the *barakah* praises God who brought forth bread from the earth that is symbolized by the meal at hand. Thus, symbols are not simply signs but, indeed, things that convey symbolic presence in the here-and-now.²⁷ Recitation of the *barakah* becomes associated with the Eucharistic prayer in the Christian tradition.²⁸ Reflecting on this eucharistic liturgy, we see a celebration of thanksgiving because of God's continual acts characterizing a history of salvation, extending from the past, experienced now, and valid forevermore.

The next section considers how the keeping of this celebration as a feast safeguards aspects of communality in practice.

Communion of Life

The presence of blood is significant within the Hebrew imaginary, as it is the symbol of life in Israel (Deut 12:23). When

²³ Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 124.

²⁴ Rasid Rachman, *Hari Raya Liturgi: Sejarah dan Pesan Pastoral Gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 13.

²⁵ Nowadays, guests are sometimes invited to tell the Passover Haggadah as well. *Ibid.*, 14-15.

²⁶ A Jewish thanksgiving prayer or praise, which is later on associated with the Eucharistic Prayer. See Rasid Rachman, *Pembimbing ke dalam Sejarah Liturgi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2012), 20.

²⁷ A sign may not always have a specific relation with the thing it signifies. As such, it requires an objective description or interpretation. On the other hand, a symbol may come with memories involving subjective emotion and, as such, is open to interpretation—though it may also have an objective or communal explanation. See Rachman, *Hari Raya Liturgi*, 155-156.

²⁸ Rachman, *Pembimbing ke dalam Sejarah Liturgi*, 20-21.

the people celebrate the Passover, a lamb is sacrificed and its blood sprinkled both on the altar symbolizing God's presence and on the people.²⁹ This act establishes an unbreakable bond of life (Jer 7:23). By this blood, a covenant is established between God and God's people, as Bermejo puts it, "a union of blood, a communion of life."³⁰ By this ritual of Passover, Israel became God's family—which Brant Pitre describes as God's "flesh and blood."³¹ The making of the covenant is then culminated in a banquet—a sacred feast.³²

Eating together is central in every family where a communal meal is the primary bond of fellowship (*koinonia*) filled with gladness. In the ancient world, a common meal seeks fellowship with the gods and with fellow worshippers.³³ A common meal is also characteristic of a Jewish way of life.³⁴ Even their religious life centered around meal. In the Passover, a lamb is sacrificed by and for the family. Each family eats its lamb inside their own house (Exod 12:46). The instructions to eat the unleavened bread suggest that people customarily spent the Passover week with their families in their houses (Exod 12:15-20).³⁵

The commemoration of a Passover meal, therefore, is not simply a memorial or symbol according to our modern understanding. The three aspects of the Jewish Passover meal—remembrance, feast, and communion—reveal how strong an entanglement connects the religious with the ordinary in their way of life, as epitomized in feasts and meals alike. Eating is religious, and God uses a culturally embedded event, such as the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to institute a remembrance of the Passover event when they were spared from death. Remembrance is thus made possible when God introduces it through the ordinary, within tangible forms and in the context of communality. By considering the context of the Passover meal as background for understanding Jesus' Last Supper, we will see the recurring theme of thanksgiving as being embedded in the fellowship of a meal that experiences and evokes remembrance in the present.

²⁹ Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, 7; also Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 29.

³⁰ Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, 8.

³¹ Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 30. For the covenant relationship between God and God's people, see Deut 12:7, 18; 27:7.

³² *Ibid.*, 30.

³³ Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 99.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁵ Note that while Jewish practice as it developed after the fall of the Jerusalem Temple is informed by the Torah, not all Jews take the scriptural instructions literally.

The Last Supper

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples.³⁶ The early church soon called this event the institution of the Lord's Supper. At this Last Supper, Jesus and the twelve were reclining—probably around a u-shaped table—and eating (Mark 14:17-25). Their number indicates the setting of a family banquet.³⁷ Apparently, there were other dishes besides the bread mentioned by Jesus, along with multiple cups of wine.³⁸

Jesus took the bread and, when he had given thanks (*eucharistēsas*, Luke 22:17), broke it and handed them to his disciples, saying, "Take; this is my body." While in the Passover meal the head of the family gives interpretation of each element of the meal (a Jewish practice recorded later on in Haggadah and Mishnah), Jesus identified the bread and wine³⁹ as his body and blood. Later on, the Gospel writers and Paul identified Jesus as the Passover lamb.⁴⁰ While the Passover meal commemorates the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, Christians commemorate their deliverance from the bondage of sin. As such, there is a sense of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) in celebrating the Eucharist.

