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The Agape of the Early Christian Chuech

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THE AGAPE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The agape is defined as 'the mutual love or investment of the individual Christians which usually accompanied the Eucharist.' It is essential that the love of the agape should be the main motive in the feeding of the poor by the Christian Church as well as in the love of God. In the first century, however, we have a variety of evidence to show that the agape was not only a religious but also a social and political act. It was a means of expressing the love of God and of the neighbor, and it was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor. It was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor. It was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor.

THE AGAPE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The agape was a social and political act. It was a means of expressing the love of God and of the neighbor, and it was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor. It was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor. It was a means of expressing the love of the neighbor and of the neighbor's neighbor.

THE AGAPE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Outside of the two passages in which the agape is mentioned in the New Testament, there are many references to it in the writings of the early Christian writers. These references are scattered throughout the works of the early Christian writers. They are scattered throughout the works of the early Christian writers. They are scattered throughout the works of the early Christian writers.

Breuer

THE AGAPE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Agape is defined as "the social meal or love-feast of the primitive Christians which usually accompanied the Eucharist." It extended from the days of the Apostles to the ninth century in the Western Church and in the Eastern Church it still exists in some form or other. In this paper, however, we have restricted ourselves to the first two centuries of the Christian Church and shall consider the Agape under the following heads: 1) the evidence of the meal and its designation; 2) the sources of first-hand information; 3) the origin and purpose of the meal; 4) the constituents of the meal and the order of the feast; 5) its connection with the Eucharist; 6) its separation from the Eucharist, taking into consideration especially the time of the separation and the reasons for or causes of the separation; and, finally, 7) the modern use of the Agape in the Western Church and the reasons for its inadvisability.

I

Evidence of the Meal and its Designation.

Outside of the two passages in which the Agape is specifically mentioned by name, Jude 12 and 2 Pet. 2, 13¹, there are three passages which are commonly considered as referring to the Agape, Acts 2, 46, and Acts 20, 11, and 1 Cor. 11. These passages will be discussed more at length hereafter and Acts 2, 46 shown to be uncertain, but since there is a common acceptance of that passage I include it here without any danger of offence.

1. 2 Pet. 2, 13 at least in some good MSS. as will be shown later.

This passage, "and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," refers to meals of Christians of Jerusalem very soon after Pentecost. But the custom was not a mere Jewish custom based on their common meals but was shared also by the Gentile converts as the other two passages show. In Acts 20, 11 we read of the celebration of the Agape in Troas, "When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed." The "breaking of bread" cannot mean the Eucharist because the Greek word, *γενομένους*, implies, not a ceremonial eating but the eating of a good, substantial meal for the support of the body. The third and most famous passage is 1 Cor. 11, in which Paul rebukes the Corinthians for their lack of self-restraint and Christian love over against one another.

Besides these Bible passages we have two chapters of the Didache devoted entirely to prayers to be used at the Agape and the directions for the meal. Pliny makes mention of it in his report to the Emperor Trajan and the Greek and Latin Church Fathers mention and frequently, especially moved by the attendant abuses.

According to Moulton and Milligan "Vocabulary of the Greek Testament" (1914) the word, *ἀγάπη* is to be found in profane Greek literature only three times. Of these three occurrences two have been rejected and are now read otherwise and the third is doubtful. Neither has the word as yet been found in that gold-mine of lexicograph-

ical and philological knowledge, the Papyri.

In the New Testament the word occurs in Jude 12. Two of the oldest manuscripts make it similar to the reading in Peter, "deceivings" ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma$) instead of "love-feast" ($\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$). But the best manuscripts have $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, the reading found in Nestle. It is noteworthy in regard to the use of the word in this passage that it is used as a customary word, already well understood and needing no explanation, thus pointing to the fact that the feast was a well-established custom.

The reading of 2 Pet. 2, 13 is doubtful. The balance of evidence favors $\acute{\alpha}\pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ although in some very valuable manuscripts, the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Saludic favor $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$. The meaning of the passage is, however, clear for the phrase, "feasting together with shows indubitably that a feast is meant. Both Jude and Peter refer to the same abuse, Jude to the negative angle and Peter to the positive.

