

THE BREAD FOR TODAY AND THE BREAD FOR TOMORROW:
THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the following thesis is my original work and is the result of research carried out at the New College, University of Edinburgh, from October 1990 to October 1993.

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TO MY PARENTS

REV. CHIYOUNG KIM AND MRS. CHOONSUN HONG KIM

AND TO MY PARENTS-IN-LAW

THE LATE WOOBUM CHOI AND MRS. KEUMSOON LEE CHOI

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ABSTRACT

The Bible reveals that the goal of God's saving acts is to establish a new society. And the desire of His people for a new society is manifest through their common sharing of food in His presence: moreover the table community is eschatologically opened to the messianic kingdom as it is frequently envisaged as a heavenly banquet. The meal has been recognised as a powerful language for the people not only in relation to one another but also in relation to God: it suggests strong ethical implications as well.

The purpose of this work is (i) to discuss how the meal tradition in the particular context of Korea is to be reinterpreted in terms of main themes in the biblical meal tradition and (ii) to contribute some suggestions concerning theology and practice of the Lord's Supper which the Korean church, as a particular church, should share with the universal Church.

This dissertation examines the meal tradition in the Bible (Part One), that of the Korean minjung (Part Two), and the understanding of the Lord's Supper within the Korean church (Part Three).

Part One (i) sees that numerous meal traditions, affiliated with the exodus event in the Old Testament and the Jesus event in the New Testament, have been reinterpreted as an all-important means for the formation of theology as well as for the transformation of a community, and (ii) argues that each of these natural meals reflects its own particular social situation and has been developed through the process of its historicisation in the light of salvation history.

Part Two, by looking at the minjung's table-fellowship experiences in their own social, religious, and cultural lives, tries to find points of contact between the biblical and minjung tradition. The minjung's interpretation of rice is abridged as "Rice (bread) is Heaven," whilst the bread in the biblical tradition is summarised as "God is Bread" through the three-fold incarnation of Jesus.

Part Three analyses how the Korean church, especially the minjung church, has understood and practiced the two meal traditions as a twin polarity -- the common meal transmitted from their own socio-historical experiences and the eucharist inherited from the Church -- in its celebration of the Lord's Table. The minjung church as a table community witnesses that the table community of the historical Jesus is represented in the midst of the congregation and that eucharistic worship is directly related to their society-transforming participation.

Part Four, the conclusion, by putting the above meal interpretation together, rediscovers the ethical significance of the Lord's Supper as the internal basis of Christian social practice.

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INTRODUCTION

People are dependent on food. As long as they live, the eating of food is one of the most pivotal actions of them as social animals. They eat food not simply to satisfy the physical demand of body; but they eat food to continue their social activities. The eating of food is understood as a central part of social life.

Food symbolises people's social relationship with others. Through the common sharing of food, people maintain, restore and enhance their social relationships. It is at table that people confirm their identities in a social group to which they belong. Those who do not eat together are without any obligation to one another, if not actually enemies. Betrayal of the common table is recognised as the worst kind of treason in the Bible (Psalms 41:9; Obadiah 1:7, etc.): the four Gospels underline in common Judas' betrayal at the table in their accounts of the last supper (Matthew 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:18, 26-27).

Partaking of a common meal, on the one hand, expresses the characteristics of a certain community. In order for a man to be good, he is advised to "choose the company of good men at table" (Ecclesiasticus 9:16).¹ The common meal,

¹Biblical quotations in this dissertation are from *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha* (1970) unless otherwise indicated.

on the other hand, constitutes a community consciousness in a real sense. Its experience from the same table gives a community a new social vision. The common meal not only leads the community into a new time and space but it also transforms the community into a different one; it is ultimately concerned about the building of a new community. Therefore, how one eats what and with whom under what circumstance is directly related to the social and historical responsibility of the community.

People cannot produce food alone, but only with others through communal labour; and food is also consumed among a community.² They depend on food from outside, i.e. nature and the One who controls it. People are, therefore, more intrinsically, dependent on God, as the One who offers food to them.³ This means that a common meal creates a special tie between God and them. Food is an important language for human beings not only in relation to one another but also in relation to God.

²It is said amongst Koreans that "Eating rice [sitting at table] alone gives no appetite" and "Eating rice together gives a good appetite." This means that eating together is related to the building of a community, whilst eating alone is related to only the satisfying of one's physical needs.

³To be provided with food and to make one's livelihood are directly related, as in Amos 7:12: "Get out, you seer! ... Earn your bread there and do prophesying there (NIV)." Koreans usually ask "Where [do you] eat rice?" or "Under whom [do you] eat rice?" instead of asking "What is your occupation?"

Human beings "are indeed made in the image of some God" who provides them with food. And they "have no more important theological investigation than to discern in whose image [they] have been made."⁴ Their sciences, behaviours, and social relationships with others are "predictably derived from, legitimated by, and reflective of [their] theology."⁵ In this respect, the manner by which a meal is shared among a community discloses with what God the community communicates, i.e. in what image of God the community comes into existence and from what God the community is provided nutrition. Moreover, the common meal suggests what society the community envisions and strives for with the food provided by *their* God.

The Hebrew *berit*, translated covenant, expresses well the nature of the food-relation. It is true that attempts to explore the etymology of the term *berit* have not led to any clear or certain conclusions. Nevertheless it is very probable that the word itself is formed from a root *brh* which indicates "food" or "eating" by the addition of a feminine ending.⁶

⁴W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 17.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁶D.J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 2-4; E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), pp. 209-210.

The Bible renders various examples about the relationship between covenant and meal, both among human beings and between God and human beings. Meals are often recognised as a sign to ratify those covenant relationships. Through meals, one is accepted by another, and mutual agreements between them are reached (Genesis 24:54; 26:30; 31:46, 54; Exodus 2:20; 1 Samuel 9:19, 24, etc.); but a more significant food-relation is established through the covenant meal between God and human beings, i.e. between God who gives food and people who are created to do the work of God for His food.

The experience of the common meal of a community, according to the biblical witnesses, has influenced both ritual and social life. *Historically*, their dietary practice has reflected their relationship with God and with one another. It has also played an important role in their worship and its meaning has never been exhausted. *Theologically*, the common meal is radically egalitarian in its basic conceptions and suggests strong ethical implications, as Paul criticised the gluttony of the rich and their humiliation of the poor as not being the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20).⁷

⁷The significance of a ritual meal cannot be separately understood apart from the dietary practice of the same community: they are complementary to each other.

Just for the purpose of discussion, i.e. in order to emphasise the function of the common meal, one would like to differentiate "the Lord's Supper" from "the eucharist" although they usually mean the same meal: that is, the

In the eucharist, numerous meal traditions, formulated in particular socio-historical contexts, are accumulated, e.g. the Passover meal, Israel's meal experience in the wilderness, the common meal in Canaan, Jesus' table community and the last supper, the post-Easter meal, the meal tradition of the early Church, etc. The eucharist as a Christian sacrament cherishes the same social directions of these common meals and is also concerned with concrete changes of the society to which the celebrants belong. The dietary customs and social circumstances in a particular context, therefore, should not be despised, but be opened to its proper understanding and celebration of the eucharist.

The fact that the accounts of several important ritual meals in the Bible, including the eucharist, were developed through the theological reinterpretation of regular meals in the light of salvation history (Cf. Part One), signifies that people in a particular context have a privilege to rediscover the significance of the biblical meal tradition in the light of their own meal tradition and contemporary socio-historical tasks; more positively, when this work is neglected, the eucharist becomes isolated from concrete social changes and degraded as a mere ritualistic activity.

Lord's Supper includes both the eucharist and the common meal among a community, whilst "the eucharist" designates the ritual meal of bread and wine.

And the fact that the meal of the common people is more eschatological for a new society than the meal of those in affluence, suggests that the meal of the common people be dealt with first than the meal of those who try to maintain the *status quo*.

The purpose of this dissertation is (i) to discuss how the meal tradition of the common people in the particular context of Korea is related to the main themes in the biblical meal tradition and (ii) to contribute some suggestions concerning theology and practice of the Lord's Supper which the Korean church, as a particular church, should share with the universal Church.

Attention is paid throughout this work mainly to the discussion of various table communities organised by means of common meals, but having one question at heart: "What does the eucharist, a strange and unusual meal inherited in the Church, really mean *today* to the people of God for their religious and social lives? And arguments are to be concentrated on the understanding of the common meal in relation to social ethics. This attitude limits the sphere of research to the establishment of a theological foundation for the proper celebration of the eucharist. Therefore the result of this work should be connected with and developed to the study for the renewal of eucharistic worship within the church as well as for the renewal of eucharistic practice outside of the church.

For this purpose, this dissertation examines the meal tradition in the Bible (Part One), that of the Korean minjung (Part Two), and the understanding of the Lord's Supper in the Korean Church (Part Three). These three aspects -- the Bible, a particular context, and the church where the people of God in the particular context belong -- are not separable from one another for Christians' proper faith life. That is to say, the importance of *the Bible*, as the common text of Christianity, cannot be depreciated no matter how its interpretations may be diverse from context to context; a *given situation* is a concrete context which the text is to be reinterpreted and applied to; and a *church* is a cardinal locus for the people of God to rediscover the meaning of the Christian tradition in a contemporary context, to express their social vision through worship, and to be encouraged to practice what is confessed among themselves.

Part One argues (i) how meals in the Bible, especially meals affiliated with the exodus event in the Old Testament and Jesus' event in the New Testament, are theologised as a powerful means for the building of a new society, and eventually for the kingdom of God, and (ii) how these meal experiences have affected both ritual meals, especially the eucharist, and social transformation.

Part Two looks at (i) how the Korean minjung have preserved their own table community with particular meal

traditions and (ii) how they have envisioned a new society in their common meal.

Part Three analyses (i) how the minjung church, a church of the poor, has understood and practiced the two meal traditions -- the one transmitted from the minjung's own socio-historical experiences and the other inherited from the Church -- in its celebration of the Lord's Supper and (ii) to what extent the church's experience of the Lord's Supper could affect the transformation of the Korean church as such and its society.

Finally those meal experiences are to be put together for an integral understanding of the Lord's Supper in Part Four as a conclusion of the dissertation.

PART ONE

BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TABLE COMMUNITY

Part One has two basic standpoints. *Firstly*, it understands the mission of God in the light of "the table community movement." The goal of God's saving act is to establish a new society which has the spirit of the common meal at its heart. Moreover, the messianic kingdom is frequently envisaged as a heavenly feast prepared by God (Isaiah 25:6-8; Luke 14:15; 22:30, etc.). In the table community movement, the coming kingdom of God is eschatologically anticipated.¹ *Secondly*, there is a special place at these meals for the common people: the so-called Hebrew minjung in the Old Testament and Galilean minjung in the New Testament, who are the nucleus of the biblical table community movement. (This kind of perspective is linked to the table community of the Korean minjung in Part Two and then to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church in Part Three.)

¹"An anticipation is not yet a fulfillment. But it is already the presence of the future in the conditions of history. It is a fragment of the coming whole. It is a payment made in advance of complete fulfillment and part-possession of what is still to come." J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 193.

Part One approaches the interpretation of the common meal from three different angles: (i) the relationship between the presence of God and the meal experience of His people; (ii) the meaning of a common sharing of the meal in the people's lives as well as in its ritual celebration; and (iii) how these meal experiences have affected the formation of theology and the practice of community ethics.

I. THE TABLE COMMUNITY MOVEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section focuses on examining a theological interpretation of how Israel understood the Passover meal in relation to the spring feast of ancient nomads and their covenant meal in the wilderness. Section Two looks at how they related these meal experiences to the building of a new society, in their theology and practice: the first part of the section regards the theological understanding of "bread" and then of the inner essence of the common meal; and the second part regards how these understandings are reflected in the real lives of people. Section Three observes the process of how people's celebration of the common meal became associated with the centralisation of religion and, as a result, the common meal lost most of its eschatological significance. Then a brief conclusion of Chapter One is

followed.

1. The Passover Meal and Its Historicisation

It is widely agreed that the custom of the Passover was already known to Israel, in the time before they stayed in Egypt. Scholars have found that "as far back as preagricultural times,"¹ desert nomads in the Near East used to hold a spring feast before they departed from their winter station to greener and more abundant pastures. "In the life of the wandering shepherds it must have been a critical moment, a time laden with uncertainties and anxiety."² The feast was a customary meal feast for each family or group of families. They "killed a male sheep or goat of a prescribed age, roasted it whole, and ate it [along with unleavened bedouin bread and bitter desert herbs] with girt loins, after sprinkling the blood on the doorposts and lintel, and whatever remained uneaten had to be burned by fire before the morning."³ "On the primitive level the belief in a magical power residing in a

¹S. Mackintosh, *Passover Seder for Christian families* (New York: Resource Publicans, Inc., 1986), p. 5.

²A.J. Chupungco, *The Cosmic Elements of Christian Passover* (Roma: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), p. 16.

³H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Forms and Meaning* (London: SPCK, 1967), p. 48.

sacrificial victim led men to regard the sacrificial meal as the most intimate possible means of contact with the power of god."⁴ The night before the departure, when the moon was full, an apotropaic rite was performed ensuring a safe journey: an imminent departure was the unchangeable presupposition. The essential features of this nocturnal feast were:⁵ (i) the sacrifice of an animal from the flock or herd, (ii) the smearing of the blood at the entrance to the tent, (iii) a communal meal, (iv) a ritual dance, and (v) its association with the full moon.

It is unclear what the original meaning of the word *psh*, translated Passover, may have been.⁶ Notwithstanding the uncertainty of its etymological meaning, it has been convincingly assumed that the Passover originated from "a

⁴W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1961), 1:154.

⁵A.S. Herbert, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 43.

⁶Some etymological suggestions derived from non-biblical materials are: "make soft, supple, soothe, placate" (from Accadian), "the blow" (from Egyptian), or "separate" (from Arabic). J.B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover: From the Earliest Times to A.D. 70* (London Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 96-97.

Biblical materials also give several different interpretations: (i) "step, leap over," (ii) "save, deliver," (iii) "joy," (iv) "spare, protect," and (v) "passover" as a technical term for divine activity of the a salvific character. Cf. S.P. Brock, "An Early Interpretation of *Pasah:aggen* in the Palestinian Targum" in *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible*, eds. J.A. Emerton and S.C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 27-34.

hopping dance in a ring" of the old nomads.⁷

What then are the continuities and discontinuities between the Passover meal and the meal eaten among the nomads on the special day? Both meals were signals to unite people into a community and to make them ready for their imminent departure. However, the Passover meal got a more historical, less natural meaning. According to the account of how Israel observed the old customary meal on the evening prior to the departure from Egypt, it was no longer bound up with the cycle of an annual event; but the meal was reinterpreted theologically and historically in the light of the covenant relationship between God and themselves, i.e. in the context of God's hearing their outcry (Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-8; 9-10) and God's remembrance of His covenant with their ancestors (Exodus 2:24; 3:15). A natural and customary human activity, that of eating: (i) was recognised as an act of communion where people could experience the transcendence of God in the real historical

⁷M. Buber, *Moses* (Oxford and London: East & West Library, 1946), p. 71.

The verb "pasah" means "be lame, limp" as the qal (1 Kings 18:21), "be lamed" as the niph'al (2 Samuel 4:4), "dance with limping motions" as the piel (1 Kings 18:26). The assumption is more persuasive from the fact that "the sacred dance formed an indispensable part of divine worship" and "the celebrants regarded it as part of their duties." W. Eichrodt, *Op. cit.*, p. 310.

Moreover, in Isaiah 30:29, God's coming judgement on Assyria would arrive, in the likeness of the Passover judgement on Egypt, "as in the night when the ring dance is hallowed." M. Buber, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

situation;⁸ (ii) led to the transformation of the community; and (iii) made them leave their old land for the land God has promised where He would feed them with new food, often symbolised in milk and honey.

The meal Israel ate in the first Passover was not like any other meal they had eaten before. Their previous meals had been provided from the political and economical structure of Egypt, which were based on the monopolisation of food, as it was described:

There was no bread in the whole country [except Pharaoh's house]. ... [he] collected all the silver in Egypt in return for the corn. When silver was all spent ... [people] brought their herds [to Pharaoh] who gave them bread in exchange for their horses, their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, and their asses. ... [people] said, "My lord, ... our silver is all gone and our herds of cattle are yours. Nothing is left for your lordship but our bodies and our lands. ... Take us and our land in payment for bread, and we and our land alike will be in bondage to Pharaoh." ... the land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, Pharaoh set them to work as slaves from one end of the territory of Egypt to the other. (Genesis 47:13-21)

⁸Cf. At the Passover table, Israelites confess the direct intervention of God as follows. "And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt": not by the hands of an angel, and not by the hands of a seraph, and not by the hands of a messenger, but the Holy One, blessed be he, himself, in his own glory and in his own person. ... "For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night": I, and not an angel. ... I, and not a seraph. ... I, and not a messenger. *The Passover Haggadah*, ed. N.N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 37.

Pharaoh was regarded as a god. He symbolised the immovable lord of the *status quo*. His "religion of static triumphalism" was intimately connected with "the politics of oppression and exploitation" as well as "the economics of injustice and inequality";⁹ furthermore, the politics and economics were derived from and justified by their religion. Under these circumstances, Israel could get bread only through compulsory labour.

Behind the first celebration of the Passover, there was extreme tension between Pharaoh, who oppressed the Israelites with slave labour and would not let them go, and God, who wanted to liberate His oppressed people. The Passover meal symbolised that "the bread of affliction" was reinterpreted by the Hebrew slaves in the light of God's salvation history: more radically, they committed themselves to seek after "the bread of freedom," i.e. food for pilgrims. Two accounts contrasted in the process of liberation: (i) Pharaoh made the Israelites work for his store cities in order to store grain (Exodus 1:11);¹⁰ and (ii) Moses asked Pharaoh to let the oppressed go into the wilderness in order to have *zebzah*, the celebration of a

⁹W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 11-27.

¹⁰The account, which explains the hard situation of Israel in the beginning of Exodus, seems to be intentional in order to compare the oppression and freedom related with bread. Cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), p. 11.

common meal in the presence of God (Exodus 5:3; 8:21-24, etc.).