The following section focuses on the imagery of bread in the Passover context and in Jesus' Last Supper, as well as the manner in which this celebration was mandated by Jesus in remembrance (*anamnesis*) of him.

Bread: "This Is My Body"

Jesus introduces the notion of his body and blood through elements already provided within the Passover meal. When Jesus aligns his body with the bread, he makes theological use of an element that already bears powerful significance for his disciples, with the imagery of bread carrying spiritual significance since the times of the ancient Hebrews.⁴¹ Of note, it is readily associated with manna—the heavenly bread God gave the Israelites during their forty years of wandering. The keeping of manna in the wilderness reminded the Hebrew people concerning God's ongoing and

³⁶ The synoptic Gospels explicitly mention Passover meal (e.g., the *seders* in Luke 22:8-15). See discussion in Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6.

³⁷ Additionally, supper would have been the main meal of the day, to be eaten within a family home. Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 57.

³⁸ Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharist: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 110.

³⁹ Or "the fruit of the vine" in Mark 14:25 has gained various interpretations. Wine is used here as is most common and widely used term in our modern churches.

⁴⁰ E.g., John 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7-9. See Rasid Rachman, "Narasi Membangun Selebrasi: Gulir Ritual Kekristenan Awal," *Indonesian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2020): 139. Patricia S. Klein, *Worship Without Words: The Signs and Symbols of Our Faith* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2007), 108.

⁴¹ See Exod 16:2-4, 14-15, 31, 35; Num 11:7-9; Josh 5:12.

miraculous provision (Exod 16:32). In Psalm 78, manna is referred to as the “grain of heaven” and the “bread of the angels” (see vv. 18-19, 23-25, 29).⁴²

As such, when Jesus said, “This is my body,” the association for first century audiences very likely differs from modern readers who might have imagined a cheap loaf of bread sold in plastic bags at markets today. In Jesus’ time, bread was essential for living. Whether for the rich or the poor, bread was provided daily at every meal and the primary food in the first century Middle East.⁴³ Furthermore, the theological import of manna has significance beyond a historical past, as heavenly bread becomes a sign of God’s ongoing providence in the present that will continue in the future.

Anamnesis of Presence

Again, at the Last Supper Jesus broke the bread and gave it to his disciples saying to do this “in remembrance [*anamnesis*] of me” (Luke 22:19; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Jesus’ instruction to commemorate the Last Supper echoes God’s commandment to the Israelites concerning the manna and the Passover, namely, to maintain remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (Exod 12:14).⁴⁴ Paul relates the sacrifice of Christ who is the Passover lamb to the celebration of a feast of unleavened bread among Christians (1 Cor 5:7-8). The Eucharist commemorates Christ’s Passover, although the *anamnesis* of Christ means more than mere mental recall of some past event like the crucifixion of Jesus. “It not only commemorates Jesus’ death and resurrection,” writes Pitre, but “it actually makes that event a present reality.”⁴⁵ Jesus’ command for believers to “do this in remembrance of me” makes possible their identification with the events of the Last Supper, his trial and execution, Christ’s resurrection and ascension, and his real presence among the celebrants.⁴⁶

The real presence of Jesus in Communion has long been a matter of debate in Christian sacramentology, although the theological significance might also claim a biblical antecedent. In Exodus 25, Moses speaks about the bread of the Presence, or showbread (literally, the “bread of the Face(s)”), that memorializes

⁴² “Bread was God’s gift of both the earth for growing grain and skill for baking. Moreover, bread was considered essential for life,” in Neel and Pugh, *The Food and Feasts of Jesus*, 37. See Sirach 29:21.

⁴³ Even in the hardest times when other food was scarce, “the people still were making and eating bread.” See Neel and Pugh, *The Food and Feasts of Jesus*, 37.

⁴⁴ “Since early Christian times, the manna has been considered a prefiguration of the bread of the Eucharist,” in Andrew J. Gerakas, *The Origin and Development of the Holy Eucharist: East and West* (New York: St Pauls, 2006), 14.

⁴⁵ Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 178.