1 Pet. 5, 13: $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \psi\iota\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\epsilon\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta\varsigma$ may refer to the kiss customary at the Agape but this cannot be proved. It may be a mere indication of Christian love.

In addition to those three passages the word occurs in post-canonical literature from Ignatius on, gradually assuming the character of a technical term.

The derivation of the designation is best and most simply explained by Tertullina, Apol. 39, "Our feast explains itself by its name. The Greeks call it $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$, i.e., affection."

II

The Sources

The sources are few in number, namely: the Bible, the Didache, Pliny, and the Church Fathers.

Several Bible passages are almost invariably found in connection with this discussion and must be considered and their value judged by a detailed examination. The first of these is Acts 2, 42,

ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδασκῆτι τῶν
ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινῶν τῇ κλήσει τοῦ
ἔργου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

Formerly the reading was _____ and on the basis of this it was argued that the translation should be, "exhortation, Eucharist, Agape, and liturgical service", but the best manuscripts omit the " _____ " and leave us a simpler and more satisfying explanation, thus: teaching, and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the Eucharist. Fellowship (κοινωνία) cf. 1 Cor. 10, 16 better translated as Communion. The breaking of bread is thus to be taken as in opposition to κοινωνία. The Vulgate supports this interpretation by its rendering, "Erant perseverantes in doctrina Apostolorum, et communicatione fractionis panis, et orationibus" and the Peschitto has the simple "breaking of the Eucharist." The eminent Lutheran theologian, Gerhard, quoted by Dr. Pieper "Christliche Dogmatik," III, 342, n. 1163, seems to be of the same opinion in giving the names of the Eucharist, thus: "fractio panis (mit der Benennung: Sed quia evidenter et apodictice demonstrari nequit, oportere in illis

locis, Act 2, 42; 20, 7, (?); per fractionem panis intelligi administrationem coenae, ideo quidam de vulgaribus epulis phrasin accipiunt, quo sensu usurpatur Luc. 24, 35; Act. 27, 35; atque alibi passim). The passage, therefore, drops out of our list and nothing intrinsic is lost or gained.

Act. 2, 46: κλωυτες τῆ κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον
μετελλυβανον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ
ἀφειρότητι καρδίας.

The English translation of the phrase, "κατ' οἶκον" "from house to house" is misleading in this connection because it seems to indicate a going from house to house in order to have social gatherings the better translation, indicated in the marginal rendering is better "privately" and takes away the idea of social gatherings. It points out the antithesis to worship at the temple and home life and shows that home life was just as holy and as much a service to God as the temple worship and indicates that the Christians did not cease being God's children as soon as they were at home but even their meals, instead of being, as were meals of heathen, a time for gluttony and revelry, were a continuation of service to God in whom they "lived, moved, and had their being." Thus the eating of their meat with gladness and singleness of heart serves to explain more fully the breaking of bread and is not pleonastic. It might be argued that the contrast between ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ and κατ' οἶκον means a temple worship and a liturgical meal outside of the temple but I believe that the former explanation is more natural and simpler and

does more justice to the Greek and the Christian idea of life under the influence of the new found salvation. I would, therefore, not use this passage in connection with the Agape except to dismiss it because it is so often used. It was used, I suppose, because it's a hard temptation not to use every possible passage to prove the Agape when that theme is foremost in one's mind.

Acts 6, 2, "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables," is also used in this way and probably for the same reasons. *ἄλλοκοῦντες τραπεζῶν* does not necessarily mean to serve as attendants upon tables for social purposes but, as the connection shows, means rather, to give out alms, to give the poor people or, as here, widows the means of more fully supplying their tables at their own homes. If it were a social gathering it would be more probable that the leaders, the Apostles, would be seated with the rest and lead the discussion in spiritual matters, and, finally, it seems to be overlooked that, though the Agape did help the poor, it was merely incidental and not the main feature. If, taking for granted that the occasion was an Agape and the widows of the Greeks were neglected, would the complaint be repaired by the giving over of the division of food by the Apostles be remedied? Would they have been justified in giving up the work to others? Could they have excused themselves on the ground that they needed more time for the Word of God? Not very readily for while one spoke the others would serve. The complaint and the answer seems more readily explained if the Apostles had the supervision of alms and had to visit and care for the widows and look into cases of need in different parts of the

city and at the same time preach and teach and found that they had to neglect either the one or the other. This case was easily remedied by choosing men for alms and retaining their position as preachers. Acts 6, 2 can, therefore, not be used.