The *zebhah* (or *shelamim*; or *zebhah-shelamim*), translated "sacrifice" or "the peace offering," has prebiblical history. In the *zebhah*, unlike the *olah*, the burnt offering, the whole part of the flesh of the victim is not offered to God upon the altar, but only the fat parts, the most valuable parts of the animal, are consumed by fire. It is a community sacrifice eaten especially by a family or extended families. "The idea and expectation that the meal eaten together will create *communio* is basic to this sacrifice"¹¹ The communion is twofold: the communion between God and the participants; and the communion among those who eat together. "Because the deity and his worshippers enter the same system of living power, they are united by the strongest possible bond"¹² The purpose of the

¹¹H.-J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 118.

¹²W. Eichrodt, *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

There are a few references in conservative language of the cult which might even suggest the idea that God is in a real sense fed by sacrifices. Thus, the sacrifices are called "the bread of God" (Leviticus 21:6, 8; 22:25): "the shewbread" (Exodus 25:30; 1 Samuel 21:6) too has also been thought of in this connexion, since *lehem* means not only "bread," but "nourishment" as well. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 1: 254.

"But since the God of the Israelites refused to all nourishment (Judges 13:16), the loaves became a symbol of communion between Yahweh and his people." J. E. Latham, "Bread" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 vols. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 2:301.

zebhab is to create "peace." "The peace of the sacred meal with God establishes peace between the faithful members of the community and, by extension, throughout the world."¹³ Here the peace, *shalom*, designates "the unimpairedness, the wholeness, of a relationship of communion, and so a state of harmonious equilibrium, the balancing of all claims and needs" among a community.¹⁴

The *zebhab* is a kind of meal feast celebrated by the common people. It does not belong to the main part of worship. The peace offering consistently occurs at the conclusion of the ritual: nevertheless it "was a part of every feast."¹⁵ "Though this meal lay outwith the procedures of the ritual, it was however for the laity the main element and the high point in this cultic act. For them, the sacrifice accompanied by a common meal was the sacrifice *par excellence*."¹⁶ The celebrants experienced God as invisibly present. The common meal was shared without any formality. "The occasion and the whole mood connected with it were predominantly joyous and on occasion even excessively so."¹⁷ Notwithstanding its importance, "very

¹³M. Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial*, 2 vols. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), 1:41.

¹⁴G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁵M. Thurian, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁶G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 257.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

little can be gathered about the real significance [of the common meal], for the information in its scattered notices about this kind of sacrifice is for the most part one-sidedly related to its ritual aspects."¹⁸

The significance of the *zebhah* in relation to the exodus is, on the one hand, the Passover was celebrated in the form of a *zebhah*. The Passover resembles most closely the *zebhah*, mainly because a sacred meal is a central theme of both rites. The account of the first Passover in Exodus 12:1-36, which is given as the result of historicisation, depicts the Passover as a *zebhah*; and the Passover is to be remembered among the children of Israel as "*zebhah leYahweh*" (Exodus 12:27). "The Passover was called a *zebhah* in the Ritual Decalogue (Exodus 34:25), which is commonly regarded as the oldest Decalogue."¹⁹ On the other hand, the *zebhah* after the exodus event came to have a historical aspect. The purpose to leave Egypt is to celebrate the *zebhah*. Once the Passover had become associated with the departure from Egypt, the *zebhah* also had to be interpreted in the light of God's salvation history.

The significance of the above became more concretised through the experience at Mount Sinai called "the mountain of God" (Exodus 3:1). Mount Sinai is, *firstly*, the place

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 257-258.

¹⁹H.H. Rowley, *Op. cit.*, p. 116.

where God revealed Himself to Moses "in the burning bush."²⁰ Uniting Himself with the Hebrew slaves,²¹ God showed that "He saw the suffering from the inside, not looked at it from the outside, as through a window":²² and that "He entered fully into the hurtful situation and made it His own"²³ Secondly, it is the place where God instructed Moses to lead His suffering people from slavery and to worship Him with them: "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall all worship God [by celebrating *zebhab* as designated by Moses in Exodus 5:3; 8:21-24, etc.] here on

²⁰A Korean theologian described the mystery of the burning bush which was in flame, but was never consumed by the fire: "This mystery is like that of the powerless oppressed, the so-called *minjung*, who have become the subjects of history, not becoming extinct but overcoming the absurd reality of the right of the strongest." Eekon Kim, *Theology of the Suffering in the Book of Exodus* (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1989), p. 49.

²¹"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their outcry against their slave-masters. I have taken heed of ["know" in the Hebrew Bible] their sufferings" (Exodus 3:7). The verb "to know" connotes knowledge which has come about by experience. "When the Bible says Adam knew Eve, it does not mean Adam acquired a lot of data concerning a woman called Eve, or that he arrived at a rational definition or concept of Eve. It means Adam loved Eve, and they became united." M. Cakenaka, *God is Rice* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), pp. 8-9.

In this context around Exodus 3:7, "God has actually suffered their sufferings." Cyris Heesuck Moon, "Culture in the Bible and the Culture of the *Minjung*" in *The Ecumenical Review* 39 (1987), p. 183.

²²T.F. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 128.

²³*Ibid.*

this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). *Thirdly*, Mount Sinai is also the place where the Hebrew slaves became people of freedom in the covenant relationship with God. Worship on the mountain of God was a proximate goal of the liberation from slavery in Egypt.

The Old Testament witnesses that the purpose of the liberation from Egypt does not lie in the liberation *per se*. The exodus story does not end with the doxology of God's miraculous works in Exodus 15. The ultimate goal of the exodus was not "the exodus from" Egypt but "the exodus for" the promised land. Here the worship on Mount Sinai played a role in: (i) the ending of the journey from Egypt and the commencement of a new journey for the promised land; and (ii) the transformation of the ex-slaves into the people of God, the subjects of history, with an eschatological vision of a counter-society. It is through the meal in the wilderness that the deeper meaning of the Passover is disclosed: the *zebhah* in Egypt, called the Passover meal, and the *zebhah* in Mount Sinai, called the covenant meal, are not to be understood as two separate meals.

Exodus 24:1-11 depicts Israel as a table community entering into a covenant relationship with God. The covenant on Mount Sinai is not only the basic covenant of other covenants but also the starting point of Israel

religion.²⁴ Exodus 24:1-11 consists of two parts: vv. 3-8 on the covenant of blood and vv. 9-11 on the covenant meal; vv. 1-2 is an introductory part to the two events. Between these two accounts vv. 9-11 plays a more important role in order to get a more accurate understanding of the covenant and covenant community, because this part is : (i) the earliest source known among the covenant stories;²⁵ and (ii) the concluding part of the whole context of Exodus 24:1-11.

Some scholars insist that the exodus tradition and the Sinai tradition are separate ones.²⁶ They understand the event in Exodus 24:3-8 as a ceremony of the alliance in the law. This attitude, however, does not seem persuasive. A people's pledge occurred twice in vv.3 and 7, "We will do all that the Lord has told us" (cf. Exodus 19:8), indicates, doubtless, that God and His people entered into

²⁴M. Weinfeld, "Berit" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT) 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974-90), 2:275.

²⁵H.H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 68; M. Noth, *The Laws in Pentateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), p. 39.

²⁶G. von Rad, *The Problems of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), pp.13-20; M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Tradition* (Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 59-62.

M. Noth, however, admits that the relationship between the law and the covenant made literary analysis difficult; *The Laws in Pentateuch and Other Essays*, pp. 37-39.

Furthermore he regards a common meal shared by both of the covenant partners in Exodus 24:9-11 as a very important event and recognises that "a covenant meal can form an effective and valid seal on the making of a covenant." *Exodus* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 196.

a covenant relationship.²⁷ The word "to take" occurs thrice in vv. 7-8 to represent the ceremonial acts of the covenant: "Moses *took* half of the blood .. [and] he flung it against the altar"; "He *took* the book of the covenant and read it aloud for all the people to hear"; "Moses then *took* the blood and flung it over the people"; and he said, "This is the blood of the covenant."

The peace offerings (*zebhabh-she lamim*) of oxen between v.3 and v.7 were celebrated as the ratification of the covenant. It is difficult to imagine that the common meal of the peace offerings was celebrated in the middle of the covenant establishment: it was in general celebrated at the end of worship. The peace offerings in v.5, nevertheless, suggests that on the one hand, the peace offering was an essential event in the establishment of the covenant and on the other hand, the covenant was a perfect covenant ratified through the common meal among a people.

The common meal in Exodus 24: 9-11 was the climax and centrality of the covenant establishment. It depicted the scene of the *zebhabh*. The common meal might play an important role in uniting the people into "a quasi-familial relation."²⁸ The text seems to describe that Moses and the

²⁷H.H. Rowley, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁸D.J. McCarthy, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

It seems that the Israelites who left Egypt together were a loose assemblage of people: "The Israelites journeyed from Rameses ... Many other people ["mixed multitude" in the Hebrew text] went up with them" (Exodus

representatives of the people ate the common meal among themselves on the mountain. U. Cassuto, however, argues that they shared the meal with the people after they returned to the camp:²⁹ for during the forty days of his stay on Mount Sinai, Moses "neither ate bread nor drank water" (Exodus 34:28; cf. Deuteronomy 9:9, 18). Judging from the whole context of the exodus event, especially from the importance of the covenant ratification, it is more probable that all Israel, in groups of a family or extended families, celebrated the common meal together "in the presence of God" (v.11). Moreover Exodus 24:4 states that the covenanting ceremony was performed among all the people of Israel "at the foot of the mountain." There was "no ecstasy, mysticism, no glossolalia," but "the pleasure of happy fellowship"³⁰ "Everything points to Exodus 24:11b involving a sacrificial meal in which the covenant between the God of Israel and his people was realised and made effective."³¹

The experience in the wilderness, especially that of the common meal, disclosed that the land of Egypt was no

12:37-38, NIV).

²⁹U. Cassuto, *Op. cit.*, p. 315.

³⁰G.A.F. Knight, *Theology as Narration: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press Limited, 1976), p. 158.

³¹W. Beyerlin, *Origin and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 33.

longer a suitable place for worship, in which the egalitarianism of God's politics could be radically revealed. The covenant meal exposed the absurdity of Egyptian social structures, that filled with "the politics of oppression" and "the economics of inequality" resulting from "the religion of false gods."

The wilderness, unlike Egypt, was a place of "the religion of God's righteousness." Moreover, the presence of God which was experienced in the common meal of the covenant revealed that the righteousness of God was the foundation of a new society: that is, both justice and equality in their real senses could not be established, unless they were based on the righteousness of God.³²

In the context of Exodus 24:1-11, the covenant relationship between God and His people is expressed in worship. It is through the common meal, a central act of worship, that the covenant relationship is ratified and

³²The extent to which Israel sees the human justice as a reflection of God's righteousness is illustrated well in the twin acrostic Psalms 111 and 112. The former extols the glorious acts of God; the latter, the actions of His people who fears God. In verses 3b, each of them uses precisely the same words to refer to both God and His people before God: "His righteousness is forever." W. Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), p. 143.

"Righteousness" is also the central term in worship. It is in worship that the covenant relationship between God and His people is established and renewed: human justice, however, is overwhelmed by divine righteousness; and thus "what takes place in the cult can also be designated as the righteousness of God." G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

solidified: not only did the *zebhab*, in which the common meal is an indispensable theme, indicate worship itself (cf. Exodus 3:12, 18); but the *zebhab* was also the purpose of the exodus from the land of bondage (Exodus 5:3; five times in 8:21-24). The common meal makes it possible for the celebrants: (i) to experience, more materially, the egalitarian character of a covenant community, (ii) to taste and envision the coming society that God promises, and (iii) to have faith that the promised society will be eschatologically granted. The common meal shared among the community clarifies the relationship of the covenant and eschatological expectation of the future:

"Covenant" is the bonding of decentralized social groups in a larger society of equals committed to cooperation without authoritarian leadership and a way of symbolizing the locus of sovereignty in such a society of equals. "Eschatology," or hope of the future, is the sustained commitment of fellow tribesmen to a society of equals with the confidence and determination that this way of life can prevail against great environmental odds.³³

Three common meals appear in relation to the exodus story: (i) a meal as a customary practice before the time of the Passover, (ii) the Passover meal, and (iii) the covenant meal at Mount Sinai. All of them were celebrated in terms of the *zebhab*. Each of the meals was the meal of:

³³N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 692.

(i) "a small social unit" celebrated within a family or extended families; (ii) "a signal" to bind a whole community into one table community; (iii) "communion" between God and the celebrants as well as among the celebrants; (iv) "departure" to seek for another place for new bread; and, above all, (v) "anticipation" of a future society.

When the meal had become associated with the historical event, it had become a part of salvation history; and other elements of the meal also had been reinterpreted in the light of the process of salvation history. The customary meals of nomads were celebrated every spring time before they left for an unknown place; the Passover meal was solemnly eaten before the oppressed escaped from the land of bondage; the covenant meal was shared among them as the people of freedom under the commitment to establish a new society. The significance of the meal became more and more profound as the people's experiences were reflected by the common sharing of meal.

The historicisation of the Passover makes it possible for its meal to embrace two other meals: both the habitual meal of the ancient nomads and the covenant meal of the liberated people. Since an ordinary nomadic meal has become understood in terms of the historical event, its significance has penetrated into the concrete socio-political situation of the celebrants, i.e. its meaning has

been demythologised both historically and theologically; and since the Passover meal has become understood in terms of the covenant meal, the ethical aspects of the meal have begun to be more emphasised. The meaning of the Passover meal has not been restricted only within the boundary of past history; rather it has been opened to the future to all of God's people who remember the covenant relationship with God and have committed themselves to participate in His salvation history. In the history of Israel, every *zebhab* was interpreted as a covenant ceremony with God.³⁴ When and where the common meal of the *zebhab* was celebrated, the community entered into a covenant relationship with God experiencing once again the exodus and Sinai events.

2. The Common Meal and Building of a New Society

The meal experience of the wilderness cannot be emphasised too much when examining the nature of the covenant community as a table community. The fact that "Jewry was, or rather became, a pariah people"³⁵ suggests that the wilderness as a place of suffering was the

³⁴B. Lang, "Zabhach; zebbach" in *TDOT*, 4:26.

³⁵M. Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 3.

birthplace of the Old Testament spirituality, the spirituality based on the experience of liberation: God "called his son [Israel] out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1). The wilderness was also the place of a rediscipline. When Israel forgot His love, God would call them again into the wilderness:

I will woo her [Israel], I will go with her into the wilderness and comfort her: there I will restore her vineyards, ... and there she will answer as in her youth, when she came up out of Egypt. (Hosea 2:14-15)

The most significant characteristic of the wilderness experience in terms of the table community movement was that God Himself fed His people throughout the whole period in the wilderness, until "they first ate the produce" in the land of Canaan (Joshua 5:12). Behind the wilderness experience, the meal experience stood as its root experience. God was understood, first of all, as the One who provided them with daily bread, i.e. manna. The sovereignty of God was manifested by His ability to control food: "Between dusk and dark you will have flesh to eat and in the morning bread in plenty. You shall know that I the Lord am your God" (Exodus 16:12). It is assumed that "the tradition of the covenant meal on the mount of God in Exodus 24:11b was rooted in a practice of the desert period."³⁶ The meal experience affected both the formulation

³⁶W. Beyerlin, *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

of the theological understanding of bread and the establishment of community ethics.

(1) The common meal and covenant theology

Israel theologised other creation stories of the Near East on the basis of their experiences of historical liberation and their covenant relationship with God. The creation story expresses the eschatological completeness of God's acts of redemption through His creation works in the world, i.e. through the perfect state of *koinonia*. In the creation story, the blessing of food is a sign to contrast the state before creation and the state after creation.³⁷ That is, before creation there does not appear to be the blessing of food at all; the absence of food symbolises the barrenness of the earth. However, when God creates the world, He adds the blessing of food to fertility and dominion (cf. Genesis 1:28-29).

The ultimate concern and goal of the creation focuses on the creation of human beings. The account in Genesis 1:26a that "Let us make man in our image and likeness" shows a theological intention to emphasise the peculiar relationship of human beings to God. *First*, human beings

³⁷The same Hebrew verb *tsmh* meaning "to sprout" or "to grow" juxtaposes two different states: "the absence of food" (Genesis 2:5) and "the abundance of food" (Genesis 2:9).

are created, theologically, "to be the image of God."³⁸ This means that human beings are created as God's counterparts in order to accomplish His plan through their responsive acts: "the image of God" reveals that, on the one hand, human beings are in the concrete covenant relationship with God; on the other hand, this covenant has an eschatological character. *Second*, human beings are created as a community. They are socially related to one another as covenant partners. The continuing statement in 1:26b, "and let *them* have dominion ..." (NIV), points out that man is to be understood in a collective sense;³⁹ likewise the first man is described as male and female (Genesis 1:27; 5:1-2).⁴⁰

"Man in His image" signifies that man as a social community has both the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with one another. These relationships become warranted by means of food. When man begins to produce bread, then these relationships come into effect. In the creation story, "labour [human production of bread] appears as the only definition of man's proper significance."⁴¹ No bread was produced until man was

³⁸K. Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, 1955), p. 42.

³⁹H.W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 161.

⁴⁰P. Tribble, *God and Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 15-21.

⁴¹H.W. Wolff, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

created: "The grain of the field had not yet sprung up (*thmh*), because there was no man to till the ground" (cf. Genesis 2:5).⁴² After God created man, however, "the Lord God made trees spring (*thmh*) from the ground, all trees pleasant to look at and good for food" (Genesis 2:9). Bread is an important medium for man to communicate with God as well as with one another. The process of producing bread and consuming bread, therefore, is a crucial criterion to define human responsibility in the world.