⁴⁶ Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6.

the heavenly banquet at which Moses and the elders saw God while they ate and drank. Because human beings cannot see God, we need perceivable elements that signify God's face or presence. As such, this showbread serves as a visible, earthly sign of the invisible, heavenly face of God.⁴⁷ The bread at the Lord's Table also visibly points to Christ's love for his people. Breaking such bread makes possible for those with eyes to see the glimpsing of humanity's greatest desire, namely, to see the face of God and live, knowing that God loves them.⁴⁸

With the showbread signifying the divine presence, from an ancient Israelite perspective, God is really and truly present to God's people in the Tabernacle. Three times a year, when they celebrated the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, the golden table of the Bread of the Presence was presented to the pilgrims, with the priests declaring, "Behold, God's love for you!"⁴⁹ In like manner, Jesus is really and truly present to his disciples through the Eucharist.⁵⁰ Though this miraculous presence is a mystery that transcends the signs themselves, the significance of both bread and wine is not merely symbolic, but real—as Jesus is present, indeed.⁵¹ When believers observe the Lord's Supper and its mandated *anamnesis*, it is as if they are experiencing Jesus at table with his disciples.⁵²

As we have seen, the context of a communal meal is not only part Christian Eucharist but central to its significance. While the Passover commemorates the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt, Christians commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus who is sacramentally present in the Eucharist. While the centers of each ceremony are different, a shared atmosphere of thanksgiving remains integral. These acts of worship are meant to be filled with joy and gratitude. The bread and wine of Holy Communion are not simply material elements but symbols that convey the real presence of the Giver.⁵³ Thus, when we partake in thanksgiving as Eucharist, we remember the Lord who provides and the Savior who is ever present with us.

⁴⁷ Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 122.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵¹ Despite the different views regarding the forms of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, there is wide agreement of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, whether physical or spiritual. See Ernest Bartels, *Take Eat, Take Drink: The Lord's Supper through the Centuries* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2004), 77-82.

⁵² Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6.

⁵³ Bermejo, *Body Broken and Blood Shed*, 15.

The *Agape* Feast

Early Christian communities would often worship together at homes and break bread regularly.⁵⁴ This common meal observed by the earliest Christians has several notable aspects—including prayers of thanksgiving and being a full or complete meal—and correlate to many terms like “Eucharist” (1 Cor 11:24), “Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor 11:20), “breaking of bread” (i.e., the ritual opening of the meal; cf. Acts 2:42, 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16), “sharing/participation” (*koinonia*, 1 Cor 10:16), and—exceedingly germane for the present essay—the *agape* or “love feast” (Jude 12).⁵⁵ Despite some ambiguity as to whether the *agape* feast was synonymous with the Lord’s Supper, the practice of the Lord’s Supper in antiquity nevertheless incorporated faithful believers who would come together to eat a proper meal and to share in divine love—as confirmed in the Corinthian practice.⁵⁶ Feasts and celebrations involving specific meals can be traced throughout the Gospels. As we have observed, shared meals were of the utmost importance, even as “early Christianity literally worshiped while eating.”⁵⁷

Within the wider Greco-Roman context, participation in certain rituals involve spiritual forces.⁵⁸ The word for “fellowship” (*koinonia*) connotes a dynamic of relationality that involves a community spirit—which often involves the tradition of sharing a meal that might include a main course (*deipnon*) and a drinking banquet (*symposion*).⁵⁹ In fact, Jewish traditions involving food and drink were also festive and celebratory in nature, with wine in the sacrificial tradition denoting a drink offering, the shared act of

⁵⁴ Paul evokes the term “breaking of bread” to refer to the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 10:16; cf. post-Pauline context in Acts 20). See Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), s.v. “Lord’s Supper.”

⁵⁵ While some scholars have pointed out that the term *agape* rarely refers to a Christian meal, the exception is Jude 12 where an explicit reference appears. Furthermore, “There is no evidence from the NT period to suggest that the love feast was a separate meal from the Lord’s Supper; rather, love feast and Lord’s Supper refer to the same event.” See *ibid.*, s.v. “Love Feast.”

⁵⁶ “All we know from Paul is that the actual celebration of the Lord’s Supper was linked with, and perhaps was an extension of, the so-called *agape*, a common meal, which Christians in a given locality were in the habit of sharing together,” in *ibid.* Although scholars cannot be certain “beyond all doubt that this common meal was called ... ‘the love feast,’” we do well to note that, “if it was so called, it was to remind all who partook that lying at the base of their fellowship was *agape* ... [namely,] the love of God for them expressed so vividly in the broken bread, and the love of Christian for Christian as seen in their sharing the one loaf.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Christianity in antiquity is not unique in this, according to Neel and Pugh, *The Food and Feasts of Jesus*, 3-5.

⁵⁸ See 1 Cor 10:16-17; 20-21.