Acts 20, 7 and 11 are more plausible and, in fact, Agapes. We read, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached etc." When this is compared with 1 Cor. 16, 2, we see that this was a customary way of celebrating the Lord's Day, by means of a meal and spiritual exercises. That the *κλάσει ἄρτον* does not mean exclusively the Eucharist is seen from verse 20 where the verb, *γευσάμενος* is used for eating. This verb indicates the eating of a meal as said before. According to usage we may well suppose that the Eucharist, too, was celebrated but the reference is evidently to the Agape, a social meal of all Christians at which services were held.

The chief passage, however, is 1 Cor. 11. Here the Apostle warns his people to beware of and to remedy the abuses which had already shown themselves 57-58 A.D. in the Corinthian Church. Both the Eucharist and the Agape were abused but chiefly the Agape and, in consequence of the Agape only, the Eucharist. It was not so much the Eucharist that was meant as the Agape because the time was too near institution for so sacred and divinely instituted a rite to be desecrated so shamefully, and verse 33 indicates this beyond doubt, "Where ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." For the Eucharist all were assembled and there was no eating until all were prepared,

but at the Agape some came earlier and some later and could not resist the cravings of hunger and ate and drank to their hearts content without regard for the late-comers or even for those on time. In addition to this the rich ate their elaborate meals without paying any attention to their poorer brethren just as in the time of Socrates as Xenophon accounts until Socrates, himself, was forced to reprove his fellow Greeks. Therefore, St. Paul could say with perfect justice, "When ye come together therefore into one place, ye cannot eat the Lord's Supper." Why? V. 21 "For in eating everyone taketh before his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken." Some were unfit because they harbored thoughts of envy and hate at their more fortunate brethren while the others were too much satiated and inebriated to fully comprehend the hallowed occasion and both would, therefore, not fitly receive the Sacrament. We see here the order of events, first, the Agape, then the Eucharist. But, in spite of the abuse Paul did not condemn the Agape. For: *abusus non tollit usum*. If the abuse was corrected there could be no valid objection to the Agape, and thus, we conclude, as a corollary of verse 20, that, if the Agape is not abused and all other things are in order, they can partake of the Sacrament. The name is not mentioned but the entire description is that of an Agape and there is no doubt about the matter.

2 Pet. 2, 13 and Jude 12 have already been discussed and need not be mentioned here.

Similar to Act. 6, 2 and 2, 46 are Act. 1, 4 and Gal. 2, 11ff, but they have not even as much shadow of proof in their favor and

are mentioned merely because found in works on the subject.

The first extra-canonical writing to be examined is the Didache written about 100 A.D., a set of rules of order for the early Christian Church, probably written at Jerusalem. Chapters 9 and 10 are most under discussion because there is doubt concerning the series of prayers in these chapters. Some think they pertain only to the Eucharist, some, only to the Agape and others, again, to both, the Agape and the Eucharist. To me it seems that it applies only to the Agape because two chapters, 14 and 15, refer entirely to the Eucharist and it would be almost foolish to expect the same subject to be treated so fully twice in one writing of that compass. The final prayer contains the warning, *ἐἴ τις ἄγιος ἐστίν, ἐρχέσθω*
ἐἴ τις οὐκ ἔστι μετνοσίτω . From this it is argued that the prayer is preparatory to the Eucharist immediately following. It would then apply to the Eucharistic ceremony but there is one objection to this conjecture. Were it given as a warning outside of a prayer, it would be valid but it appears in the heart of the prayer and the entire connection shows that it is a specific warning to repent before the coming of the Son of Man in Judgment. This point thus is of no avail to prove its Eucharistic qualities. Again, in X we read, *μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐμπλησθῆναι*. This could not refer to the Eucharist but evidently does refer to a previous, substantial meal which satiated the participants. The terminology, too, is used as a basis for ascribing these prayers to the Eucharist. The verb *εὐχαριστεῖν* is very frequent but at the time of the document, the terminology was loose and not yet in fixed form and the verb