Bread is, above all, given as the blessing of God: "You may eat from every tree in the garden" (Genesis 2:16). Bread is to be produced by God and man: "rain" from God and "labour" by man (Genesis 2:5). Labour for bread, in its true sense, is not from the result of sin, but "belongs to the basic commission of the Creator."⁴³ Man is, however, not allowed to eat the fruit (not to break off the branch) of the tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden (Genesis 2:17a; cf. 2:9): "for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die" (Genesis 2: 17b). Notwithstanding numerous interpretations of the trees of "life" and "knowledge," their reality is still unclear. However there is no room to doubt that these

⁴²U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1961), p. 102.

⁴³H.W. Wolff, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

trees belong to the dominion of God:⁴⁴ that is, the source of life and knowledge is beyond the possibility of human beings.⁴⁵ Man is not allowed to "be like God" (Genesis 3:4), nor to penetrate into the righteousness of God; nor to privatise the blessing of God; nor to monopolise bread.

It is with forbidden food that the first verb, which appears in the Bible, "to command" is connected. When man ate it, the covenant relationship between the Creator and the created was distorted; at the same time, the relationship among creatures also became dissolved; and then death came. Death is not just to be understood in a physical sense. Rather death is the state of the broken covenant; in this respect, "Adam was dead before he died."⁴⁶

⁴⁴According to the whole context of the creation story, the relationship of fruit (food), life, and knowledge can be: God gives *life* to human beings; and they not only sustain it but also *know* God by means of the *food* He provides. This relationship is most explicitly revealed through the last supper and Jesus' farewell discourses: Jesus, by giving his body as *bread* (symbolising His food), promises *the life-giving Spirit* (John 16:1-15) and makes the name of God *known* (John 17:24-26).

⁴⁵Byungmoo Ahn, Korean minjung theologian, interprets that the eating of the forbidden fruit is a challenge against the sovereignty of God by monopolising "matter" (the symbolic word for bread). Matter belongs to God: sociologically speaking, it belongs to "the public." Matter cannot be dominated by some individual. "Sin is privatisation or monopolisation of matter which belongs to God." *A Story of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: KTSI, 1988), pp. 202-203.

⁴⁶D. Bonhöffer, *Creation and Temptation* (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 86.

The dead are, therefore, those who are cut off from the praise of God (Psalms 115:17), i.e., those who seek prohibited bread than the bread God offers. Sin made man realise that he could disobey His Creator through the very act of eating. It caused man to have two tables: the Lord's table and the idol's table. The cultic history of Israel shows that "to eat some food" had been intimately related with "to serve some God."

What a large number of far-reaching cultic discussions possibly lies behind the two lists of unclean animals in Leviticus 11:2ff and Deuteronomy 14:4ff! These animals were certainly used for sacrifice in one cult or another, or else they had a sacral connexion with divine powers; and just for this reason they were sacrally disqualified for the cult of Yahweh.⁴⁷

After the transgression, the status of man could not but be changed. Nevertheless his particular role to produce bread was still the same. Owing to the forgiving grace of the One who initiates the covenant, the covenant relationship was not broken, but went on. Man was punished; but his original task remained unchanged. The word "to till" was picked up in the very wording of Genesis 2:5 where the word was used to indicate the destiny of man as the purpose of God's creation.

So the Lord God drove him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he had been taken (Genesis

⁴⁷G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, pp. 208-209.

3:23)

Outside of the garden, man, however, could gain his bread only by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:19). The future process of the gaining and sharing of bread would be related to the restoration of his original status in the garden, if he ate bread in response to God's faithfulness in His covenant. But there was always a possibility that bread could be "related to oppressive social relationships and to authoritarian and hierarchical ways of organising life."⁴⁸ "Happy are all who fear the Lord, who live according to his will. You shall eat the fruit of your own labours, you shall be happy and you shall prosper" (Psalms 128:1-2).

The Old Testament "did not merely develop a *protological* understanding of creation; in the process of doing so it also arrived at an *eschatological* view of creation."⁴⁹ "The eating of bread with God" was related to not only the first creation but to the eschatological expectation of the fulfillment of history: that is, bread has a *soteriological* character. When the day comes, "the primal curse of Genesis 3:19 will be abolished"⁵⁰ and man

⁴⁸W. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 53.

⁴⁹J. Moltmann, *God in Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 54.

⁵⁰W. Zimmerli, *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

will participate in the Lord's table, the feast God will prepare for His people.

Silence before the Lord God! for the day of the Lord is near. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice (*zebhabh*) and has hallowed his guests. On the day of Lord's sacrifice (*zebhabh*), ... they shall feed and lie down with no one to terrify them. (Zephaniah 1:7, 8 and 3:13)

On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will prepare a banquet of rich fare for all the peoples, a banquet of wines well matured and richest fare, well-matured wines strained clear. (Isaiah 25:6)

During the process to restore the creation order in the world, the people of God are called to participate in His mission in order to overcome the dominant socio-political structures for a new society and eventually for the messianic kingdom. It is in a common meal of the *zebhabh* usually celebrated before and after war (the so-called holy war) rather than in the meal experience of ordinary times that the reality which motivates this process is more clearly found.⁵¹

Before Israel was established as a nation, people from various places gathered together, when there was an

⁵¹"It is necessary to avoid a simple identification of *milhamah* in the Bible with our [predominant] definition of war. War in the Bible can be understood only in relation to shalom [the restoration of the creation order] and chaos [the broken order of creation], and can best be described as that which transforms the realm of shalom into the condition of chaos." P.D. Hanson, "War and Peace in Hebrew Bible" in *Interpretation* 38 (October 1984): 347.

indication that war was imminent, and offered the *zebzah* (1 Samuel 6:17; 13:8ff). They celebrated the common meal mainly for two reasons. *The first* is that scattered people needed to be reunited in the name of God: they were called "the people of Yahweh" (Judges 5:11, 13; 20:2). *The second* is that "His actual presence was particularly desired":⁵² "the armed camp was also its ancient holy of holies."⁵³

As indicated in the previous section, the purpose of *zebzah* is the establishment of *shalom*, i.e. the peace of God. That is to say, the celebration of the common meal before a war provided the army with *shalom* through the communion with God.⁵⁴ The common meal, therefore, made them carry out war with this *shalom*: it also made their engagement in war understood in the realm of the establishment of *shalom*. In their affirmation "Yahweh (is) *shalom*" (Judges 6:24), the army could hear the Word of God that "The Lord *has put* your enemy into your power" (Joshua 2:22 and elsewhere). "A great warrior was he who always had

⁵²W. Eichrodt, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁵³G. von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 51.

⁵⁴The eating of food in the presence of God is a powerful symbol of the communion with God (i) in order to be united with Him and (ii) in order to carry out His will, as expressed "They see God, and they eat and drink" (Exodus 24:11). Sometimes the Word of God itself is given as food (Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 2:8; Revelation 10:10).

peace in his battle."⁵⁵

A common meal before war gives a theological understanding of peace in relation to the participation in "the mission of God." The common meal helps people to experience that peace is granted through the communion with God, not by the power of the world. Peace is the gift of God: it is not guaranteed by others, but by God alone. The peace of God is a sign of His presence. It becomes the foundation of the victory over enemies; and it has been granted to those who do not fear but believe when they participate in His mission with the confidence that He has given them victory. The peace of God generates the event of God; and its power liberates His people. Therefore *shalom* designates "faith in the faithfulness of God that His righteousness will eventually be victorious": that is, *shalom*, in its real sense, is more than the fruit or goal of some campaign or movement. It is through the common meal that the peace of God is given to the people of God. Israel thus could confess that the communion meal itself with God, which they believed God Himself prepared for them, signified victory over the enemy.

Thou spreadest a table for me in the sight of my enemies; thou has richly bathed my head with oil, and my cup runs over (Psalms 23:5).

⁵⁵J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its life and Culture I-II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 302.

The idea of the holy war, which is expressed through the common meal, shows the way of God's mission between the table of the world and the table of the messianic banquet;⁵⁶ the present and the future; history and eschatology. The idea that God fights alone on behalf of His people suggests what human participation in the mission of God means, i.e. what the human attitude should be. The Passover meal and the experience in the wilderness show a paradigm of the holy war: the exodus and the wilderness period was, in some sense, the time of holy war *par excellence*, more significant than either the period of the Judges, or of the conquest.⁵⁷ The Passover meal resulted in two contrasting events: (i) the death of every first-born creature in Egypt, which had not let the Israelites go, and (ii) the liberation of God's people from servitude. Israel did not fight, but only participated in the mission of God: during

⁵⁶The word *lhm* signifies that the theme of a meal is intimately related to the idea of the holy war. The noun *lehem* is used for "bread" or "all kinds of edible food." Its verbal form *laham*, however, means both "to eat" (food), "to fight" (with the enemy), and "to devour" (the enemy as bread). Cf. S.P. Tregellis, *Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1884), p. 436.

"To eat food" and "to fight with the enemy" sometimes mean one and the same activity. In Numbers 14:9, for example, Joshua says of the Canaanites: "... because we will swallow (*lhm*) them up [or "for there we shall find food (*lhm*)" in NEB; or "for they are already our sacrificial food (*lhm*) in Korean Common Translation Bible] ... but the Lord is with us" (NIV).

⁵⁷M.C. Lind, *Yahweh is a Warrior: the Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 46-47.

their stay in the wilderness, God Himself fed them with His food.⁵⁸ They marched towards the land He had promised "in His peace" which was granted through the common meal. It was God that fought as a warrior: the song of Miriam reflects that God intervened to throw the enemy into the sea "at the historical events of the exodus":⁵⁹

The Lord is a warrior: the Lord is his name.
The chariots of Pharaoh and his army
he has cast into the sea;
the flower of his officers
are engulfed in the Red Sea.

...

Sing to the Lord, for he has risen up in triumph;
the horses and his rider he has hurled into the sea.
(Exodus 15:3, 4 and 21).

After a victory over the enemy, a common meal of the *zebhah* was once again celebrated among the army (1 Samuel 6:15) and everything was consecrated before God; and then they returned home in peace. Through the common meal, the

⁵⁸In the idea of the holy war, the role of God as a warrior was, without doubt, more emphasized than that of human beings: God's victories were called *chidqot Yahweh*, "the righteous acts of Yahweh" (Judges 5:11; 1 Samuel 30:26). (*Chidqot Yahweh*, which is the plural form of "righteousness of God," is best rendered "saving acts of Yahweh" based on the social bond existing between God and His people. W. Zimmerli, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.)

Nevertheless Israel did not make light of the human role. The song of Deborah, for example, recounted in detail the part played by specific individuals in the victory: "a curse ... because they brought no help to the Lord" (Judges 5:23).

⁵⁹G.A.F. Knight, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

celebrants might have confirmed the relationship between God and themselves by confessing that the victory belonged to God; and they returned to their everyday lives with the same peace that they experienced before the war. This means that the peace of God was also indispensable in their social lives for the building of a new community, as the common meal, celebrated at the foot of Mount Sinai, not only ratified the covenant relationship between God and Israel but it also made them continue their journey to the promised land in the same peace that they were given through the Passover meal.

Both of the common meals before the holy war and the exodus functioned: (i) to unite a scattered people into one community in the name of God; (ii) to make the community experience the peace of God and stand in the kairotic time; and (iii) to make them overcome the present and venture the future.

And the common meals after the war and the exodus were ceremonies: (i) to celebrate the joy of God's triumph over the enemy; (ii) to reconfirm the covenant relationship between God and His people in response to His redemptive works; and (iii) to commence a new journey in the peace of God, without fear, but with the confidence that God's faithfulness in the covenant would come true.⁶⁰

⁶⁰The most significant event regarding the meal-peace relationship seems to be found in the post-Easter meal event, because the peace is understood most powerfully in

Therefore, the peace of God, which is experienced through the communion with God, is by no means the peace of "guarantee," but the peace of "promise." The time of the peace is always "today" as the time of the covenant is always the eschatological now.

The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, all of us who are alive and are here this day. (Deuteronomy 5:2-3)

The peace of promise is entirely opened to the future in the context of "the mission of Israel." Whenever the common meal is shared, its significance is remembered. The Hebrew word *zeker*, meaning remembrance, "does not merely signify a recall of the past. It designates a ceremonial commemoration which summons the people to take a stand for action in view of Yahweh's purpose in history."⁶¹ The deeper meaning of the common meal is not restricted within the

the light of the life of the resurrection: (i) the disciples ran away after the death of Jesus; (ii) the risen Jesus appeared and gave "peace" while they were "eating"; (iii) the disciples in fear were changed into those of faith; and (iv) they went out into the world in order to establish "the same peace" they received from Jesus.

⁶¹S. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p. 115.

"Remembrance" is one of the most crucial word to express the God-man relationship in the covenant. God's remembrance is both the departure point of His liberating event (Exodus 3:1-12) and the basis of the covenant renewal (Exodus 32:11-14). God's remembrance can be proved effective through man's remembrance. In this respect, the mission of God is the mission of mankind.

boundary of the common meal experience *per se*, but penetrates into the real life of the covenant people: its nature is more material than spiritual.

The common meal was an indispensable medium to experience *shalom*. The peace of God, however, means the peace of those who struggle for a more egalitarian society, against the absurd reality of the rights of the strongest. The peace of God, in this sense, was to grow more in hope against hope rather than in a life of affluence. "The covenant of peace" was bestowed to "the oppressed" and it would be eschatologically established at the cost of their sufferings, not by means of the worldly power. This idea was developed and culminated in the theology of Deutero-Isaiah:

Come, all who are thirsty, come, fetch water;
 come, you who have no food, buy corn and eat;
 come and buy, not for money, not for a price. (55:1)

I will make covenant with you;
 my covenant of peace (*shalom*). (55:4; 54:10)

[The suffering servant of God would bring peace]
 but he was pierced for our transgressions,
 tortured for our iniquities;
 the chastisement he bore is health (*shalom*) for us
 and by his scourging we are healed. (53:5)

(2) The common meal and community ethics

The covenant meal reflected the politics and economics of God, which had been revealed through the exodus-Sinai-

wilderness experiences, especially through the forty years' wandering in the wilderness.⁶² The experience in the wilderness gave a special meaning to interpret the God-Israel relationship. The wilderness life by no means counted each person as an individual; but the whole community was recognised as one united family. The life of the individual was always integrated in the bonds of his or her family and thus of the whole community. A mingle-mangle of "I and we" in the historical credo (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) and "thou and ye" in the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21:1-22:16) signifies that Israel did not accurately distinguish "I" from "we" or "thou" from "ye."⁶³ Moreover, in the wilderness, the whole community was entirely thrust upon God in all facets of life; and a pure covenant relationship was maintained. It was the time of the first love between God and Israel: "I remember the unfailing devotion of your youth, the love of your bridal days, when you followed me in the wilderness, through the land unsown" (Jeremiah 2:1-2).

⁶²The wandering in the wilderness, historically, has a place of its own alongside the deliverance from Egypt; "You saw for yourselves what I did to Egypt. For a long time you lived in the wilderness" (Joshua 24:7); "It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, I who led you in the wilderness forty years" (Amos 2:10; cf. Psalms 136:16).

⁶³"In these curious alternations between singular and plural we have an illustration of the primitive oscillation between individual and group which has now been explained by the concept of corporate personality." N.W. Porteous, *Living the Mystery* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 145.

The basic relationship of God and His people was recognised through food: God as the One who offered food and His people who were nourished by it. The Israelites were taught the way to establish a new community by means of food: through the eating of food in the presence of God, the righteousness of God and the responsive justice of His people to it had been revealed.

This food experience in the wilderness suggested powerful ethical implications; and it became the basis of their community ethics. Stories of the manna event disclosed that the God-Israel relationship through equal food had an egalitarian aspect *par excellence*. All Israel were commanded to gather food which "God gave to them to eat" (Exodus 16:16) in order for them to "know" God (v.12); but each of them had to gather the exact quantity necessary for each and each family. There was no surplus and no lack, but equality: there was a strict distributive justice among the community.

This is the command the Lord has given: "Each of you is to gather as much as he can eat: let every man take an omer a head for every person in his tent." The Israelites did this, and they gathered, some more, some less, but when they measured it by the omer, those who had gathered more had not too much, and those who had gathered less had not too little. Each had just as much as he could eat. (Exodus 16:16-18)

Moses said, "No one may keep any of it till morning." Some, however, did not listen to Moses; they kept part of it till morning, and it became full of maggots and

stank. (Exodus 16:19-20)

It cannot be imagined that the Israelites had splendid food during their stay in the wilderness. Complaints about food echoed among the people in the early stages of the journey to the promised land: "If only we had died at the Lord's hand in Egypt, where we sat round the fleshpots and had plenty of bread to eat!" (Exodus 16:3); "In Egypt we had fish for the asking, cucumbers and watermelons, leeks and onions and garlic. Now our throats are parched" (Numbers 11:5-6). However God's ability to provide His people with food silenced their murmurs.

The experience of equality made the Israelites contemplate their food experience in the light of the table community movement. The food experience clarified the meaning of liberation to the Israelites, those who had been in Egypt, but now in the wilderness; those who had been in servitude, but now in freedom; those who had eaten the bread of affliction, but now the bread of liberation. The Israelites were once compulsorily engaged in the construction of Pharaoh's store cities so that he might monopolise food; but the liberated ate food "from hand to mouth." They were not allowed to store food (Exodus 16:20), nor to privatise food for their own future (Numbers 11:32). Neither could people exploit others nor be disobedient to God by means of food. The food from God, which symbolised

His protection of Israel, was understood as a medium linking Israel with God for a new society. This "process of spiritualising the old miraculous story was carried a further step forward."⁶⁴ It was reflected through the ceremony of the covenant renewal.

I led you [the Israelites] for forty years in the wilderness; your clothes did not wear out on you, nor did your sandals wear out and fall off your feet; you ate no bread and drank no wine or strong drink [as others did, but the food the I gave to you], in order that you might learn that I am the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 29:5-6)

Through the ceremony of the covenant renewal, especially when they shared the common meal, the Israelites, who were called "the Hebrews," were once again sent back to the time of the Egypt-Exodus-wilderness and remembered their wilderness days.⁶⁵ In this sense, a sociological term like "Hebrew" suggests even a more spiritual implication.