⁵⁹ Neel and Pugh, *The Food and Feasts of Jesus*, 96.

eating replete with religious meaning, and the relationships among the religious community as well as with God being strengthened (e.g., 1 Cor 10:16, 21). Sharing a table conveys religious anticipation of heavenly fellowship with God.⁶⁰ The Lord's Supper takes such notions of fellowship, by means of a common meal, to evoke a shared, corporate memory that serves as a basic expression of true human community. Consisting of varied groups, first century Christians adapted a common banquet tradition within their own conventional practices.⁶¹ That said, finding a common liturgy within such diversity is nigh impossible, in spite of the undeniable reality that so many religious celebrations correlate with feasts.

After Jesus' death, the early Christians met together consistently, gathering in houses to break bread and share food with glad and generous hearts (Acts 2:42-46).⁶² Common meal was thus at the very heart of the Christian fellowship.⁶³ In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul discusses a meal of sharing at which rich and poor would sit down together in perfect fellowship (vv. 17-22). It is during an actual meal that people have real fellowship, even as the stratification of social status might threaten to undermine the reality portrayed by the rite.⁶⁴ One might say that the eschatological community through eating and drinking together "expresses a desire for union, of being one for others, of being of one heart and spirit."⁶⁵ This can only happen when love characterizes that communion. The Latin term *communio*, which means "sharing in common," corresponds to the Greek word *koinonia*. Holy Communion is thus a sacred *koinonia* that is, namely, a joining first with Christ and, in partaking of that one shared body, a union with one another by extension.⁶⁶ As such, Christian fellowship is made complete when people of different socio-economic backgrounds come together to share a meal at a common table. Communion is made possible when love joins the rich and the poor, or those of

⁶⁰ Matt 26:29; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor 11:26.

⁶¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 5.

⁶² These fellowships patterned after the apostles' doctrine might refer to "table fellowship" as being the fellowship of a meal that was then followed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper (i.e., "the breaking of bread"). See Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 119. The church in Troas also met to break bread and eat together (Acts 20:7, 11).

⁶³ Barclay, *The Lord's Supper*, 56.

⁶⁴ The point is to not lose sight of a more natural communality even amidst the ceremonious. According to Barclay, "It would be very much more natural for an act of fellowship to begin as a real meal than for it to begin as a formal ceremony." *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁵ The phrase is borrowed from Antonio Donghi, *Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy*, trans. William McDonough and Dominic Serra (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 71, which continues: "People who are not at peace, who are split apart or angry, do not want to sit at a common table and share the same meal."

⁶⁶ Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6.

high status and of low status. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians even identifies such communion as "a communion of the blood and body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16).⁶⁷

The foregoing has shown how the *agape* meal theologically frames the practice of the Eucharist since its earliest recorded observances. Several biblical and historical precedents for the Lord's Supper suggest the salience of a communal meal within the context of worshipful celebration. In the next major section, we proceed to consider the current place of the Lord's Table within the current practices of select ecclesial traditions in Indonesia today.

The Lord's Supper in the Contemporary Reformed/Evangelical Churches in Indonesia

As we have established above, Jesus' Last Supper embraces aspects of both the sacred and the ordinary. While being a social or fellowship meal (1 Cor 11:21; *idion deipnon*), table fellowship is thoroughly religious in nature (1 Cor 11:20; *kyriakon deipnon*).⁶⁸ By taking into account the quotidian context of the *agape* meal, we may consider the rich aspects of religious celebration embedded in the significance of bread and throughout the narrative surrounding such an act of worship. We may also acknowledge that *remembrance* extends beyond mere cognitive recall, instead animating vibrant aspects of celebration and thanksgiving, as well as real fellowship and communion—that is, the expression and experience of *eucharistia* and *koinonia*.

We can also safely assume that the Lord's Supper of today looks nothing like the practices of the early church. As worship began to be formalized and structured under the confinement of a church building, the ceremony of the Lord's Supper began to be stripped off its *agape* setting.⁶⁹ Eventually the communal feast was

⁶⁷ See discussion in Bartels, *Take Eat, Take Drink*, 50.

⁶⁸ Rasid Rachman, "Perjamuan Awal Jemaat Korintus: *Deipnon*, *Poterion*, *Symposion*" (D.Th. diss., Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologi Jakarta, 2017), 204. The Old Testament also shows that most meals have a sacred character, for they are the source of life from God. See Philippe Rouillard, "From Human Meal to Christian Eucharist," *Worship*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (1978): 439.