means merely "to say grace". Besides this there is no mention of any presiding officer, as bishop or deacon. They were always present at the Eucharist but are not mentioned here. At the end of the chapter the notice is given that the prophets may render thanks as much as they desire but at the Eucharist there is no such freedom. Everything is fixed and definite. Finally, in such a large set of prayers, if it were the Eucharist, the words of institution would certainly not have been omitted. We can therefore safely conclude, with Ladenze, who presented most of these arguments (quoted in Cole), that the Agape alone is meant.

Pliny, too, is a source of confirmation in this matter of the Agape. While at Amesos, on the Black Sea (Now Samsoun), there acting as governor of Bithynia (112 A.D.) he wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan for information concerning the Christians and reports his findings. (Ep. X, 96).

Ignatius, writing about 110-117 A.D. gives certain directions concerning the Agape in his epistle to the Smyrnaeans, VIII, 2.

Clement of Alexandria (153-127 A.D.) in his book, "The Instructor" (II, 1 and 4) raises his voice in protest against the prevailing and pverpowerin abuses of the Agape, especially against the use of frivolous music.

Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) writes about the Agape as an anti-quarian. The sources of information of that day were scant and not very reliable. His main source of information was the remnant of the

Agape in Alexandria. There was also the perplexing fact that a meal before the Eucharist amounted almost to sacrilege on account of the newly instituted ideas of the necessity of fasting before the Lord's Supper. His testimony is thus of small value. (Hom. 1 Cor. 11).

Tertullian's evidence is of a varied nature due to the changes in his religious views. While writing his "Apology" and "To his Wife" he was still orthodox. Between 202 and 208 A.D. he showed tendencies of a Montanist and thus tried to smooth things over between both parties, but after 208 A.D. he turned rabid Montanist and bitterly fought against the Church and tried to make every fault stand out in glaring light. These changes are therefore to be taken into consideration in viewing his testimony.

Finally, we have to deal with Minucius Felix who wrote (210 A.D.) an apology of the Christian Church in the form of a case in court between Octavius, a Christian against Caecilius, an heathen while Minucius poses as the judge.

There are, of course, more references to the Agape in other writers but many are too scant to be of any value and others do not give any information concerning our period.

III

The Origin and the Purpose of the Agape.

Throughout the Graeco-Roman world there were guilds and unions of various tradesmen, fraternities and religious associations. One of the main features of these unions were the banquets given every now and then at which the poorer members would find a satisfying meal. Their purpose was to promote a bond of fellowship between the members. The *raison d'etre* of the club was varied. Some existed for politics, others for trade rights, but most for the purpose of providing for a decent burial of its members and for the support of the poor.

Many people think that these club meals were the origin of the Christian Agape but this is scarcely tenable. Christians fled rather than invited heathen practices in the early period of their existence although later on, when the Agape was firmly established and centuries had passed and persecution had ceased, they were no longer so intolerant of novelties. But at the very beginning Christians were marked by their difference from the heathen so that they were strangers in this world and were, for their very strangeness, disliked by their pagan neighbors. That these clubs had no charms for the Christians of the early Church we can see from Keating's description and opinion of them, "While the state religion of Greece showed a certain approximation to refinement and morality, the vulgar were attracted by the looseness and the disorderly rites connected with the and the effect of these associations, and the cults they represented

could hardly be characterized as morally progressive." The meals, per se, were not wrong but the odium attached to them would make the Christians avoid running the risk of ever having such a stigma attached to their name by taking over a meal that had become a byword for licentious revelry. In fact, for this very reason, that the Christians fled these practices and were decent, many heathen of the better class, who were earnestly awaiting deliverance, welcomed them and embraced their teachings. The origin of the Agape in heathen lands was rather the teaching of the Apostles who came from the land in which it was already established, from Palestine.