According to the scholarly consensus, "the method of administering justice and the social organisation" of the covenant community were instituted during the stay at Kadesh.⁶⁶ Even in Canaan, throughout the period of the Judges, Israel had not yet broken with their wilderness

⁶⁴G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁶⁵God revealed Himself as "the God of the Hebrews" in the burning bush: "Tell him [Pharaoh]. It has happened that the Lord the God of Hebrew met us" (Exodus 3:18).

⁶⁶W. Beyerlin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 146, 150-151.

tradition. Little materials are known about how the Passover had been observed in the post-settlement period.⁶⁷ It is generally assumed that the feast of the Passover had been "treated as a *zebhah* sacrifice"⁶⁸ and "celebrated in the framework of the tent festival of the families."⁶⁹ However the meaning of the Passover meal, as a covenant meal, had been continuously remembered through the ordinary meal and the *zebhah* at the level of a family or extended families.

It is known that premonarchical Israel possessed a four-level social structure. The basic social and economic unit was "a family" called *bet-ab*. This group, usually based on genuine blood relationships, was composed of three or four generations of kin. Several *bet-abot*, the extended families, could join together to form a *mishpahah*, often translated "clan." The members of a *mishpahah* usually lived in the same place, and they could meet for common religious feasts and sacrificial meals.⁷⁰ Several *mishpahoth* could band together to form "a tribe" (*shebet/matteh*). Tribes formed the nation Israel or "the house of Israel" (Joshua 21:45). Among these, with some exceptions, most of

⁶⁷H.H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, p. 117.

⁶⁸B. Lang, *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁶⁹H.-J. Kraus, *Op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁷⁰R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institution* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), p. 8.

community life ranged from the *bet-ab* to the *mishpahah*, except in the case of an emergency like war. The socio-economic functions of the *mishpahah* were directed "downwards" to the member *bet-abot*.⁷¹ Judicial proceedings took place on the level of *mishpahah*, or of a smaller social unit like the *bet-ab*: that is, both the judicial proceedings and the *zebhab* sacrifices were performed within the same social boundaries.

As far as the domestic meal of early Israel is concerned, very limited materials remain. The Jewish meal *berakoth*, however, can infer its nature, because: (i) "it took on its greatest importance in the family meals, especially the holy day meals, such as at Passover"⁷² and (ii) its "prayers are certainly among the most ancient of the Jewish rituals that have come down to us."⁷³ The prayer of the *berakoth* was understood as "the response to the Word."⁷⁴ The *berakoth*, which were uttered by Jethro, might be one of the oldest examples.⁷⁵ Jethro was told what "God had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt for Israel's sake, and

⁷¹N.K. Gottwald, *Op. cit.*, p. 319.

⁷²L. Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 79.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 40-49.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 42.

about all their hardships on the journey, and how the Lord had saved them" (Exodus 18:8). Then he cried out:

Blessed be the Lord who has saved you from the power of Egypt and of Pharaoh. Now I know that the Lord is the greatest of all gods, because he has delivered the people from the power of the Egyptians. (18:10-11)

The text goes on: "Jethro ... brought sacrifices (*zebhamim*) for God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came and shared the meal with Jethro in the presence of God" (v.12). After their settlement in the promised land, the interpretation of the meal grew "into a cosmic blessing for all of creation, especially the continued creation of life."⁷⁶

The blessing of a meal related to both God and man: to God, blessing meant His sovereignty over history; and to man, it had creation as its object. In the meal prayer emerged three *berakoth*. The first and the second concerned God's creation and redemption. The third referred to an eschatological fulfillment of the covenant which was expressed in the creation and redemption in praising of the *mirabilia Dei*.⁷⁷ The Jewish meal *berakoth* showed that: (i) an ordinary meal was shared among a family in terms of the covenant meal; (ii) a meal was recognised as a corporal and material form of covenant between God and them; (iii) the

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 86-88.

mighty acts of God was remembered in the faith of creation as well as of redemption; and (iv) a meal was not only related to the liberation of the past, but it was also, even more fundamentally, related to the creation of future liberation.

As far as the common meal of the community is concerned, it was usually celebrated in the form of the *zebhah* among several *bet-abot* called a *mishpahah*. After the settlement in Canaan onwards, "agriculture dominated Israelite daily life."⁷⁸ Even though a *bet-ab* might be an economically autonomous unit, "meat was very rarely eaten in everyday life."⁷⁹ A feast of the *zebhah* was occasionally celebrated at the holy place of *bet-abot* and a *mishpahah*. Animals were sacrificed; and the common meal was a meal *par excellence* especially for the poor. The common meal of the *zebhah* reflected the covenant meal in Exodus 24:9-11.⁸⁰ Through the common meal, the celebrants: (i) were reunited into one community: (ii) looked back on the exodus event and the lives of their ancestors in the wilderness; (iii) confirmed the covenant relationship with God; (iv) experienced the realisation of the covenant in the midst of their lives; and above all (v) envisioned a new society

⁷⁸O. Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1987), p. 5.

⁷⁹H.-J. Kraus, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁸⁰Cf. W. Beyerlin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

where the spirit of the common meal would prevail.

The table fellowship, at the level of the extended families, is particularly worth notice because this experience of the common meal had affected the establishment of their community ethics: that is, the covenant was renewed and community laws were laid down and developed.⁸¹ The social legislation was based on a concrete covenant relationship with God and with one another.

The law regarding the Sabbath, the day of rest, for example, represents the socio-ethical significance of the covenant meal among the community,⁸² because it reflects (i) *historically* the time during Israel's life in the wilderness when the essential principle of a new community was established by means of food and (ii) *theologically* the Sabbath symbolised a day when the purpose of God's creation works came into effect.⁸³ Besides, in a real social life among a people, it is in the Sabbath that a new community is partly realised and thus the messianic age is eschatologically expected.

⁸¹E.W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 48.

⁸²Cf. A.J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: a philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), pp. 288, 418-419.

⁸³Both of the Decalogue in Exodus 20:1-21 and in Deuteronomy 5:1-22 strictly stipulate norms for keeping the Sabbath. The legislation of the Sabbath in Exodus is linked to God's creation acts, whilst in Deuteronomy it is connected to God's works of redemption.



The regulation of the Sabbath was based on the historical event of the exodus: both of the Decalogues begin with a historical prologue (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). The keeping of the Sabbath was already commanded by God when He gave food to the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16:23-30). "They shall keep it in every generation as a covenant for ever. It is a sign for ever between me and the Israelites" (Exodus 31:17).

The significance of the Sabbath is manifested by the eating of food. "The day of the Sabbath is the day that represents the politics of God."⁸⁴ *In the wilderness*, the Sabbath was separated from other days in order to be kept holy. "Its holiness came from man's being able to share in God's holy joy."⁸⁵ The holding of a feast was a sign of the participation in divine holiness. It was characterised by the preparation of food for the Sabbath: "Tomorrow is a day of sacred rest, a sabbath holy to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake now, and boil what you want to boil; put aside what remains over and keep it safe till morning" (Exodus 16:23). Every individual Israelite became equal before the distributive justice of food. However, egalitarianism in its social and ethical implication was

⁸⁴J. Miguez-Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 140.

⁸⁵G.A.F. Knight, *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

more clearly demonstrated when people kept the Sabbath in their remembrance that they had been slaves in Egypt and God had brought them out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and *for that reason* they obeyed His command to keep the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The meal experience in the wilderness was theologically reflected *in the creation story* (Cf. Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 2:3). Its interpretation of the common meal in relation to the Sabbath is outlined: *Firstly*, the producing and consuming of food is an important activity to establish and maintain a right relationship not only between God and His people but also amongst themselves. These relationships are most clearly revealed on the last day of creation, i.e. the day of divine rest in the perfect communion between God and His creatures.⁸⁶ *Secondly*, the disobedient management of food, however, causes human beings to break these relationships: the meaning of "rest" (*sabbath*) in a real sense becomes distorted and consequently the state of *koinonia* in creation is destroyed. *Lastly*, the covenant relationship between God and them, nevertheless, is not broken, but continued by means of food. The keeping of the Sabbath symbolises that people participate in the process of salvation history for

⁸⁶G.L. Robbins' translation on Genesis 2:2 as "in the seventh day God caused to rest" gives a crucial clue to social ethics of the community. *And in the Seventh Day* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1987), pp. 80, 212.

the restoration of sacred rest, i.e. for the perfect realisation of God's politics.

The practice of the Sabbath *in a real social life* embraces both its historical and theological meaning. The Sabbath is the day that the purpose of creation and redemption is to be partly realised among the community. It is, therefore, the day of a liberating feast in which people taste the eschatological accomplishment of God's creation: "eschatology was," in this sense, "not invented by the prophets nor by postexilic Israel. It was already inextricably rooted in Yahweh's revelation of himself in the liberation of the exodus."⁸⁷

The Sabbath is man's "awareness of God's presence in the world":⁸⁸ "it is eternity within time" and thus understood as "the spiritual underground of history."⁸⁹ This is the day that all the community become equal before God: rest is given to every one, master and slave alike (Deuteronomy 5:14), and a kind of social discrimination is abolished. "The Sabbath has been instituted for the sake of

⁸⁷Cf. Th.C. Vriezen, "Prophecy and Eschatology" in *Vetus Testamentum*, supp. 1 (1953), pp. 199-229. Quoted in J.P. Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1982), pp. 116, 193.

⁸⁸The Sabbath was regarded as a day that "a bride came from heaven to grace his home with the beauty of holiness." B.D. Cohon, *Judaism in the Theory and Practice* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1948), p. 176.

⁸⁹A.J. Heschel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 419, 418.

all those who are especially hard driven and especially dependent."⁹⁰

The social realisation of the Sabbath was characterised by the table fellowship among the community. Not only the taking of rest from hard work but also the celebration of the Sabbath meal were understood as a tangible sign that the covenant relationship between God and His people was established. Israel made it a rule for every one to enjoy a Sabbath meal so that no one might be isolated from its celebration.⁹¹

The Sabbath might have been a day of a feast for the poor, just as the day of the *zebhab* was a feast day for them. Through the Sabbath meal, all Israel stood before God as one family. The celebration of the meal could have caused the community, especially the poor, not only to remember the God who had given food to their forefathers in the wilderness, but also to experience the liberating joy flowing from egalitarianism; that is, to realise that the exodus event was not merely a remote event, but rather it was a present happening in the midst of their lives.

The celebration of the common meal in the *zebhab* sacrifice affected the formation and development of the

⁹⁰H.W. Wolff, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁹¹The practice of the Sabbath meal has continued and the joyous character of the Sabbath obligation was stated: "every man should enjoy three good meals on the day, and the poor must be helped to observe this requirement." B.D. Cohon, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

social laws for a new society. The social laws of Israel showed that the Israelites endeavoured to practice the principle of the covenant meal in their own community. It was most basically exercised when Israel allotted land to each family "before God" (cf. Joshua 18:1-9) so that they could live as a covenant people. The laws in and for itself prohibited privatisation of the land. No individual was to imagine that he possessed any land in his own right. The land was of God (Leviticus 25:23) and given to Israel as a whole (Deuteronomy 1:8 and elsewhere); family property could not be alienated in perpetuity.⁹² The land was not merely nourishing space for bread but "a covenanted place."⁹³ It was always regarded as a historical place with God; "a place filled with memories of life with him and promises from him and vows to him."⁹⁴ Therefore its products had to be consumed according to the will of God, especially for the powerless who could not protect themselves in the society, because God would hear their cries.

What made it possible for the Israelites to enact the law to protect the right of the socially weak? The answer: "Israel had a tremendous sense of the incongruity of

⁹²G.A.T. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 235.

⁹³W. Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 52.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5.

injustice and slavery among a people which owed its freedom to the deliverance of their forefathers from Egypt."⁹⁵ The equal status of masters and slaves in the covenant had been based on the recognition of their God, as the One who remembered His covenant with their forefathers and liberated them from oppression.⁹⁶ By identifying themselves with the oppressed and by making themselves stand at the lowest social level, they envisioned an ideal community where no one would be able to lower oneself any further. This kind of positive attitude was a completely free personal act which could be possible only as a venture of faith in the present pressure of social contradiction.⁹⁷ The continuous remembrance of a basic framework of social laws, that "you shall not wrong an alien, or be hard upon him; [because] you were yourselves aliens in Egypt" (Exodus 22:29 and elsewhere), made the community maintain not only a right relationship with God but also a right relationship

⁹⁵N.W. Porteous, *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁹⁶The biblical laws, unlike those of neighbouring nations, do not contain the numerous references to social stratification. In the code of Hammurabi, for instance, the laws of Eshunna distinguished three social classes: (i) partisans called "awilum" who enjoyed freedom and full rights; (ii) plebeians called "mushkenu" who, while being free, were subjects to certain limitations; and (iii) slaves called "wardum." The codes protected the awilum and prevented them from being slaves. L. Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1986), pp. 136, 3-16.

⁹⁷W. Eichrodt, *Man in the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1951), pp. 65, 77.

with one another.⁹⁸ "Significantly enough there is no word in Hebrew for beggars or alms. The poor are regarded as one's own flesh (Isaiah 58:7)."⁹⁹ In "mono-Yahwism," Israel had strongly prohibited power to be centralised.¹⁰⁰ Power moved, accordingly, horizontally among a people, and not exercised vertically from above.¹⁰¹ The name Israel meaning "May God rule!"¹⁰² could be seen as the proper name for the covenant people.

According to socio-economic analyses, "Israel was most appropriately conceived as an eclectic composite in which various underclass and outlaw elements of society joined

⁹⁸"[Because] you were yourselves alien in Egypt" is made the key phrase of the so-called Book of the Covenant, the Code of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 24:17-18), and the Law of Holiness (Leviticus 19:18): the NEB does not translate *ki* meaning because. Among these the Book of the Covenant is known to have its roots in the time long before the settlement and to have been formed at least before the monarchy. G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁹⁹I. Epstein, *Judaism* (London: The Epworth Press, 1929), p. 20.

¹⁰⁰N.K. Gottwald, *Op. cit.*, pp. 209-215.

¹⁰¹"There can be no doubt about the source of judicial authority in the lower levels of the social structure. In the family the *paterfamilias* exercised such authority and was presumably responsible for enforcing the covenant stipulations in his own household. At the level of the *mishpahah*, judicial authority resided in the elders or heads of extended families." R.R. Wilson, "Enforcing the Covenant: The Mechanism of Judicial Autonomy in Early Israel" in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 65-66.

¹⁰²G. von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 322.

their diffused antifeudal experiences, sentiments, and interests, thereby forming a single movement that, through trial and error, became an effective autonomous social system."¹⁰³ Nevertheless, beyond socio-economic factors, a profound theological intention can be drawn from the fact that Israel not only confessed the slaves of Egypt as their forefathers but also united themselves with the lowest. The object was, without any doubt, to establish an egalitarian society which would have its foundation on the covenant relationship with God, whose meaning had been revealed in their meal experiences, especially those in the wilderness.

The exodus/Sinai/wilderness experiences have decisively affected the theology and community ethics of liberated Israel. Behind each of these historical events, there lay common experiences of the Passover/covenant/daily meals as a root experience. These experiences were remembered by means of domestic meals and especially the common meals of the *zebhab* celebrated at the level of a family and extended families. Through these meals, Israel theologised their meal experiences in the light of God's table community movement. God was confessed not only as the Creator and Liberator but also as the One who would create liberation towards the fulfillment of history. In order for Israel to participate in the mission of God, their laws

¹⁰³N.K. Gottwald, *Op. cit.*, p. 491.

required that the spirit of the covenant meal be realised in their community lives. It was no accident that the judicial proceedings and the celebration of the common meal were performed within the same social boundaries. The meal experience played a crucial role not only in Israel's maintenance of their covenant relationship with God but also in their establishment of a covenant community among themselves.

3. The Passover: a Feast of the Common People

It is inferred that the Passover, in ancient Israelite times, was celebrated at a particularly designated place. The reason for this inference is *firstly* that the fat parts of sacrificial animals were to be burnt on an altar instead of being eaten by the participants, or burnt within the house.¹⁰⁴ *Secondly*, after entering into the promised land, the Israelites settled there: they no longer moved to other places. *Thirdly*, the Passover was treated as a *zebha* sacrifice (Exodus 12:27; 34:25; Deuteronomy 16:2-6), or

¹⁰⁴The primary term for altar in the Old Testament is *mizbhaeah* which is derived from the root *zbhh*, "to slaughter." This fact signifies that the altar is originally related to the *zebha* sacrifice, even though "the most common activities associated with altars in the Hebrew Bible are the burning of sacrifice upon the altar." R.D. Haak, "Altar" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:162, 164.

celebrated as *zebhab-she lamim* (2 Chronicles 30:1-27; 35:1-19; Ezra 6:19-22) even after the Passover was associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread. "There was, at all events, an inevitable connection between the Passover sacrifice and the nearby altar."¹⁰⁵ With the fact that the Passover had been recognised as a *zebhab*, the Passover in the early days of Israel can be understood as a feast celebrated at the altar, called *bamah*, where people performed covenant ceremonies with God and ate sacrificial meals together.

The *bamah*, usually translated "high-place" or "hill-shrine," was mainly used for the sacrifice of the *zebhab*.¹⁰⁶ The *bamoth* had been of the Canaanites, but after the settlement the Israelites took them over as places for the Yahweh cult. They "were numerous and scattered throughout the country."¹⁰⁷ "Each *bamah* was furnished with an altar for offering sacrifices"¹⁰⁸ and "had a tent or a smaller or

¹⁰⁵M. Haran, *Temple and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 345.

¹⁰⁶The word *bamah* presents itself in the Old Testament with five meanings: (i) the original meaning "back" (Deuteronomy 33:29); (ii) "ridge" or "high ground" (Deuteronomy 32:13, etc.); (iii) its primary meaning "cultic high place" or "cultic place"; (iv) "mound" (Isaiah 53:9); and (v) the special meaning "stela" (the Septuagint of Leviticus 21:28; 33:52). K.-D. Schunk, "Bamah," in *TDOT*, 2:140.