⁶⁹ For a detailed explanation on the separation of *agape* from the Eucharist, see Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), s.v. "agape." It seems that when the "table fellowship" of the first-century Jewish community was abandoned, Communion became more and more institutionalized. Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6, under "A New Covenant Liturgy."

abandoned by the fourth century.⁷⁰ Summarizing the evolution of the Eucharist, John Bowden observes,⁷¹

By the end of the second century, the eucharist had evolved from a full meal to a symbolic meal consisting of prayers, scripture readings and communion. Increasingly Christians gathered not in the evening but in the morning of the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Partly because of its association with Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, and partly because of its similarity to the sharing of food sacrificed in temple worship, the eucharistic meal came to be regarded as a sacrifice and its leader as a priest. In the fourth century Constantine legalized Christianity in the Roman empire and made Sunday a public holiday. This enabled church leaders to expand the eucharist into a formal liturgy or ceremony of public worship, sometimes lasting for hours.

While spatial limits prevent a full tracing of liturgical historical development here, it would do well to ask whether the absence of any full communal meal in the celebration of the Lord's Supper that Bowden and others describe reflects the contemporary circumstances of Reformed and Evangelical churches in Indonesia, with some attention to their Reformation-era precursors.⁷²

Symbolizing Solemnity, Spiritualizing Reality

The Calvinist Reformed tradition of Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI; Indonesia Christian Church) uses bread and wine, or tea or plain water for those who cannot tolerate wine, in their celebration of Holy Communion.⁷³ This tokenistic practice of using

⁷⁰ Paul Fieldhouse, *Food, Feasts, and Faith: An Encyclopedia of Food Culture in World Religions* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017), s.v. "agape feast." See also Bartels, *Take Eat, Take Drink*, 75; Michael Welker notes that by the fourth century communion (*koinonia*) no longer consisted of the gathering for a "full communal meal," in Michael Welker, *What Happens in Holy Communion?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 40.

⁷¹ John Bowden, ed., *Encyclopedia of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "sacrament."

⁷² Broadly speaking, most Protestants in Indonesia are in some sense Reformed (the *Gereformeerd* Church), which extends back to the influence of Dutch churches and missionary societies during the early rise of Christianity in Indonesia in the sixteenth century. "In regard to ecclesiastical tradition, the majority, ... are predominantly Calvinist," according to Frank L. Cooley. "Most of the churches are theologically orthodox or conservative. The Heidelberg Confession is widely used where a theological norm is needed. Most are strongly traditional, whatever the particular tradition may be," in Frank L. Cooley, *Indonesia: Church & Society* (New York: Friendship Press, 1968), 49.

⁷³ See Tata Laksana GKI Bab VIII Sakramen Pasal 25 Perjamuan Kudus, No. 5. Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode Gereja Kristen Indonesia, *Tata*

bread and wine as a symbolic representation of a meal (i.e., instead of a full meal) is widespread across and outside Indonesia, as well as throughout many Protestant denominations the world over.⁷⁴ Disciples no longer sit together around a table to share a substantive meal, and attention is focused on the clergy performing the rite. The congregation is often prompted to examine themselves and to contemplate their sin to comprehend the deep meaning of Jesus' sacrifice.

Indonesian liturgical theologian Rasid Rachman notes the theological mapping of Passover onto Good Friday can give space for an authentic and humane expression, namely, one that emphasizes the humiliating death of Christ as the means of being in solidarity with those suffering the world over.⁷⁵ This eucharistic focus on our sin and on Jesus' broken body and shed blood may well correlate with aspects of the Passover. Whereas the antecedent of Passover is a vibrant and victorious celebration, however, the Lord's Supper more closely correlates with either Maundy Thursday or Good Friday.⁷⁶ The Lord's Supper appears to be more strongly associated with a sense of solemnity and grief.

On the other hand, according to Hughes Oliphant Old, the Reformed tradition celebrates the Lord's Supper not only with profound seriousness but also exultant joy.⁷⁷ He notes that in the Reformation's response to the Roman Mass, attempts were made by Protestant churches to transform the Last Supper into the Lord's Table. For instance, in Strasbourg the mass altar was replaced with a dining table and thus made to look more like a meal—although elements placed upon it were limited to bread and wine only.⁷⁸

The eucharistic theology of Reformer John Calvin emphasized *eucharistia* and *koinonia*—the two dimensions we examined in the previous section—which we will consider in turn. First, in terms of thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), Calvin's Communion

Gereja dan Tata Laksana Gereja Kristen Indonesia (Jakarta: Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode Gereja Kristen Indonesia, 2009), 72.

⁷⁴ Scholars in the West have noted the use of bread and wine as symbols of meal in most churches. See for example Bartels, *Take Eat, Take Drink*, 108-109; Keith Watkins, "Jesus Happened to Me: Evangelism in a Table-Centered Church," *Encounter*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (2008): 12.