The real origin of the Agape was the last Passover of Christ. After this meal the discourses found in John 13, 1 to 18, 1 followed, and, as the beginning of the new day began Jesus instituted the rite of the new covenant, the Eucharist. There is no definite proof for this time of institution except the custom and tradition of the Church. As can be seen from Act. 20, 4, the eating after the long sermon about midnight and as we know from the order of service, then, the Eucharist. The old Paschal meal had passed away with the old covenant and this the disciples and Apostles fully realized but the last meeting was dear to them and they desired to perpetuate the memory of this event by following the same order as Christ had, first a meal, then the Eucharist. The days had not yet come in which eating was considered a thing almost unholy but it was fully realized that through eating and drinking we act in the service of God as well as at any other time or through any other occupation. This desire to imitate their Master could be easily carried out and became a fixed

custom on account of the close communion of the early Christians. Every common meal could be crowned with that holy Sacrament and thus assure all of the forgiveness of sins and unite them all in the close bond of one religion, one Christ and Savior.

Besides this there were several other reasons for the meal. Through persecution the new converts had lost house and home, their property had been destroyed or plundered and their own family members had turned against them because they had joined themselves to the Christians and here, at the Agape, the social gathering of Christians, they found some solace and consolation in their loss and peace and joy in the message of Christ always the theme of these meetings. Here, too, those who were poor, received bodily sustenance and felt as though they were not utterly forsaken but had some friends left.

The entire institution was not divine but, for the early Church, it was a good custom as St. Chrysostom writes, the Agape was "A custom most beneficial, for it was a supporter of love, a solace of poverty, and a discipline of humility." (Quoted by Cole).

IV

The Constituents of the Meal and the Order of the Feast.

The meal did not consist of such succulent morsels as were conjured up in the imagination of the heathen and ascribed to the Christians as: human flesh and blood. This idea most probably originated from the common misunderstanding of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the eating and drinking of the body and blood of Jesus; neither did it consist of the ingredients with which the superstitious were so well acquainted, as: herbs prepared by magical rites and incantations under the portentous shades of the solemn midnight hour, but, as Pliny states, it consisted of food that was simply innocuum, against which no offence could be taken.

From the Didache one might obtain the impression that the meal consisted only of bread and wine, but ample testimony corrects this impression. Who can imagine anyone making a glutton of himself with mere bread as the Corinthians? Would the rich really have been so chary of their food if it had been mere bread? Scarcely. They must have had something that gave more delight to the gustatory nerve-centers. Pliny describes the food as "promiscuum", a variegated diet. And the heathen poet Lucian, writing about 167-170 A.D., gives a description of the food given to Perigrinus by the Christians when he had been thrown into prison and calls it *δειπνὴ πολκίαν* just as Pliny. From this we gather that the food and drink was anything simple to satisfy hunger and thirst as Tertullian also witnesses, Apol. 39, "As much is eaten as satisfied the cravings of hunger; as

much is drunk as befits the chaste." The varied diet led in time to abuse which would not be so likely with bread so that Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, especially, must raise their voices against the culinary art displayed in the Agape and tempting the palates of the weaker brethren beyond their powers.

The meal was partaken of by the entire church or by groups in the church. At first the entire church was so small that all could be present. Gradually the church became so great that the entire congregation could not readily come together in one place at one time. Due to these conditions in the early Church, meetings of parts of the congregation were permitted for an Agape but the practice was viewed with disfavor.

The Agape and the Eucharist formed the center and crown of the entire service. The order of the feast was as follows: The lights were first lit, because the assembly was held at night (cf. Act. 20, 8). The body was presided over by a bishop or a presbyter. Before they sat down and ate they washed their hands. Then prayer was said. A Scripture reading followed. Thereupon questions were proposed upon topics of the day in relation with their Christian life and Church affairs were discussed in order to promote sympathy and fellowship with the churches in different lands and keep alive the realization that all were one in Christ. After this letters of recommendation (ἐπιόστορα ὀυστὰτικὰ) were read introducing members of other churches into the fellowship of the members present at the Agape. Upon this the meal was eaten and a collection made for the orphans.

widows, and prisoners which commonly made up the poor and often also for poor of other lands as we read in 1 Cor. 16, 2. Thereafter followed the kiss of charity or of the Agape. This kiss was very probably only between members of the same sex because men and women usually sat at different tables. Each man, it is supposed, kissed his neighbors. As the kiss, customary in the Orient, fell into disuse the kiss of the Agape also became neglected. The entire meal was prolonged until dawn and then, in conformity with the example of Christ, retained by the disciples, the Eucharist was celebrated and the meeting was adjourned and the participants went quietly and in an orderly manner to their respective homes.