¹⁰⁷M. Haran, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁸K.-D. Schunk, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

larger room covered with some sort of roof where the sacrificial meals were eaten and where the cultic vessels were stored."¹⁰⁹ Israel had a positive attitude towards the *bamah* for their social and religious life, especially for the place of covenant renewal.¹¹⁰ Agricultural and family festivals were kept, and on particular occasions people would come there to seek the laws, and in special circumstances would make a personal offering in fulfillment of a vow, in order to expiate sins, or in case of sickness, and so on.¹¹¹

The *bamah* also held a sacrifice of considerable size. All the *mishpahah* sometimes participated in the celebration of the *zebzah* together (1 Samuel 20:29 and elsewhere). Even after the building of the temple in Jerusalem, the centralisation of the cult, "the *bamoth* continued to be regarded as legitimate cult places."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹¹⁰"The predominantly negative estimation of the *bamoth* found in the present form of the Old Testament is due to prophetic criticism of the establishment of these cult places and of the type of cult practiced there, and to the Deuteronomic movement which advocated the centralisation of the cult at Jerusalem." *Ibid*, p. 144.

In the early times of Israel, however, the *bamah* must have been thought positively. The story in Samuel 9:11-25, for instance, describes a festival day at a high-place in Samuel's city and considers it a holy and honoured institution.

¹¹¹Th.C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), p. 83.

¹¹²K.-D. Schunck. *Op. cit.*, pp. 143, 144.

The Passover had been observed in each locality as a family (or several families) festival until it was absorbed in the feast of Unleavened Bread. In Deuteronomy 16:16, regulations concerning the main three pilgrim-feasts, there is no mention of the feast of the Passover: "Three times a year all your males shall come into the presence of the Lord your God in the place which he will choose: at the pilgrim-feast of Unleavened Bread, of Weeks, and of Tabernacles." No clear evidence is given for the time when the feast of Unleavened Bread absorbed the Passover: whether through Josiah's reform (2 Kings 23:22), or some time earlier, or even before the establishment of monarchy.¹¹³ However the Passover had been essentially a family feast related to the local *bamah*.

Two things can be suggested. *First*, the Passover had been a feast of the common people from the beginning, as it had originated from the nomadic spring feast and been reinterpreted by the Hebrew slaves; and whenever the Israelites celebrated the Passover meal, they also remembered the Egypt-exodus-Sinai-wilderness experiences. The Passover meal had been celebrated at the same time by all the family of Israel thus uniting them into one community: nevertheless it was by no means a uniform feast controlled from above. After the settlement, the Passover had continued its separate existence for a fairly long time

¹¹³H.-J. Kraus, *Op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

as a family feast apart from other nationwide festivals: an old record on the keeping of the Passover does not mention the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:21-27). The experience of the Passover along with that of the *zebhah*, especially of their common meal, not only made everyone equal before God but also affected the formulation of theology and community ethics. The principle of the common meal played an important role in shaping and maintaining Israel as one community. Power was not to be centralised but to flow horizontally among the community. For the Israelites, the common meal was recognised as the covenant meal between God and those who remembered the fact that their fathers were ex-slaves.

Secondly, the Passover was a *zebhah*, never a pilgrim feast (*hag*), celebrated in small social units. It is true that, only once in the Old Testament, Exodus 34:25 speaks of *zebhah hag happasah*, the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover. However, it is generally agreed as the result of a Deuteronomic interpretation.¹¹⁴ In the three places in the accounts of the exodus, mention is made of the term *hag* (Exodus 5:1; 10:9; 32:5); the first two are related with Moses' demand of Pharaoh to "Let my people go so that they may keep my pilgrim-feast in the wilderness"; the other is with a people's feast before the image of a bull-calf (cf.

¹¹⁴G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), pp. 100-101

1 Corinthians 10:7). M. Haran argues that "all these references are no more than anachronistic retrojections."¹¹⁵ However, the usage of *hag* in the above context seems to contain some theological intentions: (i) the place of feast in a true sense is the wilderness where people could maintain their egalitarian community through food; and (ii) meal feasts in front of the idol, which were connected with a false morality like *hagim* in the temple as criticised by the prophets, could not be feasts before God. The Passover was always a *zebhah*; likewise, a *zebhah* was also celebrated in the light of the Passover. That is, the participants in a *zebhah* remembered the historical event of the past in their own life situation, envisioning a society where its table fellowship could be realised. In this respect, "the phrase *hag happesah*, the pilgrim-feast of Passover, was impossible in biblical Hebrew."¹¹⁶

The centralisation of the cult caused the Passover to be associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread. "It was an old custom for the three great annual festivals [apart from the Passover] to be celebrated at the cultic centre."¹¹⁷ The feast of the Passover which had been observed "in each locality was now to be transferred to the sanctuary in Jerusalem as part of the thoroughgoing

¹¹⁵M. Haran, *Op. cit.*, p. 300.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 340.

¹¹⁷H.-J. Kraus, *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

centralisation of all worship."¹¹⁸ Scholars indicate that this process was directly related to the centralisation of power and the privatisation of the land.¹¹⁹ However, thinking of the above circumstances in relation to the absorption of the Passover into the feast of Unleavened Bread, it resulted in the loss of two important Passover themes. *On the one hand*, the *zebhab*, along with the Passover, was assimilated by the so-called temple sacrifices. "Great sacrificial ceremonies were celebrated at the Jerusalem temple, with the *zebhab* as the conclusion."¹²⁰

The centralisation of the cult made the killing of animals [*zebhab*] at a near-by "holy place" [*bamah*] no longer possible, but secular killing was permitted (Deut. xii 4ff.). There was a decline in the status and dignity of sacrifice, and the later rituals therefore had strictly to exclude the *zebhab*.¹²¹

"During the late monarchy, the *zebhab* became restricted by cultic law (Deuteronomy 12:2; 2 Kings 23) to the Jerusalem

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹As Samuel warned in 1 Samuel 8:11-18, the centralization of power meant for the common people the deprivation of the freedom that was experienced through the exodus and the covenant events. W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, pp. 28-43.

"One of the great social evils was the swallowing up of the crofts of the peasants into huge *latifundia*. Injustice flourished among the highest in the land." N.W. Porteous, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹²⁰B. Lang, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹²¹H.-J. Kraus, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

temple."¹²²

On the other hand, the transference of the Passover from the *bamah* to the temple caused its meal to be celebrated "as a sacrificial fellowship but not as a table fellowship."¹²³ "The presence of God" had been an indispensable theme of the common meal. The place, where the name of God was to dwell and to be placed, had to be chosen by God Himself, not by human beings. The building of the temple, consequently, imprisoned God within the temple, as king Solomon said in Kings 8:12-13:

O Lord who hast set the sun in heaven,
 but hast chosen to dwell in thick darkness,
 here have I built thee a lofty house,
 a habitation for thee to occupy for ever.

From now God was totally and unquestionably accessible to power and those to whom power granted access.¹²⁴ The religious lives of the common people were separated from their social lives. The experience in the wilderness was forcibly moved into a centralised cult. The presence of God

¹²²B. Lang, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

The celebration of the *zebhab* had been modified through increased participation of the temple priests. "According to the draft of the law in Ezekiel 40-48, performance of the *zebhab* ritual is a function of Levites (44:11) and temple ministers (46:24). The layman who comes to offer sacrifice merely hands over his animal and is given the cooked meat." *Ibid.*

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴W. Brueggemann, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

was to be communicated by means of the religious power. History entered into the sphere of mere reminiscence. Consequently, the common meal lost most of its eschatological significance, because, if not always, it was celebrated conforming to the order of the present rather than transforming it for a new society.

It may be difficult to assert that the feast of the Passover, called a *zebhah*, and that of customary *zebhahim* were absorbed into the temple cult at the same time: the procedure might have taken place slowly. However it is certain that: (i) these two feasts had been intimately related to each other and their meals had been understood as covenant meals, when they were celebrated among the common people; (ii) the centralised cult prohibited them from being celebrated among the common people and "the day of the old form of Yahwism was altogether at an end";¹²⁵ and (iii) these feasts, especially their meals, began to lose vitality when they were celebrated only within the boundary of religion.

The significance of the common meal, even though ritual texts hardly provide any interpretation of it, lies in eating in the presence of God, i.e. being the guest of God. Only in the presence of God can the righteousness of God be revealed. When the people of God stand in front of

¹²⁵G. von Rad, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

His righteousness, they have a righteous relationship with Him through the offering of worship (in their religious life) and the doing of justice (in their social life); if not, biblical worship and justice cannot but lose their true meaning. The prophets, the mediators of the covenant, endeavoured to restore the broken covenant relationship between God and His people. By using a typical prophetic formula, "This is the Word of God," they proclaimed the righteousness of God by their criticism of false worship and social injustice. The history of the Israelite religion witnesses that: when the common people participated in the celebration of the *zebzah* as the subjects of it, its meal not only was understood as a covenant meal but also affected their religious and social lives; when, however, their meal practice was institutionalised by the religious power, not only was the freedom of God limited but the role of the common people as covenant partners also diminished accordingly.

The significance of the partaking of the common meal in the Old Testament is summarised: *First*, the main theme of the participation in the common meal is communion among a community with one another in the presence of God. As the presence of God is always related to concrete historical events, the meal experiences are related to the process of history. Israel has several common meal experiences. During the historicisation of these meals, their ethical aspects

are more and more emphasised. The presence of God in the meal has affected not only the maintenance and renewal of the God-Israel relationship but also the establishment of social laws and thus played an important role in the transformation of social structures for a new society. As a sign of the presence of God in the common meal, people are given the peace of God. It is a motivating power which makes it possible for a community to participate in His salvation history.

Secondly, the historical meal experiences have also affected the formation of theology. Through the partaking of the common meal, both domestic meals and communal meals, God is confessed as the Creator and Liberator; and moreover the messianic kingdom is eschatologically anticipated: it is frequently envisaged as a heavenly banquet. The Sabbath meal, especially, disclosed not only that the common meal is radically egalitarian in its basic conceptions but also that its celebration is directly related to the coming of the messianic age. Therefore ethical implications for the reconciliation between the rich and the poor are drawn out from the whole process of the common meal, i.e. especially from that of the Sabbath meal. (They are a basis to discern Jesus' understanding of the Sabbath meal and church's celebration of the common meal on the Lord's day.)

Lastly, the inner meaning of the common meal is more implicitly revealed when it is celebrated with the socially

weak as its nucleus: when they are excluded, the common meal is apt to lose its eschatological significance. In this respect, the common meal is to be celebrated in the midst of their own life situation, especially at the level of a small social unit: a community as a family or extended families was particularly emphasised. The Old Testament meal tradition witnesses that the historicisation of the common meal has progressed through the continuous reinterpretation of common people's meal practice in the light of God's salvation history.

II. The table Community Movement in the New Testament

1. Jesus and the Table Community Movement

Jesus' first public words were about the kingdom of God: "The time has come; the kingdom of God is upon you; repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). During his public life, Jesus told many parables about the kingdom of God. Jesus spent his time mainly amongst his followers, the so-called Galilean *minjung*, and shared food with them. "The gospel of the kingdom was so full of sayings concerning meals, eating and drinking, hungering and thirsting, that there is not *one* element of it which is not expressed

somewhere in terms of a meal-metaphor."¹²⁶ His table community was often compared to the kingdom of God: it was "not a proclamation in words at all, but an acted parable."¹²⁷ The table community which Jesus established was, in a real sense, more than an acted parable. It was a "social reality" rather than a metaphor, a "historical event" rather than a mere lesson.

"The meals of Jesus during the present time of His ministry was invested with messianic significance."¹²⁸ In and through Jesus' table community, both the community as it would be in the messianic age and the community as it ought to be in the world were disclosed at the same time. Jesus' table fellowship was, on the one hand, a sign of that to be expected in the messianic kingdom, as the Old Testament traditions related to the messianic banquet had been a common place of its apocalyptic expectation. Jesus depicted the future salvation under the image of feasting and feeding: "From east and west people will come, from

¹²⁶"The blessing of this Gospel message, the challenge, the commandment, the promise, all are comprehended in this meal context and in the corresponding custom." Even his healing ministry is described in terms of feeding children (Mark 7:24-30) and the messianic banquet (Matthew 8:5-13). E. Lohmeyer, *Lord of the Temple* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), pp. 79-80.

¹²⁷N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 102.

¹²⁸G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: EPworth Press, 1971), p. 28.

north and south, for the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29; Cf. Matthew 8:11). The scene of the messianic banquet was also portrayed in relation to the parousia by his disciples (Luke 12:37 and elsewhere).

The table fellowship, on the other hand, did not present the messianic feast as something reserved only for the future. To some extent it was realised even during the life of Jesus through the "exuberant joy" of scandalous meal practices, which "was the most characteristic result of all Jesus' activity amongst the poor and the oppressed."¹²⁹ His table was a kind of antepast for the messianic banquet; and his table community was a kind of messianic community for the kingdom of God. In the prayer of Jesus, the kingdom of God was the place where bread was shared together; to pray for the kingdom of God and to pray for bread were not antithetical.¹³⁰ "The bread that he gives here, today, is also the bread that he will share with them [his followers] and eat with them in his kingdom."¹³¹

¹²⁹A. Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity: the Gospel of Liberation* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991), p. 41.

¹³⁰In the Lord's prayer, the main theme of "the Thou-petitions" (its first half) and "the We-petitions" (its second half) are "the kingdom of God" and "bread." Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Prayer of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 98-104.

The inexhaustible mystery of the relationship between these petitions is summarised in one phrase: "eschatology becoming actualised." *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹³¹E. Lohmeyer, *The Lord's Prayer* (London: Collins, 1965), p. 150.

In this sense, Jesus' kingdom of God movement can be called a "table community movement" linking the table community in the world to that in the coming kingdom of God. The table fellowship was the ferment of the Kingdom of God movement. The kingdom of God, therefore, should not be understood either in terms of a futuristic eschatology that sees the kingdom of God as a future event, or in terms of a present eschatology that sees the kingdom of God as an already realised one, but in terms of a concrete socio-historical process in the expectation of its eschatological fulfillment.

The eating of food played an indispensable role in the ministry of Jesus. Before his ministry, Jesus entered into the deepest dimension of hunger by fasting for forty days and nights until he became famished (Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2):¹³² he experienced in person how much matter signified in human life; but he by no means succumbed to the temptation of materialism. Then he began his table community movement in Galilee (Matthew 4:12; Luke 4:17).¹³³

¹³²Hunger is also "a principle and an absolute *criterion* of the last judgement" (Matthew 25:35). E. Dussel, *Ethics and Community* (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1988), p. 13.

¹³³According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus started his public life "after John [the Baptist] had been arrested" (1:14; Cf. Matthew 4:12). Jesus showed the contrast between the period of John the Baptist and his own. The former was a time of waiting and fasting; the latter was that of joy and banqueting (Mark 2:18-19; Cf. Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 7:33-34). His proclamation of the kingdom of God (1:15) after the arrest of John the Baptist signifies that his

He chose twelve disciples and "the meals which he must have taken with the apostles throughout his ministry formed a focus for the enjoyment of fellowship."¹³⁴ Moreover he was willing to share table fellowship with all sorts of people. It is assumed that Jesus was in the habit of eating with a large circle of his hearers. He received prostitutes and quislings and other notorious sinners, the outcasts of society, at his table. Often, especially on a Sabbath (Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1), Jesus was invited to a meal, together with other guests (Mark 14:3; Luke 7:36; 11:37; John 2:1-11). Sometimes Jesus entertained his own guests (Luke 15:2), on one occasion in large numbers (Mark 2:15). His feeding miracles demonstrated how his table community was expanded among those who followed him. He also sent disciples to continue the regular practice of his table community movement (Luke 10:1-12).¹³⁵ His table community

kingdom of God movement is to be understood in terms of the table community movement.

The contrasting relationship between Mark 1:14 and 1:15 is better clarified by two consecutive accounts: that of the death of an ascetic prophet in Herod's orgiastic banquet with his chief officials and commanders and the leading men of Galilee (6:17-29) and that of Jesus' miraculous feeding of five thousand hungry minjung in a lonely place (6:30-44).

¹³⁴G. Wainwright, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹³⁵H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 53.

Shalom - the peace of God - is indispensable in the table community movement. When the disciples went into the house, they said, "Peace to this house (or family)!" This greeting is an extension of the Old Testament greeting, e.g. that expressed in the holy war (Judges 6:23); it is

movement found its climax through the last supper with the twelve disciples on the eve of the crucifixion, where he identified his own body with bread and gave it to them. The risen Jesus appeared before his beloved disciples when they were breaking bread together; and he gave them a mission to continue his table community movement.

Among the above mentioned various meal events, Jesus' table fellowship with the *ochlos*, translated as "crowd" or "multitude" and often represented by "publicans and sinners," is the pivotal meal event in order to look at the historical character of Jesus' table fellowship.¹³⁶ The other meal accounts can be interpreted in the light of it. Mark 2:13-17 discloses the subject and the nature of Jesus' table community movement: Jesus received *pas ho ochlos* to his table community (vv.13 and 15); when some doctors of the law noticed Jesus' eating with them and accused him of such a scandalous table fellowship, his reply was, "It is

also connected to the post-Easter meal greeting of Jesus that "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36 and elsewhere). J.A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), p. 847.

¹³⁶The people who gathered around Jesus were called the *ochlos*, especially in the Gospel of Mark, where, without counting the indicative pronouns, there are thirty-six occurrences of the word *ochlos*. They were the so-called sinners, who stood condemned in their society, because of their socially unacceptable occupation, sickness, or poverty. Byungmoo Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark" in *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history*, ed. CTC-CCA (London: Zed Press, 1983), pp. 139-140, 143-144.

not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick; I did not come to invite virtuous people, but sinners" (vv.16 and 17).