⁷⁵ The celebration of a victory is made more real with a vivid remembrance of suffering. See Rasid Rachman, *Hari Raya Liturgi*, 49.

⁷⁶ Christ's death is emphasized even more during the Lenten and Eastertide seasons. *Ibid.*, 51. According to Hughes Oliphant Old, the Reformation church of Geneva would preach the passion narrative before Easter and probably did the same during Christmas and Pentecost celebrations. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *Holy Communion in the Piety of the Reformed Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 24.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

liturgy employs the psalter to prompt a thankful remembering.⁷⁹ As such, Old observes, Communion is “a public memorial and thanksgiving for God’s mighty acts of salvation.”⁸⁰ Thanksgiving becomes a recounting of the mighty deeds of God throughout salvation history, with the sacramental elements serving as tangible signs that stir up such thanksgiving.⁸¹ Calvin describes one who ponders Christ’s priceless gift of redemption as thus becoming “inflamed with true gratitude to Him.”⁸² Those tasked with administering the sacrament thereby serve to move the faithful toward perceiving the signs and thus invoking genuine praise and thanksgiving.⁸³ Yet Calvin does not move beyond *anamnesis* as memorial of Christ’s past sacrifice, which tends towards mental activity that lacks actual context for the real experience of genuine gratitude in the present.⁸⁴ The congregation is asked to turn their minds to heavenly things, such as God feeding with spiritual food, whenever they approach the Lord’s Table. The heavy emphasis on heavenly realities without balancing the physical, ordinary elements might explain the current lack of the *agape* practice in observances of the Lord’s Supper during the centuries following the Protestant Reformation.⁸⁵

Second, in terms of fellowship (*koinonia*), Calvin’s eucharistic theology emphasizes communion with Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper.⁸⁶ Communion of the people is the central liturgical action in the Lord’s Supper, from a Reformed perspective. This communion is seen from two directions, namely, with God and with fellow brothers and sisters.⁸⁷ To illustrate, we signal our acceptance of God’s invitation by partaking in the sacred meal. Still, despite what Old considers “the actual sharing of the bread and the cup by the congregations,” this “actual sharing” turns out to simply be the trading of tokens that represent a meal.⁸⁸ While being a real partaking of bread and wine, these remain a mere representation of any factual fellowship meal, thereby lacking the social character of a communal feast.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁸¹ Ibid., 158.

⁸² John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans., John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 243.

⁸³ Old, *Holy Communion in the Piety of the Reformed Church*, 165.

⁸⁴ Old recognizes the tension between understanding the Lord’s Supper as *memorial* and as *communion*, in that the former assumes Christ’s absence while the latter assumes his presence, whereas to be in memory means for Calvin that Christ is not visibly present. Ibid., 69.

⁸⁵ See Calvin’s commentary on 1 Cor. 11:24. Calvin, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 247.

⁸⁶ Old, *Holy Communion in the Piety of the Reformed Church*, 42.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 151.

Perhaps this dynamic relates to Calvin's idea of *manducatio spiritualis*, a spiritual eating of the Lord's Supper, where one contemplates God's love by means of the sacramental action, and thus appropriates spiritual food to one's spiritual life.⁸⁹ Calvin's sacramentology can be taken to as a spiritualizing of the nourishment offered by the Supper in that the elements are to be chewed and digested in an eminently spiritual way.⁹⁰ Concerning spiritual realities, Calvin seems to be reducing the meal to symbols.

So, what is at stake? According to Keith Watkins, "what may have been the most important development in the history of Christian worship was changing the *agape* meal that used real food into the condensed ceremonies with loaf and cup using only token quantities of bread and wine."⁹¹ While it is true that symbols should point us to a deeper sense of reality, abstracting a real meal into tokenistic parcels make any such reality more difficult to grasp, not less. "Although the symbolic feast continued to bear the full meaning of eating and drinking with Jesus and one another," Watkins notes, "the celebration was enjoyed more by the mind than experienced by the body."⁹² The Lord's Supper remains at the level of cognition. Eating without any real meal narrows our understanding to only a spiritualized reception of Christ.