The Connection of the Agape with the Eucharist.

Throughout the early literature on the Agape there is an evident connection of the Agape and the Eucharist. We have already seen in our discussion of 1 Cor. 20-33, that there were two distinct ceremonies held in conjunction with each other but clearly separated intrinsically as verses 20-22 and 33 prove when contrasted with the others.

The meal which followed the Agape was the Eucharist just as at Christ's last Paschal feast with his disciples. The former led up to the latter. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Theodoret seem to differ from this view. In fact, they do differ, but this is due to the fact that they lived in a later time and were blinded and led astray by the practice in their day. In their time the custom of receiving the Lord's Supper fasting was observed and in Africa the practise was irregular if it was observed. They speak as antiquarians and they did not have as much material and as many resources for study as we have to-day. Their testimony in this respect is thus of no very great value in deciding the issue.

Again, some theologians assert that the meal in 1 Cor. 11 was entirely Eucharistic and that there never was a real Agape celebrated. But when the question, so perplexing as to answer itself arises, How did a meal, so sacred and instituted by Christ ever be-

come separated." If instituted by Christ no one had the authority to change and alter it, no one had the right to omit and add and who was the brilliant mind who could say that henceforth this shall be an Agape and that, the Eucharist. This goes to show that from the very beginning there were both, Agape and Eucharist, separable because one was by human will and the other divine. That they were held in connection with each other, Tertullian, speaking as a Montanist, and carrying the idea too far so as to make it law, nevertheless shows that the custom had made itself so much felt as to become almost law, when he writes, "We take, in congregations before daybreak, and from the hand of none but the presidents, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord both commanded to be eaten at mealtimes, and enjoined to be taken by all alike." (De Corona, III) (202-208 A.D.).

VI

The Separation of the Agape from the Eucharist.

Two great questions to be discussed in relation to the Agape and the Eucharist are the time of separation and the reasons for separation.

In the earliest document, the Didache, we can find no hint of any separation anymore than in the Ignatian Epistle to the Smyrnaeans (8, 2) written about ten years later, 110 A.D. Some scholars argue that because the Agape is treated separately there is of necessity separation but this is really no argument because a person must take one first and then the other in giving directions, and not both at once. That's humanly impossible. Lightfoot thinks that 8, 3 refers to the Agape and includes, at the same time, the Eucharist, but this is unnecessary because Ignatius had just treated of the Eucharist above. "Let that be held a valid Eucharist which is under a bishop or him to whom he commits it." Then after a while, he continues with the Agape and Baptism. But even though they are separated in such writings in giving explanations that is no proof of separation in customary sequence of celebration. In music we can discuss bass and alto of one piece in separate chapters but both are sung together at the recital. Agape and Eucharist may be treated one at the beginning, the other, at the end of an essay and yet both have been connected.

Pliny is the first to mention the separation in his letter to Trajan, 112 A.D., when he was acting as governor of Bithynia, Ep. X, 96:

"They (Christians who had denied their faith) asserted, however, that the account of their fault or error was this: that they had been accustomed to assemble on a fixed day before daylight and sing by turns a hymn to Christ as a God; and that they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but to commit neither theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, nor to break their word and not to deny a deposit when demanded; after these things were done, it was their custom to depart and meet again together to take food; and they said that even this had ceased after my edict was issued, by which, according to your command, I had forbidden the existence of clubs." (Ayer, "A Source-book for Ancient Church History"). From this we see that, at the time of the writing the Eucharist and Agape had been separated and the Eucharist held at dawn and the Agape at evening and, a little later, because not even this separation sufficed to ease the conscience of Christians in regard to obedience to civil law, the Agape was dropped.