The dietary practice of Jesus' table community was, indeed, not like that of his contemporaries, especially that of the so-called religious people. Jesus shared food with those who were socially denounced and condemned as if he was present at feasts: he equated himself with "the bridegroom" of a wedding feast (Mark 2:19; Matthew 9:14; Luke 5:34) and was described as "a glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners" (Mark 2:16; Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). Under the circumstance of those days, this kind of meal practice must have been a revolutionary act of reconciliation because to have a meal with those people was socially and religiously prohibited: eating together presupposed not only fellowship but also equality among diners. Jesus and his disciples even ignored the Purity Law at their table (Luke 11:38; Matthew 15:2) just as the common people usually did: for those people to observe the complicated and scrupulous Purity Law was virtually impossible. These acts of Jesus signify that: (i) Jesus made a fundamental challenge to the existing social and religious order through eating and drinking. (ii) Jesus, in order to establish a new table community, broke social barriers and penetrated the reality of his

followers;¹³⁷ and, above all, (iii) Jesus was embodying the egalitarian principles of the kingdom of God by accepting sinners in the midst of their life situation. These aspects might have made the table community of Jesus the "most meaningful to his followers and most offensive to his critics."¹³⁸

It seems that Jesus' meal practice was not always restricted within the boundary of regular meals: this kind of meal habit represents the significance of his table community movement in a larger sense. Ordinary people had "two formal repasts, one at midday and one in the evening. Breakfast was slight and informal, and there was no break at four or five p.m."¹³⁹ Some of the gospel accounts, however, suggest indirectly that Jesus received people to his afternoon table fellowship. In John 1:39, for example, "it was then about four in the afternoon" when Jesus

¹³⁷During the time of Jesus, the minjung in Galilee were groaning under severe repression and exploitation. The minjung were mostly either tenant farmers or daily workers. Land was owned by the absentee landlords residing in the urban centres. Byungmoo Ahn, "The Subject of History in the Gospel of Mark" in *Minjung and Korean Theology*, ed. The Committee on Theological Study of the KNCC (Seoul: KTSI, 1982), pp. 167-171.

Jesus perceived their desperate living conditions as real pain: he never considered their sufferings in an abstract way or tried to comfort them religiously or psychologically.

¹³⁸N. Perrin, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹³⁹A.C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1956), p. 74.

invited two disciples of John the Baptist to his company, i.e. when he admitted them "to his table fellowship."¹⁴⁰ And the risen Jesus drew near to his disciples and called them to breakfast (John 21:12); it was after breakfast that Peter was commissioned to feed the sheep of Jesus (21:15-19). These accounts cannot be related to an assumption that he used to have a meal more frequently than ordinary people of those days. Rather, his unrestricted dietary practice suggests that: (i) the eating of food was related to both his accepting people into his community and sending them out into the world and (ii) His table fellowship contained in itself a ceremonial aspect, i.e. some liturgical potential, for the continuation of his table community movement.

The aim of Jesus' table community movement was not to enjoy table fellowship *per se*, but to create a new society which contrasted to that of the world. In order for him to establish an alternative society for the reign of God -- the table community was historical and thus must be concrete and visible -- Jesus gathered the socially weak and oppressed, rather than those who had vested rights in their society, and emphasised the principle of mutual

¹⁴⁰J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1977), p. 45.

service to one another.¹⁴¹

Have no fear, little flock; for your Father has chosen to give you the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32)

In the world, kings lord it over their subjects; and those in authority are called their country's "Benefactors." Not so with you: on the contrary, the highest among you must bear himself like the youngest, the chief of you like a servant. (Luke 22:25-26)

In Jesus' table community, a natural meal was given a new interpretation. For those who were in a desperate situation, hunger could be one of the most material of pains; so eating together was the most concrete act and the most powerful symbol of love and solidarity: it is "a sign of communion."¹⁴² Jesus linked the pain of hunger and the sharing of food to the kingdom of God. The partaking of food had a more penetrating meaning than just giving food for physical satisfaction: it symbolised the sharing of destiny with those who ate together. The table fellowship transformed a community into a qualitatively different one in "hope against hope."

Those who hope against hope, who keep that absolute mystery alive, are on the way to God, a God whom they will have to regard both as a crucified God and as the

¹⁴¹The deepest meaning of mutual service could be the giving of one's body as food, as Jesus himself gave his body to all human beings on the cross.

¹⁴²R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), p. 126.

absolute future.¹⁴³

The meal was reinterpreted in the light of the participation in the table community movement for the future messianic kingdom. The sharing of food together among the poor was a sign and a source of brotherly love, equality, and mutual service, i.e. a sign of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

The arrival of the messianic age made Jesus' table community be recognised as a new family. "Family" could be the most suitable term to define Jesus' community. A new family was not a family based on blood relationship; but it was "a family in which, paradoxically, there were again brothers, sisters, mothers, and children."¹⁴⁴ Jesus dissociated himself from his family and inserted himself into another family; and he as the *paterfamilias*, who gave bread to his children, declared "the *ochlos* are the members of a new community (family)."¹⁴⁵

"Who is my mother? Who are my brother?" And looking round at those who were sitting the circle about him he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my

¹⁴³J. Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p. 155.

¹⁴⁴G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: the Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 41.

¹⁴⁵Byungmoo Ahn, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark" in *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

mother." (Mark 3:33-35)

This family metaphor has a continuation with the Old Testament meal tradition. *First*, Jesus' table community as a family is an extension of *bet-ab*, a family, the basic social unit of the table community. *Second*, "to do the will of God" is to be related with the pledge of covenant partners on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:3 and 7), i.e. the common meal celebrated among the new family is a kind of covenant meal.¹⁴⁶

Jesus' table-fellowship with publicans and sinners sheds a new light on the forgiveness of sins. The understanding of sins and forgiveness in those days was: "sins" were debts owing to God (Matthew 6:12; 18:23-35) which had been incurred in the past by oneself or one's ancestors as a result of some transgression of the laws; "forgiveness" meant the cancellation or remission of one's debts to God.¹⁴⁷ In this respect, the meaning of forgiveness could be primarily understood: "Jesus treated them as people who were no longer, if ever, indebted to God and therefore no longer deserving of rejection and

¹⁴⁶A family gathers together in order to eat together. Jesus said, "It is meat and drink for me to do the will of him who sent me until I have finished his work" (John 4:34). His saying implies that a new family members are those who "do the will of God," i.e. participate in the table community movement.

¹⁴⁷A. Nolan, *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

punishment."¹⁴⁸

However, the forgiveness of sins through table fellowship was more profound. "Jesus promised forgiveness not only in words, but *in actions*. The form of proclamation of forgiveness in action that most impressed the men of his time was his table-fellowship with sinners."¹⁴⁹ Jesus' forgiving of the sins of publicans and sinners not only gave them an opportunity of a new kind of relationship with God and with other people; but it also called them as the main group of the table community movement for the future consummation. Theologically, the forgiveness of sins has protological and eschatological aspects: it is related both to the restoration of man's original task in the creation story and to the eschatological expectation of the fulfillment of history. Practically, the forgiveness of sins has also a soteriological aspect. It is directly related to an active participation in the present realising of the kingdom of God. The mysterious delight resulting from the forgiveness of sins is visibly expressed and experienced in the joyful celebration of a common meal.

Jesus showed openness to people who came to eat with him and the eating of food with him was a sign of salvation. However one thing should be noticed: "the mere

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 2 vols (London: SCM Press, 1971), 1: 114-115.

fact of having eaten and drunk with Jesus is not a guarantee of admission to the feast of the kingdom."¹⁵⁰

When once the master of the house has got up and locked the door, you may stand outside and knock, and say, "Sir, let us in!", but he will only answer, "I do not know where you come from." Then you will begin to say, "We sat at table with you and you taught in our streets." But he will repeat, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Out of my sight, all of you, you and your wicked ways!" (Luke 13:25-27)

The table of Jesus has a dual meaning. Even though publicans and sinners were received to the table community without qualification, they were in a real sense called to "repentance" (Luke 5:32).¹⁵¹ In the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:1-14), "the missing wedding-garment is not to be understood as a special garment, worn on festive occasions, but a newly washed garment."¹⁵² Its "implication is unmistakable: the festal garment is repentance."¹⁵³ Mutual love and service in poverty are the signs of

¹⁵⁰G. Wainwright, *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁵¹Jesus did not unconditionally accept the poor just because they were victims of the evil system. E. Dussel defines the poor in *Ethics and Community*, p. 22: "The poor are the correlative of sin. As the fruit of sin, their formality as *poor* constitutes the poor of oppressed, and as such, the just and holy." Here a question can be raised: Can the labour of the poor under some evil structure serve a new society, if their work is done in the same value structure of that system?

¹⁵²J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 131.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

repentance, i.e. those of life (Cf. John 6:33). Jesus' forgiveness of sins and the people's repentance from sins are not two different matters, but one and the same event in the table community movement. The sign of their repentance is the forgiving of others: "It is significant that Jesus makes our forgiving of others the condition of our own forgiveness by God."¹⁵⁴

The table community of Jesus with publicans and sinners is summarised as follows. *First*, Jesus established a new social order in the midst of their life through the sharing of food together: this table community was the *Sitz im Leben* of his teaching about the kingdom of God. *Second*, the table fellowship was a sign of reconciliation between God and the community as well as among a people of the community, i.e. a sign that the kingdom of God was coming: the curse of Genesis 3:19 had been abolished and the eschatological promise of Zephaniah 1:7 was being fulfilled. *Third*, an ordinary meal as a covenant meal was reinterpreted in the light of the kingdom of God movement: publicans and sinners were called as its subjects. *Lastly*, participating in the table community movement was characterised by repentance from sins: the power of the table community was exercised by mutual service amongst those who are forgiven their sins.

¹⁵⁴T. Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1977), p. 169.

Some table fellowship accounts such as a feast with other sorts of people and a feast on a large scale give a broader understanding of Jesus' table community: they complement and enrich the table fellowship with publicans and sinners. Jesus' meal with the Pharisees and feeding of the multitude could be taken as an illustration.

Luke 14:1-24 depicts Jesus' sharing a meal with a leader of the Pharisees in his house on a Sabbath: according to the tradition a Sabbath meal was always celebrated as a festive meal. "Guests were often invited to a Sabbath meal at the end of the Sabbath synagogue service which usually took place at midday."¹⁵⁵ Jesus could often celebrate a Sabbath meal because he usually taught people in a synagogue, especially on the Sabbath "as he regularly did" (Luke 4:16). The fact Jesus enjoyed table fellowship with different kinds of people signifies that he was also concerned about those people and furthermore called them to his table community. The purpose of this kind of table fellowship becomes clear in the two consecutive table discourses about two feasts: the one is about an worldly festivity (vv.7-14) and the other is about an eschatological meal feast in the kingdom of God (vv.15-24). The purpose of sayings on the two feasts is remarkably characterised by those who are invited: it implies the

¹⁵⁵J.A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Op. cit.*, p. 1040.

restoration of the Sabbath.

When you are having a party for lunch or supper, do not invite your friends, your brothers or other relations, or your rich neighbours ... When you give a party, ask the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind; and so find happiness. (vv. 12-13)

The master of the house was angry [because those first invited refused to be guests] and said, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town, and bring me in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." (v.21)

The table discourses reveals that the proper eating of a meal has intimate relation to the tasting of a heavenly meal: an inappropriate table indicates the refusal of participation in the messianic banquet. Jesus' sayings on the meal caution the rich.¹⁵⁶ In order to sit at the messianic table, they are called to sit at the same table with the outcasts of society; more radically speaking, they are called to join the table community of Jesus. The relationship between the rich and the poor is illustrated in Jesus' answer to a rich young man's question: "If you wish to go the whole way, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and then you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21; Cf. Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22).

¹⁵⁶The Gospel of Thomas describes verse 21: "Go out into the streets and bring in those whom you will find that they may eat my dinner. But buyers and sellers shall not come into the places of my Father." Quoted from *Ibid.*, p. 1050.

Voluntary poverty as a commitment of the building of a new community implies eschatological expectation of the messianic age: it is impossible unless people have full conviction that the reign of God is being realised, i.e. the old promise is being fulfilled in present history. In and through the table community, the poor are blessed (Cf. Matthew 5:3; Luke 6:20) because "the kingdom which goes even beyond what they could have hoped for has begun."¹⁵⁷

The meal with the rich shows that Jesus' acceptance of people had universality and totality. The rich were by no means excluded from becoming the family of the table community: nevertheless it was necessary for them to humble themselves to the reality of their poor neighbours. Voluntary poverty is generated by a sturdy faith of eschatology and *vice versa*. The table is one of the basic places where people can communicate with each other as one family and thus an improper table relates to the very roots of human problems: "the disintegration of fellowship and communion."¹⁵⁸ Jesus' calling of the rich to the table community movement is an act of reconciliation between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak.

The four Gospels report the story of sharing five loaves of bread and two fish among five thousand people

¹⁵⁷G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 171.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 132.

(Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14; Cf. Mark 8:1-10; Matthew 15:32-39). These accounts look back to the experience of ancient Israel in the wilderness and forward to that in the future messianic kingdom. As God fed Israel with manna, many Jews believed that the messiah would repeat the miracle of the manna:¹⁵⁹ when people saw the miraculous sign Jesus had performed, they said, "Surely this must be the prophet that was to come into the world" (John 6:14). Paul and John directly connected the ancient miracle of the manna with Jesus' feeding miracles (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 30-59). The manna would be also prepared for the future: Jesus promises to feed "hidden manna" to him who is victorious (Revelation 2:17).

The significance of the feeding miracles lies in that it witnesses the communal experience of table fellowship, the collective joy of the common meal. The story does not describe a wonder benefiting individuals, but the "expansion of the family." In the Synoptic feeding accounts, Jesus is pictured as the father of extended families who provides them with food. Here the role of his disciples is worthy of attention. Jesus "looked up to heaven, said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to distribute" (Mark 6:41; Cf. Matthew

¹⁵⁹A.D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic background* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 128.

14:19; Luke 9:16). The disciples are commissioned to expand the small table community established between Jesus and them. (The crucial role of the disciples as agents of the table community movement is more clearly disclosed through the last supper and the post-Easter meal.)

The expansion of the table community in its real sense is not associated with material supply. When people understood the messiahship in political terms (John 6:15), Jesus warned them of "a false conception of the eschatological salvation."¹⁶⁰

In the very truth I know that you have not come looking for me because you saw signs, but because you ate the bread and your hunger was satisfied. You must work, not for this perishable food, but for the food that ... brings life to the world. (John 6:26-27, 34)

The story does not focus on the multiplication miracle. Rather it testifies an entirely different reality, that is, the moving experience of "table solidarity." The expression that five thousand people became full with a small amount of food and there were twelve basketfuls of leftover indicates how people were able to experience a more deepened excitement of joy and abundance of life than the excitement they experienced among a small group. The miracle demonstrates that life can become more powerful as food is shared together among the many.

¹⁶⁰R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 214.

It is in the last supper that all the meal events during Jesus' public ministry are summarised. "The last supper has its historical roots in this chain of gatherings."¹⁶¹ (The accounts of the last supper are disposed according to liturgical traditions. They are so much shaped by worship practice and by the faith of the early Christian community.¹⁶² Here its historical aspect is dealt with rather than its later interpretation.)

The last supper was eaten in the context of the Passover meal.¹⁶³ This implies that Jesus' table fellowship as a whole was to be interpreted in terms of the Passover meal; and its new understanding made his table community movement enter a decisively new phase. Jesus intensely desired to eat the meal before death (Luke 22:15). At the table, he took bread, gave it to his disciples, and

¹⁶¹J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 1: 290.

¹⁶²W.G. Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 90.

¹⁶³The Synoptic Gospels hold the view that the last supper was a Passover meal. In John, however, the last supper itself is not a Passover meal; it is preceded by twenty-four hours. John understands that Jesus is the perfect paschal victim: he as "the Lamb of God" (1:29, 36) crucified simultaneously with the sacrifice of the lambs in the temple. A.J.B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 77.

The last supper has to be seen "within the context of the *Heilsgeschichte*," especially in the light of the table community movement, beyond the question of chronological interest. It is "surrounded by the atmosphere of the Passover meal even if it should have occurred on the evening before the feast." J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, p. 88.

identified it with his own body. The last supper, though it was directly connected with impending death, cannot be interpreted as the interruption or failure of Jesus' table community movement. Rather the last supper was the culmination of the table community movement of the historical Jesus: he, by way of the cross, continued present in the table community movement. He became the one who was absent-and-present.

From the fact that Jesus' meal events are to be understood in terms of the Passover meal and the fact that Jesus was slain as "the eschatological paschal lamb" (Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7),¹⁶⁴ the last supper is a kind of the *zebhab*, usually translated as "peace offering" but often directly equated with a passover meal itself, rather than the *olah*, the burnt offering. The last supper and crucifixion are closely related to each other; and the fact that Jesus gave his body as bread, which symbolises food, indicates his death is not to be understood in terms of the burnt offering.¹⁶⁵ In other words, Jesus' death is not only "the vicarious death which atones for the sins of the

¹⁶⁴From the sayings that "This is my flesh" and "This is my blood," J. Jeremias argued, Jesus was "most probably speaking of himself as the paschal lamb." *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁵"The burnt offering is the sacrifice completely offered to Yahweh, that is, the offerer or the priest did not participate in the cultic act by sharing the meal with Yahweh" (hence it is sometimes called the "whole offering"). G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1: 255.

people of the world."¹⁶⁶ Moreover his broken body as food made it possible for the community (i) to restore their relationship with God by eating new food, (ii) to establish a new order among themselves by becoming food to one another, and (iii) to follow him, i.e. to take part in the table community movement, with his body as new food for it. In this respect, the last supper holds the deepest dimension of reconciliation through forgiveness and repentance: it has not only an expiatory aspect but also, more intrinsically, a strong ethical aspect.

The risen Jesus appeared before his disciples and ate a meal with them. On Easter Day, two of his followers, who were on their way to Emmaus, recognised him "at the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35).¹⁶⁷ He appeared to his disciples while they were at table and commissioned them to proclaim the Good News (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-49; Cf. Matthew 28:16-20; John 20:19-29). By the Sea of Tiberias,

¹⁶⁶The *zebhab*, the meal offering, has an expiatory function (Cf. 1 Samuel 3:14). *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷At table, the risen Jesus "took bread and said the blessing; he broke the bread, and offered it to them" (24:30). Luke intentionally uses the verbs "to take," "to bless," "to break," and "to give" in the accounts of the feeding miracle (9:16) and the last supper (22:19). It reflects the eucharistic situation of the primitive church. E. Kilmartin, S.J., "The Last Supper and the Earliest Eucharists of the Church" in *Concilium* vol.4 10/4 (1968), pp. 22-25.