That said, a symbolic meal may well be a real meal, as witnessed in the Passover celebration that the Old Testament describes as being a meal eaten as a symbolic memorial yet nevertheless involving the preparation and consumption of a real meal. Similarly, the Lord's Supper can be understood as a memorial. Yet Christ's sacrifice for our real redemption cannot be reduced to mere symbols and calls for the fullness of a festive response.⁹³

To summarize the issue at hand, the Lord's Supper today has developed into the eating of a merely symbolic, tokenized meal that is devoid of material substance. In so doing, we detach lived reality from theological celebration. What is left of our commemoration is a strange, ultra-sacralized observation of Holy Communion that has no embodied connection with the lives of believers. Those who partake in the rite amid their physical hungers find no satisfaction in their belly, as the spiritual reality of God's providence can no longer be experienced as *real* in the fullest sense.

⁸⁹ According to Old, Calvin's eucharistic theology regards the Lord's Supper as spiritual nourishment that we might live in the Spirit, as promised by the sign of bread and wine. *Ibid.*, 107.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁹¹ Watkins, "Jesus Happened to Me," 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ "Even though the Lord's Supper employs symbols like the bread and the cup, however, the symbolism involved are vitally meaningful." C. A. Nwaosu, "Meal Motif in Luke: A Critical Analysis," *BTSK Insight*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2006): 8.

Solutions for Sustenance

It is said, "that which is visible needs no reminder."⁹⁴ The mere sight of bread and wine can touch us directly, as theological associations in our memory take us once more to Calvary.⁹⁵ But what can we say of memory according to how GKI and similar Reformed/Evangelical Indonesian churches engage it? Today, memory is reduced in Holy Communion to a morsel of bread or sometimes wafer, along with small cups of wine or juice. How can we feel the weight of Christ's sacrifice or express the wonderful exuberance of our salvation through mere tokenistic abstractions of a much richer, more humane context?

In light of previous traditions that have demonstrated the importance of context and narrative that can re-present past events in the here-and-now, let us consider the following proposal to rebalance what might be regarded as an austerity problem in the way that Reformed/Evangelical Indonesian churches celebrate the Lord's Supper today: Holy Communion should incorporate the love feast as part of the sacramental ceremony.⁹⁶ How might we realize this?

First, by providing enough context and stories that are close to our modern lives, we can enter the sacramental drama from our varied walks of life—about which, more in a moment. Second, by regarding eating as a universal necessity for all humanity, we might consider how the *agape* feast presents cultural—and countercultural—significance for our modern societies. The eating of a common meal can unite people, bring them into fellowship according to these two points. In support of these convictions, third, some reconsideration of church architecture and sanctuary furnishings are in order. In fact, some modern church buildings elsewhere have restructured their interior designs to form semi-circles or even full circles for the congregation to occupy; in such settings, the altar/table is placed in the midst of the people.⁹⁷ Such interior designs convey a

⁹⁴ W. F. P. Burton, *What Mean Ye by These Stones?* (London: Victory Press, 1947), 28.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁶ Such practice can be seen in the Brethren's worship today, as they ate ordinary meal, it is made a part of a sacred meal. The practice of the Brethren was very much discussed in Frank Ramirez, "Lobster or Sop: Clement of Alexandria, the Love Feast, the Local and the Translocal Church," *Brethren Life and Thought*, Vol. 43, No. 1-2 (1998): 21.

⁹⁷ One example of this is the St. Laurence-Plattenberg church in Germany built by Nicolas Rosing in 1975. See F. Debuyst, "Architectural Setting (Modern) and the Liturgical Movement," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed., J. G. Davies (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 47. See also Masao Takenaka, *The Place Where God Dwells* (Hongkong: CCA and

sensibility that the Lord's Supper is the center of worship, just as the family gathers around a dining table.⁹⁸ Certain Indonesian churches, especially in the Eastern regions, maintain such practices wherein the congregation comes together to celebrate the Lord's Supper around a central altar/table, although this is largely limited to special occasions like Christmas.

Even when it is impossible to eat together inside the church sanctuary, believers can feast together in a different room or area after the sacrament is ceremonially administered. In such cases, it should be made clear that the *eucharistic feast* continues, as the shared meal is not only part of the congregation's worship but even an integral facet of the sacramental ceremony itself. By observing Communion in this *agape*-inflected way, believers may experience the deeper meaning of fellowship, being satisfied with food and convinced of divine providence in ways other than cognitive-rational means. Furthermore, elements of the food used may with careful consideration even be contextualized to lift up the value of cultural conventions that differ from Westernized sensibilities—insofar as these contextual elements speak to the congregation, as it were, while still conveying their biblical significance.⁹⁹ The presider may even teach the meaning of the Lord's Supper by means of showing how feasting together unifies the people with Christ and one another, using tangible means to express their theological unity. In recontextualizing Holy Communion, we find historical parallels since the Reformation era in the case of the Mennonites who attempted to revive the love feast,¹⁰⁰ the Moravians who in the eighteenth century did the same with great variety continuing today,¹⁰¹ and the Methodists who employed the *agape* feast whenever the Sacrament could not take place.¹⁰² Even a simple meal of bread and water can carry “quasi-eucharistic functions.”¹⁰³

Fourth, another approach would be to incorporate the ceremony of Communion into everyday meals within which we remember Jesus' words. Just as several religious feasts originated from ordinary meals, there is value in recalling stories and retelling

Asian Christian Art Association, 1995), cited in Rachman, *Pembimbing ke dalam Sejarah Liturgi*, 121.