Scholars argue that the oath, "Sacramentum", cannot be regarded as the Eucharist and does not necessarily or even probably apply to it. But is that so? Consider the difficulties of the Christians and of Pliny. The Christians were to explain the Eucharist to an heathen ruler. How on earth could they in their brief hearing introduce him into Christian phraseology and make him understand the Lord's Supper? Would he readily understand an eating of flesh and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine, Would they dare to speak of flesh and blood and thus appear guilty to a misunderstanding populace, suspiciously intent on finding something against these secretive people, Would they understand a forgiveness of sins, a

strengthening of faith? Would it not be better to tell the governor that they promised, at their ceremony, to be good and obedient to the state and thus gain favor and leave no room for just rebuke. "Sacramentum" thus means that inexplicable Christian rite, the Eucharist.

Justin Martyr, writing about 150 A.D. mentions no Agape and in the sequence of service the reading of Scripture is followed, after prayer and exhortation, by the Eucharist. (Apol. 47).

Tertullian mentions both in 200 A.D. in Apol. 39 but both are separated. In his writing, "Ad Uxorem" II, 4 he mentions the inadvisability of keeping them together even on the one great day, the Paschal feast. In "De Corona" he has turned Montanist and has again reverted to the former usage and made it a law for himself.

Gradually the Agape disappeared all over the Roman Empire. At first it lost its influence in the West, then in Africa and finally in Egypt. Here we read that it itself existed until the 4th century (Soh. 5, 22; Laz. 7, 19 "Herzog"). In certain places in Syria it continued at all times in more or less modified forms.

The chief reasons against the Agape were the persecutions against the churches and the abuses within the Church. The persecutions were due in the first place to the reinforcement of the laws against the hetaeriae, clubs. Ramsay gives the clearest and most concise elucidation of the law in his, "The Church and the Roman Empire." Any club that gave suppers to its members was included in this category

whether they were trade, political, or religious. It was found that they fostered the idea of brotherhood to such a degree that the claims of the club were superior to all other, including the state and in the subjugated countries these associations threatened to become very strong and dangerous in politics. The wise Roman emperors therefore considered them too dangerous and forbade them with the exception of certain long licensed clubs and even these were regarded with disfavor and later done away with. The Christians, with their Agape, thus came under this law, and, to avoid breaking it, gave it up and were thus no longer liable to persecution on this account. But the union of Agape and Eucharist was at an end. Had they continued with both, Pliny, in obedience to Trajan, would not have written to the Emperor for advice because there would have been a clean case against the Christians. This was then no longer a reason for persecution because the Eucharist was not considered a meal and was legal.

The next and greatest reason after this for the breaking of the union was the suspicion of the surrounding people who accused them of eating human beings (Epulae Thyestae) and of licentiousness, revelry, and crime (concupitus Oedipodai). The former accusation readily explains itself. It was due to the Eucharist and the following absurd tale was common among the people. At the feast the initiated brought their converts and led them into the mysteries in this way. A little child was brought in upon a dish and hidden by meal covering it. The novice was given a dagger and told to thrust it into the food. He was, of course, ignorant of the true contents of the dish and did as he was told, but when he had killed the

child the horror for the crime and the fear of punishment if it were revealed made him a firm adherent to the new religion. They were all comrades in crime and bound together through fear of death. After the blow was struck the onlookers fought greedily for the blood of the infant and soon nothing was left as evidence of their crime except the bones. This, especially, was the accusation against which the Church Fathers had to contend. Tertullian refutes this absurdity by demanding proof. He mentions the fact of their frequent disturbances and raids and never has anyone found an infant wailing or apprehended and led to court any one "with the gory mouths of Cyclops and Sereus." Hethen asks them to place themselves in the position of the Christians and consider the outcome of their faith, eternal life and the obligation if it were true, the murder of infants, etc. and asks, "Do you think eternal life worth this evil and the resultant accusing conscience?" And if they themselves must answer, "No", how can they think Christians differ from them.

The second accusation was that of illicit and shameful intercourse with their own sisters and mothers, the more shameful the deed the better enjoyed and more denied. It was related among them that at a certain time in the feast a piece of offal was thrown at a dog tied to the light. The dog ran, the candle overturned and went out and every one ran over to his mother or sister in the dark and satisfied his lust to his heart's content. This may be a reminiscence of 1 Corinthians but better, an exaggeration of abuses of heretics who aped the Agape, and even, of abuses in the Church itself.