This interrelationship shows that the table fellowship during Jesus' public life, that of the last supper, and that after the resurrection are inseparably connected in the table community movement.

Jesus called the disciples to breakfast; he "took the bread, and gave it to them, and the fish in the same way" (John 21:13); and then he commanded Peter to continue his table community movement (vv.15-19).¹⁶⁸ That the thought of the resurrection in general was linked with the recollection of those meals can be summarised by Acts 10:40-41: "God raised him to life on the third day, and allowed him to appear .. to us, who ate and drank with him."

Various meal accounts affiliated with the risen Jesus occupy as the centre of the post-Easter narratives: they can be regarded as the finale of Jesus' table community movement and also of the whole Gospels. Moreover, it is through table fellowship with risen Jesus that a new table community movement was commenced by the disciples. The promise of the Holy Spirit was made during table fellowship. Acts 1:4 is related with a meal: "[The risen Lord] was assembled together with them" should be rendered "eat together."¹⁶⁹ There is a direct "historical link"

¹⁶⁸Jesus felt that "his heart went out to them [the crowd], because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34) when he was about to feed them. In the feeding miracle, Jesus first gave food to the disciples in order for them to distribute it to the crowd.

Here Jesus' command, "Feed my sheep" (three times in John 21:15, 16, and 17), could mean that he gave his disciple a mission to expand the table community into the world.

¹⁶⁹O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 16; G. Wainwright, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

Cf. New International Version (NIV) correctly

between the last supper and the meal at which the risen Jesus appeared,¹⁷⁰ i.e. between the table community movement of Jesus and that of the early Christian community.

Some results from the study of the table community movement in the Gospels can be drawn: *First*, the table community was the historical counterpart of what Jesus envisaged and proclaimed. The meal shared among the community was a kind of appetiser for the messianic banquet.

Second, Jesus called the Galilean minjung as the nucleus of his table community movement. He himself had lived with them and established a new community in the midst of their lives. Nevertheless, Jesus enjoyed various kinds of table fellowship with all sorts of people, as a sign of reconciliation. No one was excluded from becoming the family of his community.

Third, Jesus gave a new interpretation to the meal which people had regularly eaten before. Therefore an ordinary meal came to be eaten in the realm of the covenant meal. The point of departure of the table community movement was to experience the presence of God and to recognise the true meaning of mutual service among the community.

translates it into "While he was eating with them."

¹⁷⁰O. Cullmann, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity" in *Essays on the Lord's Supper* written by O. Cullmann and F. Leenhardt (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), p. 21.

Fourth, the forgiveness and repentance of sins experienced in and through table fellowship were a sign that the reign of God was being realised, i.e. a sign that the meaning of the Sabbath was restored. These experiences gave life to the world and thus had strong social and historical implications.

Fifth, Jesus gave his body as food for the table community movement. His death was to be understood in terms of the *zebhah*, the Passover meal. His death was the vicarious death which atoned for the sins of the world; but at the same time his death demanded ethical response.

Sixth, the mission to expand the table community had the concept of the holy war in the Old Testament. The table community movement is understood in terms of the mission of God. The strategy of participants is to become food to one another just as God did through Jesus.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹Jesus referred to the sword in his conversation with his disciples (Matthew 10:34). A more striking mention of the sword was made during the final hours he spent with his disciples after the last supper (Luke 22:35-38). However, judging from his firm saying -- "Put up your sword. All who take the sword die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52) -- a sword was no option for the kingdom of God. "The politics of God was not a politics of the sword but the politics of the cross and suffering." C.S. Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in Formation in Asian Settings* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), pp. 226-228.

Judging from the whole context of the Bible in the light of the table community movement (in fact, the command to prepare the sword was given soon after the last supper), the sword could symbolize the mission of the disciples to continue his community movement for the expansion of the table community in the world.

Lastly, every meal event in the Gospels can be interpreted in the context of salvation history and thus understood in continuation with both the past and the future, i.e. with the table community movement in the Old Testament and that of the early church: they were all parts of the same salvation history for its consummation.

2. The Table Community of the Early Church

The encounter with the risen Jesus made it possible for his followers to rediscover the true meaning of the table community movement and motivated them to continue it in their own life situation. New table communities demonstrated that the historical Jesus, who became incarnated into the table community movement by giving his body for it, and the risen Jesus, who presented himself again through the table fellowship, were not two different persons but the one same Jesus. Any attempt to de-emphasise the historical meal between Jesus and his followers, therefore, would be inappropriate. "Since Jesus had appeared to them [his followers] at mealtimes after his resurrection, the early Christians regarded their continuing meals together as occasions when Jesus himself

was still present with them."¹⁷² Their meal "was characterised both by the experience of Christ's presence and by the fellowship created by this presence among the faithful."¹⁷³

The early Jerusalem church, for example, assembled daily in their meeting house "for a meal held within the framework of worship."¹⁷⁴ In their communal life, worship and meal celebration were not separate. "The breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42, 46) was the most central activity of everyday gatherings. Their common meals, though reinterpreted in the light of the resurrection event, were "a continuation of a regular practice of the ministry of Jesus."¹⁷⁵

It is ambiguous whether the phrase "breaking of bread" itself denotes a ritual meal or an actual meal. In Judaism this phrase never refers to a whole meal but only (i) to the action of tearing the bread, and (ii) to the rite with which the meal opened.¹⁷⁶ However, it seems that the description of the holy meal as the breaking of bread was

¹⁷²I.H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1980), p. 144.

¹⁷³O. Cullmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁴J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 131.

¹⁷⁵N. Perrin, *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁷⁶J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1977), pp. 119-121.

a completely new usage of the primitive church.¹⁷⁷ When the phrase is considered in the actual context of the primitive church, particularly from the fact that "the oldest celebrations of the Lord's Supper took place in the setting of an actual meal,"¹⁷⁸ the expression of the breaking of bread could designate a common meal with special significance. In all probability, "the breaking of bread, which directly names a rite, also signifies the *sharing* of the bread and thus looks to the social dimension of the Eucharist."¹⁷⁹

The common meal of the primitive church affected not only the formation of eucharistic theology, especially its expression in worship, but also the transformation of the social life of the congregation as a whole. The first part of this section examines how the primitive church understood the meaning of the table fellowship (a

¹⁷⁷Two interpretations in Acts regard the breaking of bread. *First*, Acts already presupposes the separation of the eucharist from the meal proper: "the koinonia" and "the breaking of bread" in Acts 2:42 could mean an agape meal and subsequent ritual activity of the eucharist. The breaking of bread after midnight (20:11) is also evidence for this assumption. J. Jeremias, *Op. cit.*, pp. 119-121.

Second, the breaking of bread in Acts 4:42 "becomes a designation of the whole supper" because the phrase "the broken pieces of bread" which was also used outside Judaism had "no ceremonial sense of any kind." H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p.197.

¹⁷⁸O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁹X. Leon-Dufour, S.J., *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 30.

theological aspect of the Lord's Supper); and the second part studies the church's practice of the table fellowship in its continuing table community movement (a socio-ethical aspect of the Lord's Supper).

(1) Bread as the body of Christ

Even though the common meal of the primitive church was celebrated in terms of the extension of Jesus' table community movement, the early Christian communities witnessed to a multiplicity of meal practices rather than to a singularity of them,¹⁸⁰ as the historical Jesus celebrated various kinds of meal with all sorts of people without any formality. Accordingly, the eucharistic texts reflect some different traditions, especially their liturgical influence; so it is impossible to "reconstruct one version of that event."¹⁸¹ Notwithstanding these diversities and complexities of meal traditions regarding both their common meal and ritual meal, the early Christian communities by no means lost the significance of Jesus' table fellowship; moreover they ceaselessly reinterpreted their meal experience and endeavoured to materialise it in their own life situation.

¹⁸⁰Cf. D.E. Smith and H.E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 16.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 15.

The Lord's Supper of the primitive church treasured three meal experiences: the historical meal of Jesus, the last supper, and the post-Easter meal. It was celebrated: (i) in remembrance of the historical Jesus; (ii) in the Easter joy of life experience; and (iii) in the eschatological expectation for His kingdom. These meals are so intimately related to one another that none of them could be fully explained without the help of others.

Owing to the above meal experiences, the Lord's Supper bears some major themes of the New Testament. *First*, "the incarnation": God humbled himself, not became humbled, into human conditions.¹⁸² *Second*, "the table community movement": Jesus called all sorts of people to the building of a new community and gave a new meaning of messianic hope to their everyday meal. *Third*, "the crucifixion": Jesus gave his body as a Passover lamb, the food for the continuing movement for the kingdom of God. *Fourth*, "the resurrection": the life experience of his followers made them fully confident that the perfect reign of God would eventually be realised. And *lastly*, "the parousia": Jesus would come again and hold the messianic banquet. Among these, the first, the incarnation, is a pivotal event for comprehending the others.

¹⁸²Cf. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), pp. 159-160.

The incarnation has a three-fold meaning: (i) God made himself man, a real man of flesh; (ii) the man Jesus lived as bread for the world by identifying himself with bread; and (iii) he, by his death, became incarnated into a new community. This understanding signifies that God acts by means of bread and therefore "the incarnation is understood in the light of sacrament."¹⁸³ The celebration of the Lord's Supper reflects and actualises the above redemptive process. This understanding can produce several theological insights.

First, Jesus' three-fold incarnation reveals that God has been faithful in the covenant relationship with human beings. His faithfulness is not concerned about his existence as a "wholly other" but about his concrete concern for his people and history. It is true that Christianity has been fascinated by the image and concept of God as a "wholly other" for a long time.

We viewed this "wholly other" in isolation, abstracted and absolutised, and set it over against man, this miserable wretch ... in such a fashion that it continually showed greater similarity to the deity of the God of the philosophers than to the deity of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 44.

¹⁸⁴K. Barth, *The Humanity of God* (London and Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1971), p. 41.

The importance of the Old Testament, in this sense, cannot be emphasized too much when recognising the God of Christianity as the God of history: "Without the adoption of the Old Testament as a sacred book by Christianity,

God's faithfulness proves and reveals himself "not in a vacuum as a divine being-for-Himself."¹⁸⁵ Rather "His deity encloses humanity in itself."¹⁸⁶ Radically speaking, his deity is tangibly experienced in his humanity revealed in Jesus.

Two things are to be noticed in relation to God's faithfulness revealed through his becoming flesh. The one is that: God's righteousness always precedes and defines human justice. That is to say, "He establishes in His Person the justice of God [righteousness] *vis-a-vis* man and also the justice of man before God."¹⁸⁷ In this "sequence there arises and continues in Jesus Christ [especially in bread] the highest communion with man."¹⁸⁸ The other is that: any idea to separate humanity from divinity, time from eternity, the material from the spiritual, is to be rejected. In Jesus, of whom bread is an embodiment, bread for the spirit and bread for the physical body are not different entities. The daily bread for *today*, as in the

gnostic sects and the mysteries of the cult of Kyrios Christos would have existed on the soil of Hellenism, but providing no basis for a Christian church or a Christian ethic of workaday life." M. Weber, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵K. Barth, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 46.

Lord's prayer, is the same bread for *tomorrow*.¹⁸⁹ The overcoming of dualism makes the present time eschatological.

Second, the three-fold incarnation demonstrates that the presence of Jesus is revealed not within bread itself, but in the very act of bread-sharing among celebrants: Jesus became incarnated not into the eucharistic element but into the table community movement.

According to the accounts regarding the last supper, it could be certain that Jesus pronounced the meaning of bread *after* he gave it to his disciples. "Jesus ... took bread *and*, after giving thanks to God, broke it *and* said: "This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me" (1 Corinthian 11:24). "The words of interpretation" were followed after the consequent acts of "thanksgiving over the bread, breaking of the bread and distribution":¹⁹⁰ each of these acts is a complete action and linked to one another with coordinate conjunctions.

When Jesus gave the bread-saying, judging from the phrase "broke it [bread]," it is unclear whether the

¹⁸⁹The original meaning of "Give us today our daily bread" seems to be: "Our bread for great Tomorrow, give us today." J. Jeremias, *The Prayer of Jesus*, pp. 99-102. Also G. Wainwright, *Op. cit.*, p. 32. Cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *God is New Each Moment* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), p. 39.

¹⁹⁰H. Conzelmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

The same sequence was made in Mark 14:22 and Matthew 26:26 (Cf. Luke 22:19).

disciples ate the bread or were holding it.¹⁹¹ However, one obvious thing is that, when Jesus gave bread its new meaning, the bread had been already handed over to the disciples.¹⁹² This fact testifies that the disciples were given real food, not some special holy symbol. Rather the disciples received ordinary bread and then its new meaning. Emphasis was not placed on the transformation of the bread but on the transformation of the community. The words of interpretation cannot be a kind of spell to change bread into the body of Jesus: it is a solemn proclamation that the participants in the same bread became one family for the table community movement.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹"The breaking of bread" usually meant neither an act of dividing some bread nor that of distributing it, rather an act of eating it, as seen in Acts 2:42: the same word *klasis* is used in 1 Corinthians 11:24.

¹⁹²The accounts on the drinking of wine witness more clearly the fact that the words of Jesus followed the disciples' drinking of it (Mark 14:23-24; Cf. Matthew 26:27-28).

D.E. Smith and H.E. Taussig argue that the celebration of the Lord's Supper was much influenced by the meal of the contemporary Roman banquet. It had two major courses, i.e. the *deipnon* ("supper" or "Banquet"), which was the meal proper, followed by the *symposium* ("symposium"), which was the drinking party. They think that the symposium was reflected in the Lord's Supper traditions in the New Testament in which the wine is drunk "after supper [*deipnon*]" (1 Corinthians 11:25; Luke 22:20). In this case, we can draw an inference that "the new covenant" could indicate the whole process of the meal sharing among the disciples. *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

¹⁹³In most churches today, eucharistic sayings are repeated by pastors either before the elements are distributed or when they are being distributed. If the above hypothesis is correct, then the church's way of

As Jesus had enjoyed an "ordinary meal" as a token of the kingdom of God by interpreting it in the light of the messianic banquet, he used "ordinary bread" as a symbol of his body. He lived in person with publicans and sinners by first sharing real food together, rather than first imposing a new meaning on it. In his table community movement, bread-praxis always preceded bread-theology; and the bread-theology transformed the previous bread-praxis into a qualitatively different one. The bread had an antidocetic aspect; it had nothing to do with magical effectiveness.¹⁹⁴

Third, the three-fold incarnation makes participants of the Lord's Supper (i) experience Jesus as the one who is present among them and (ii) wait for him as the one who is to come. The early eucharistic formula "Maranatha" explicates how the early Christian community recognised

distributing of the elements should be reconsidered. It is because this kind of eucharistic practice is apt to make the participants realise the meaning of receiving bread only in the very act of it, not in relation to the act for building community.

On the other hand, the fact that Jesus gave bread a new meaning after he distributed it provides the church with some possibility to theologise ordinary meal, i.e. everyday meal in the light of the table community movement.

¹⁹⁴John, saying of bread as the body of Jesus, stresses "to eat" by using the verb *trogein* thrice (6:54, 56 and 57). It denotes "to bite in pieces" or "to chew." To eat bread has "a strongly anti-docetic interest." O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 99.

The word *trogein* is different from the verb *esthien* meaning "to eat food": "One of you who is eating with me shall betray me" (Mark 14:18).

Jesus through the Lord's Supper. *Maranatha* is acceptably interpreted in two ways: *Marana tha* (O, our Lord, Come) or *Maran atha* (Our Lord has come).¹⁹⁵ A decision about the form and meaning of the phrase is thus not on linguistic grounds, whether it was an invocation to the Lord to come in the celebration of the Lord's Supper or at the parousia. The phrase "Amen, come Lord Jesus" in Revelation 22:20 suggests, as most scholars agreed, that *Maranatha* was originally an invocation related with the parousia of Jesus.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, as was indicated by "the exuberant joy" in Acts 2:46, the early Christian community had an anticipated experience of the parousia, i.e. "an eucharistic anticipation of the end-time coming."¹⁹⁷ In this respect, "the eucharistic prayer, *Maranatha*, is fulfilled already in the community's celebrations of the Lord's Supper."¹⁹⁸ Paul's entreaty to the Philippian congregations, "Rejoice in the Lord always ... The Lord *is* at hand" (4:4-

¹⁹⁵G. Wainwright, *Op. cit.*, pp. 69-70; C.F.D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), pp. 70-72; F. Hahn, *The Title of Jesus in Christology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), pp. 93-96.

¹⁹⁶K.G. Kuhn, "Maranatha" in *TDNT*, 4: 467-470.

¹⁹⁷R.H. Fuller, *The Foundation of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), p. 157.

¹⁹⁸O. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, p. 16.

5),¹⁹⁹ certifies that (*Maran*) *atha* was also to be taken as the present perfect.

The presence of Jesus is experienced when the Lord's Supper is celebrated in remembrance of him (1 Corinthians 11:24; Cf. Luke 22: 20).²⁰⁰ "Remembrance" is an essential act that makes the covenant between God and his people come into effect in the present time. As God heard (remembered) the cry (remembrance) of Israel and inaugurated the exodus event, the community's remembrance of Jesus propels the table community movement. Behind the remembrance of man, there always precedes God's faithful remembrance in his covenant.²⁰¹ The invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's Supper is to be understood in terms of the invocation of

¹⁹⁹From *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* tr. A. Marshall (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1971).

²⁰⁰This memento-directive is not found in the Marcan or Matthean parallels. (*The New English Bible* intentionally deletes Luke 22:20.) Notwithstanding its occurrence only in Paul and Luke, it might not be a sufficient reason to regard the command as unauthentic. Paul and Luke seemed to inherit the word *anamnesis* from a separate tradition of earlier times. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Word of Jesus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), p. 159; A. Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (London: A & C Black, 1968), pp. 144f; J.A. Fitzmyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 1401.