⁹⁸ See also round table meetings. Rachman, *Pembimbing ke dalam Sejarah Liturgi*, 121.

⁹⁹ Consult Paul Gibson, “Eucharistic Food: May We Substitute?,” *Worship*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (2002): 445-455; Rachman, “Roti dan Roti Tak-Beragi,” 88.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Miller, “‘Let Us Break Bread Together’: Rediscovering the Love Feast,” *Touchstone*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1990): 30.

¹⁰¹ Bartels, *Take Eat, Take Drink*, 177.

¹⁰² At Herrnhut in 1727, they used fresh-baked bread and coffee. Other places may include fruit punch and cookies. See *ibid.*, 181.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

narratives organically within the rhythms of everyday meals, which can become occasions in our everyday life to commemorate Jesus' salvific work beyond the artificial meal of the Lord's Supper on Sunday mornings (typically). Care must be shown, however, that though we may commemorate Christ in our daily meals, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper has theological significance in a congregational setting that sets it apart from our otherwise quotidian nutrition.¹⁰⁴ While far from being mainstream, table celebration in the houses of congregants, where several members come together to break bread and have fellowship, can already be observed in several Indonesian contexts today.

Concluding Remarks: Reflections on Spirituality

Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, meals are of importance not only in secular settings but also for religious vitality. The Passover meal, Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, as well as the continued celebration of Eucharist by early Christians each included a communal meal context. Retrieving this feast context would allow for deeper thanksgiving and fellowship. By incorporating the *agape* meal setting, celebration of the Lord's Supper in contemporary Reformed/Evangelical churches throughout Indonesia may be enriched by embodying *eucharistia* and *koinonia* beyond mere symbolic acts. The *agape* context strengthens a communal memory of shared experience through the very context that it provides in real sustenance and faithful fellowship.

In tracing the relationship between a real meal and the Lord's Supper, what might we gain that is vital for sustaining our Christian life together? True spirituality is non-dichotomous, as the ordinary and the sacred are interwoven as inseparable. Christian spirituality involves the dual dimension of our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with fellow believers. Our spirituality goes beyond the confinement of church buildings to permeate every aspect of our sociality, even as the Communion symbols of bread and wine bear direct connection with, yet transcend beyond, our everyday life. The nourishment offered by the Lord's Supper is physical as well as spiritual. When God provides physical food, is it not also spiritual? The *agape* we share within the church extends to our neighbors and all those we meet in our daily lives, even to the point of our sharing (i.e., participating)

¹⁰⁴ That said, we ought not prioritize the recovery of the communal meal context as somehow becoming a literal repetition of the original Last Supper—or else, to borrow from John D. Garr, “on the one hand, Communion is exalted as a necessary continuing repetition of Calvary or, on the other hand, is downgraded to the status of a purely sentimental ‘memorial meal.’” See Garr, *Christian Fruit—Jewish Root*, ch. 6.

in the joy and the suffering of others, in having our physical and spiritual needs met in union with Christ and his church.

One implication of such a view of worship regards our whole life as liturgy and worship. With or without church buildings, we worship as we share in real food and faithful fellowship with our neighbors, and we worship when we go out to feed the poor as much as we welcome every believer to the Lord's Table. As such, eating meals and sharing fellowship can also be made sacred in spirit. Do we not live out Jesus' command to remember him, when our whole life is permeated by the awareness of Christ's presence? It is in remembrance in the ordinary that we meet the divine in the ordinary.¹⁰⁵ In Christ Jesus, may we find our sustenance and be altogether satisfied.

About the Author

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¹⁰⁵ Anna Woofenden puts it this way: "It is that supreme gospel of love that infuses the ordinary and shows us the sacred in the most basic of shared efforts and communal meals," in Woofenden, "The Supreme Gospel of Love: Reimagining Church Through Working Together, Worshipping Together, and Eating Together," *Brethren Life and Thought*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (2017/2018): 64.

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