About 150-200 B.C. there lived a heretic called Marli. He had the custom of traveling about the land accompanied by a train of women. At the revivals he offered the chalice to a specially chosen woman, saying, "The grace of God, which excels all, fill your inner being, and increase His knowledge in you, dropping the grain of mustard seed into good ground." After this the woman was urged by all to prophesy. She hesitates and asserts her inability but the demand is continued by all with greater emphasis and vehemence, in passionate appeals, in appeals addressed to her religious and sexual nature until she manages to utter an incoherent mass of nonsense accepted as a symptom of divine revelation, sinks down in a semi-swoon into the arms of her rapturous spiritual bridegroom and then the curtain falls. (Iren. 1, 9 Haeres. Ephph. Haeres. 34, 1 in Baring-Gould).

Clement, testifying against the heretic, Corpocrates, aGnostic, writes, "I would not like to call their gatherings "Agape". Men and women at the same time, after having been well fed, give themselves up to every sort of disgrace, and these abuses take place in a so-called Agape."

We have already considered Jude and Peter and seen that already at such an early period there were grave abuses of the Agape. As they came more closely into contact with the heathen world and had lost their first love the Christians themselves gave offence by their conduct and this was exaggerated by their neighbors. Clement of Alexandria complains about their unseemly extravagance in food and

in music. The only music which he would tolerate is the solemn music of the trumpet, Cyre, timbrel, and cymbal but even these he explains as being figurative terms for the trump of resurrection, the mouth, the resounding call of resurrection, and for the reverberating lips of man and I doubt whether he actually tolerated any music. When Tertullian had turned arch-Montanist he rages against abuses in the Church, which, though perhaps not universal, still must have happened and writes, "Of greater account is 'love,' because it is the means whereby your young men sleep with their sisters." These, then, are the reasons for the separation of Agape and Eucharist.

VII

The Modern Use of the Agape.

The Agape is in vogue among the Moravians, Methodists, Sandemans, and Baptists.

It was once believed that the Agape of the Moravians began as a renewal of the ancient Agape but some German scholar, better informed, gives the true origin. Once, when the Moravians had assembled at Count Zinzendorf's home, they became hungry and the generous Count sent to his kitchen and gave them refreshments in the form of tea and cakes. The custom continued and became known as the Agape.

The Methodists, Sandemans (Adherents of Mr. Robert Sandeman of Scotland, who has some adherents in Danbury, Conn.), German Baptists, (Junkers, Tumblers, Dunkers, Dunkards) celebrate the Agape in essentially the same way. The meal consists of tea and cakes eaten in an atmosphere of brotherly and sisterly love, during the antiphonal singing of hymns and spiritual songs.

Some people consider this Agape as of real value as Cole, "As we read the accounts of Love Feasts, we sometimes regret that the Agape has lost its place in the Christian worship of modern times. The spirit of common brotherhood which produced it and of which it was so cogent a testimony, would surely be serviceable to-day." That's mere romance. We show our Christian spirit by our Ladies' Aids, Young Peoples' Societies, etc. and especially by building and maintaining religious educational establishments. The Agape used to

be of value but times have changed as Krauss correctly says, "Sie waren eben nur fuer eine Zeit geeignet, in der die Bekenner Christi und der Zahl nach mehr das Bild einer grossen Familie darboten."

The abuses which arise as the Church grows in numbers show the inadvisability. There is no longer any persecution to bind the members of a church so closely together. There is no longer any great joy of a new discovery of a Savior whom to acknowledge, midst scorn and hatred. On all sides there are greater attractions which make an Agape seem useless and undesired in a so-called Christian land here people are lulled to sleep and see no wrong in worldliness. In smaller mission-churches the people are closely united by a common cause and need no Agape and their suppers and social supply the need amply and we have social enough to take the place of an Agape in larger congregations. In fact, they are better because an Agape was generally a spiritual exercise for all members and our meetings are too large for this and better served by a few good speakers as in our custom. Finally, it must be noted that the meal did not produce love but love the meal. This love now manifests itself in other ways as stated above and is emphatically not lacking.