²⁰¹The remembrance of God is to the remembrance of man what the righteousness of God is to the justice of man in the covenant relationship between God and man. In this sense, the remembrance of God always precedes and defines man's remembrance of God. In Exodus 33:13, for example, Moses only asked God for His remembrance: "Teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

God's remembrance of His covenant. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the remembrance of man is related to that of the historical Jesus as well as the risen Jesus, i.e. the whole process of the three-fold incarnation. The Holy Spirit is the power to make the celebrants participate in the table community movement of Jesus.²⁰² The Holy Spirit is understood as "the remembrancer of Christ."²⁰³ In eucharistic remembrance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit became united.

The Lord's Supper, like the Passover meal in the Old Testament, is a two-sided communion. The Lord's Supper, first of all, unites Christ and the community; on the other hand, it unites the community to one another: the participants, as in the covenant meal, have both the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with one another. These two relationships are not separate but complementary. The former is expressed by the latter; and the latter makes it possible for the community to create and maintain the former properly.

The first, the union of Christ and the community, implies that the community enters a right covenant relationship with God through Jesus, the perfect covenant

²⁰²Jesus himself "has become a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

²⁰³G. Wainwright, "Historical Sketch" in *Baptism and Eucharist*, eds. G. Wainwright and M. Thurian (Geneva: WCC, 1983), p. 106.

partner (Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:17).

Behind the command of Jesus, "Do this," there is a command to follow him whose life was "wrought out in conscious obedience to the eschatological will of God."²⁰⁴ As the early eucharistic formula *Maranatha* is directly connected in 1 Corinthians 16:22 with *anathema*, a warning against unworthy communion, to be united with the risen Jesus necessitates radical repentance "to end alliance with death" and "to take a stand for life."²⁰⁵ Before answering the invitation to the Lord's Supper, the celebrants are compelled to choose between life and death, because they "cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). To be united with Christ means to be a faithful covenant partner in the historical Jesus, i.e. to be a life-bearer in the remembrance of his death.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴R.H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 116.

²⁰⁵D. Sölle, *Death by Bread Alone* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 10, 9.

²⁰⁶The whole teachings, the ethical teachings, of Jesus are focused on the eschatological Torah for the messianic age, i.e. a new Torah for the End-time. N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 76-78, 206.

In the rabbinical Literature comparison of the Torah and bread is frequent. Jesus himself uses this metaphor calling the word of God his bread of life (Matthew 4:4 par.), and the will of God his daily food (John 4:32, 34). J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1977), p. 235.

"The body of Jesus" has been given the function of "the Torah at Sinai." The purpose of the both is to give life to the world. The statement of the Deutero-Isaiah that

The second, to unite the community together, indicates that the participants should become bread to one another. "The Lord's Supper is first and foremost an action of an entire community."²⁰⁷ Common participation in the same bread is one powerful symbol to unite all the community into one, as stated 1 Corinthians 10:17: "Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake." To participate in the same bread in "a *civitas* of obedient subjects" signifies to share one's life with others.²⁰⁸ Without this inter-people justice, it is impossible for the community to be one family in Christ (Cf. Ephesians 2:19). At Lord's table, the community collectively experiences that the image of God is to be restored in the sharing of bread; and that they can communicate with one another as *imago Christi* (2 Corinthians 3:18).²⁰⁹ John, instead of reporting the scene of the last supper and substituting it with an account of the feet-washing (13:1-20), emphasises "to be bread to one

"God himself will teach you" (54:13; Cf. Jeremiah 31:34) links the two. P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), p.p. 148-154.

²⁰⁷X. Leon-Dufour, S.J., *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁰⁸G. Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, p. 147.

²⁰⁹Cf. J. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 226.

"Man can become in Christ what Christ himself is (1 John 4:17): the gift of Spirit tends to make the believer what Christ is." F.X. Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), pp. 76, 78.

another": "Then if I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (v.14). It is when the bread is shared together among the community that they then can accept and forgive to one another. The meaning of the petition for forgiveness in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we also herewith forgive our debtors" becomes clear: "Forgive us our sins when we henceforth accept others into our common sharing of your body through becoming bread to one another."²¹⁰

Both the union of Christ and the community and the union of the community to one another are made in the presence of the risen Lord and by a sturdy confidence in the new world. As the Passover meal, the *zebhah*, stood between the exodus-Sinai deliverance and the building of a new society for the messianic age, so the Lord's Supper stands between the passion-resurrection and the parousia for the consummation of history.²¹¹ The Lord's Supper, just

²¹⁰It is not certain whether or not the Lord's prayer is the oldest form of eucharistic prayer, as some scholars suggested. G. Wainwright, *Doxology* (London: Epworth Press, 1980), p. 253.

However the two "We-petitions" of the prayer, for daily bread and for forgiveness are closely related to the eucharistic theme. They are directed towards the consummation and implore its gift for the present time. The "We-petitions" are the actualisation of the "Thou-petitions." J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, pp. 99-104.

²¹¹The early church understood that Jesus gave himself on the cross for his people as the Passover lamb: "... for indeed our Passover has begun; the sacrifice is offered - Christ himself" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Luke reinterprets the death of Jesus in the light of the exodus event as a "new exodus" - the fulfillment and

like the Passover meal, leads the community to a vision of the new society for which they should strive in this world. This experience enables them: (i) to participate in the table community movement for the building of the new society, i.e. for the expansion of the eucharistic community; and (ii) to wait for the coming of the Lord in eschatological hope, i.e. in hope against hope.

(2) Bread as food for the kingdom of God

The early Christian community was the historical result of Jesus' earthly life. It was not an impromptu community, but the very extension of Jesus' table community. The same kind of people, who had been called to Jesus' table community, established the same kind of table community. People "who formed the core of the first church" were "the tax-collectors and sinners, the weary and heavy laden, that his [Jesus'] gospel called to fellowship with God."²¹² The communal life of the early Jerusalem church witnessed that (i) the sharing of the common meal and possessions was one of the most distinctive activities,

completion of the old. In his account of the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus "of his *exodus*, the destiny he was to fulfil in Jerusalem" (9:31). D.B. Forrester, I. McDonald and G. Tellini, *The Encounter with God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), p. 112.

²¹²M. Dibelius, *Paul* ed. and completed by W.G. Kümmel (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1964), p. 56.

(ii) the communal life was led in the presence of the risen Lord (4:33), and (iii) the common meal was a regular part of their worship gatherings.

All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required. With one mind they kept up their daily attendance at the temple, and, breaking bread in private houses, shared their meals with unaffected joy, as they praised God and enjoyed the favour of the whole people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving. (Acts 2:44-47)

The whole body of believers was united in heart and soul. Not a man of them claimed any of his possessions as his own, but everything was held in common, while the apostles bore witness with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ... for they had never a needy person among them, because all who had property ... sold it ... and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. (Acts 4:32-34)

From the above statements, with the help of some other materials regarding the early church, several characteristics of the early Christian community as a table community can be drawn.

First, the early Christian community held the same social vision which Jesus' community had preserved: the establishment of a new community and the expansion of its boundary into the world. The communicants recognised themselves as the gathering of the saved (2:47). The statement that "there was no poor person among them" (4:34)

implied a concrete sign of salvation. It cannot be assumed from the text that the community enjoyed their common meal in affluence. The absolute majority of the community were, without doubt, socially weak and economically poor. Furthermore, the social situation in first century Palestine was desperate: natural catastrophes, over-population, the concentration of possessions, and competing tax system, along with a great famine, produced massive poverty.²¹³ It was in these despairing circumstances that the community came into being. However, the common experience of "the secret happiness of possessing the highest divine grace made the simplest meal in the rudest hut a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which the Lord would celebrate with his own at the messianic table."²¹⁴ Because of these experiences, though "the early Christians were called *poor*," there was no poverty among them.²¹⁵

As Jesus' table fellowship had not been tolerated by the then religious authorities, the early Christian communities were also persecuted. It was because they

²¹³G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 39-45.

²¹⁴H. Lietzmann, *The Beginning of the Christian Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 63.

²¹⁵E. Lohmeyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

The fact that no poor person was in actual poverty, rather living in exuberant joy with a vision of the messianic age (Acts 2:46), can be understood as an eschatological sign.

witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and followed his teachings. But a more intrinsic reason might be that they were a collection of the socially and religiously despised. Even Paul, the once advocate of the Law, had never accepted the fact that salvation could have come "to those uneducated, weak, and common persons" until he experienced that "God had given his salvation" to them.²¹⁶ In these circumstances, the communal life, especially their common meal, made it possible for them (i) to endure the persecution inflicted from outside and (ii) to sustain the eschatological hope for the messianic age: that is, their eschatological expectation was expressed through the common meal; and the act of the common meal also made their expectation even stronger. Because of this particular interpretation and experience, the significance of eating together in the early Christian communities was different from those in Greco-Roman society or Jewish religious groups. Notwithstanding the particularity of their table fellowship, their table community was not exclusive: the whole Christian community, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, were invited to the table of the Lord.²¹⁷ As a result, boundaries of table fellowship came to be

²¹⁶M. Dibelius, *Op. cit.*, pp. 51, 53.

²¹⁷Acts underlines (i) the conversion and salvation of the Gentiles (10:45; 11:1, 8; 13:47-48 and elsewhere); and (ii) the growing of the community in number (2:47; 6:1, 7).

abolished and ceremonial rigor was also relaxed.²¹⁸ The early Christian communities did not, even would not, have one unified form of dietary practice.

Second, the first Christian community had not been an isolated community from contemporary society. The communicants by no means despised their transmitted meal traditions. Rather they penetrated into their own society and made the most of those traditions: furthermore, they reinterpreted the traditions in the light of Jesus' table community movement. The communal life of the early Jerusalem church showed an example that the church developed the table community movement in the midst of their surrounding social circumstances.

As it is well known that the early Jerusalem church shared property according to communitarian values.²¹⁹ In addition, they provided a social service such as provision of food for the needy (Acts 6:2). The social system was not originally devised by themselves, but was borrowed from the

²¹⁸J. Stambaugh and D. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 59.

²¹⁹Such communism is understandable if one remembers (i) the repeated challenge of Jesus to devote possessions to the good of the poor; (ii) the example of Jesus and his disciple, who depended on a common fund and forsook all their possessions (John 13:29; 12:6; Matthew 19:29 and par.); (iii) the example of the Essenes who, like the primitive community, had communal meals.

Acts 5:1-11 provides clear evidence of primitive communism, where the sin of Ananias was not his lie, but the withholding of something that had been dedicated to God. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 130.

then Jewish systems of *tamhuy* ("poor bowl") and *quppah* ("poor basket"), as J. Jeremias pointed out:²²⁰

The *tamhuy* was distributed daily among wandering paupers, and consisted of food (bread, beans and fruits, with the prescribed cup of wine at Passover). The *quppah* was a weekly dole to the poor of the city, and consisted of food and clothing. There can be no doubt therefore that these arrangements served as a model for the primitive Church. The daily distribution of aid indicates the *tamhuy*, and the fact that local people (especially widows) were helped, indicates the *quppah*.

The meal practice of the early Christians was far more radical than that of other social system. The daily celebration of the common meal was not just an act to provide food for physical need. But it was also the very act to condense the whole meaning of communal life. Through the common meal, not only the whole life of Jesus was remembered but also the future kingdom was anticipated. The scene of the present table fellowship was the expression of their love and solidarity in Jesus and it was, above all, a "miniature society" for which the community had dreamed of and should strive for. Accordingly, the participation in the common meal had been placed as the central activity in communal life. When the meaning of the common meal was expressed through worship, its ritual form also occupied its essential part.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 131.

Third, it can be suggested that a common meal celebration, as it had been the central activity of communal and religious life, was the epitome of the Gospel tradition.

G. Theissen assumed that the Jesus movement had continued between about A.D. 30 and 70 chiefly by the wandering charismatics.²²¹ Their lives were in many ways intimately related with Jesus' teachings. They, who gave up home, family, possessions, and protection, were accepted and served meals by their sympathisers in local communities.²²² The most basic hospitality extended to them were eating and drinking.²²³ If this hypothesis proves correct, it might be presumed that the table community

²²¹G. Theissen, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1, 7.

"The ethical radicalism of the synoptic tradition was connected with" the people of the "extreme and marginal conditions" who had "the vivid eschatological expectations." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²²²*Ibid.*, pp. 10-14.

There are three groups, Theissen infers, that preserved traditions about Jesus: the disciples, the communities, and the people. Among these, the path to the Gospel literature is drawn especially by the community traditions. It incorporated other traditions of the disciples, especially the popular tales. The *sitz im Leben* of all the Gospel redaction is the "local community." G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), pp. 291-292.

²²³J. Stambaugh and D. Balch, *Op. cit.*, p. 139.

The local communities might be table fellowship communities which celebrated an eschatological presence of the risen Lord and the corporateness of the "brethren" in their daily meals. Cf. E. Lohmeyer, *Lord of the Temple*, p. 116.

movement shaped the earliest traditions of the words of Jesus and provided the social background for a good deal of the synoptic traditions.

Byungmoo Ahn, unlike Theissen, is concerned primarily for the Jesus event itself rather than *kerygma* of the early church: because *kerygma* was secondary in the light of the Jesus event.²²⁴ *Kerygma* concerned the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but there was the event of Jesus beforehand, i.e. his life, passion, and resurrection.²²⁵ There existed two streams of the Gospel tradition: that of the Jesus event tradition formed by his ordinary followers, the so-called minjung, and that of *kerygma* delivered by the disciples.²²⁶ The minjung might have had no proper way of announcing in public that Jesus was crucified and resurrected for the despised like them. Accordingly they could not but transmit their experiences by way of "rumour."²²⁷ It could only be spread privately among close associates. Food relationship symbolises a strong intimacy

²²⁴C.H. Dodd argues: "the *kerygma* was primary and it acted as a preservative of the tradition which conveyed the facts. There never existed a tradition formed by a dry historical interest in the facts as facts." *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1944), p. 55.

²²⁵Byungmoo Ahn, "The Sitz-im-Leben of the Jesus Event" in *The Development of Minjung Theology in 1980s*, ed. KTSI (Seoul: KTSI, 1990), p. 232.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 255.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

more than any other social or political relationships. If there were other groups of the Gospel traditions, their locus could have been the very setting where Jesus' followers shared meals together, i.e. where they could share experiences with a feeling of security.

Whether the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel traditions was the early church as accepted in general (the disciples), or the local communities (the wandering charismatics), or rumours (the minjung who experienced the Jesus event in person) -- when one realises that "the Eucharist had already been at the heart of the communal life of the church before the first of the New Testament documents was written"²²⁸ -- the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel traditions must have been directly related with the table community movement, just as Jesus' table community was the *Sitz im Leben* of his teachings about the kingdom of God. That is to say, the dietary practice of the early communities had been the *Sitz im Leben* not only of the eucharistic tradition as agreed in general,²²⁹ but also of many other Gospel traditions.

The characteristics of the meal practice in the early

²²⁸D.G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1943), p. 3.

"The church had found in the eucharist an entire epitome of the Gospel before the four gospels had been written." *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²²⁹J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1977), p. 106.

Christian community is outlined: *Internally*, the common meal materialised both its present meaning of existence and its vision for the future. Radical egalitarianism, expressed through the sharing of the common meal, was a tangible sign that the community was an eschatological one. *Externally*, the life of the community was not isolated from that of the existing society. The community reinterpreted its own social system in the light of Jesus' table community movement and expanded its boundary to the secular world: the common meal played an important role in these processes. Therefore it cannot be imagined that the early communities inherited only one unified meal practice, i.e. its "single origin or singular meaning."²³⁰ Rather they established different dietary practices in different contexts, of course, in terms of one same tradition from Jesus.²³¹ (Various witnesses of meal practice and liturgy in the New Testament must be observed in this way.) Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper to the congregations of the

²³⁰D.E. Smith and H.E. Taussig, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

²³¹Smith and Taussig argue that the meals in New Testament times had been decisively affected by the meal tradition of the Greco-Roman banquet; and the New Testament meals had the meal tradition of the Greco-Roman banquet as the "common meal tradition." They link this assumption to the various meal practices of the early Christian communities. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22, 14-16.

However, it is more probable, judging from the whole context of the New Testament, that the common meal tradition was handed down from Jesus' table community, especially from his table fellowship with the publicans and sinners.

Corinthian church and the Antioch church clarifies the nature of its internal and external characteristics respectively.

According to 1 Corinthians 11, the situation of the church is roughly reconstructed: (i) Originally, both the agape meal and the eucharist were celebrated at the same table. "He took the cup after supper" (v.25) signifies the meal proper had been eaten between the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. (ii) Later, however, the agape meal and the eucharist were separated. The congregation came to celebrate the meal proper prior to the eucharist. (iii) The rich began to eat their own food without waiting for the arrival of the poorer brethren: "One goes hungry another has too much to drink" (v.21). (iv) As a result, the congregation "fell into sharply divided groups" (v.18). In such a situation, they had taken part in the eucharist.

Paul related the partaking of the Lord's Supper directly to the building of the Christian community:²³² on the other hand, more intrinsically, he also recognised that "social inequality was clearly one of the root causes of the disorderliness of the Lord's Supper."²³³ In order to

²³²Paul warned Christians not to partake of food offered to an idol because they were apt to "become partners with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:20), i.e. because they could "build a community with those who associated with demons."

²³³A.J. B. Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

correct its improper celebration, Paul instructed the church in the true meaning of the Lord's Supper.

Paul, above all, underlined that the Lord's Supper "came from the Lord himself" (v.23). In order to explain "from the Lord," most scholars have been concerned to study when and how Paul received the tradition. But v. 23 can be explained in the light of the Jesus' table community movement, i.e. "our celebration of the Lord's Supper originated from the table fellowship of the historical Jesus." The reason is: every time the community celebrated the Lord's Supper they were to "proclaim the death of the Lord" (v.26). Here "the death of the Lord" connotes "the historical life of Jesus"; and "to proclaim" indicates "to represent."²³⁴ Therefore, v.23 can be rendered: "The Lord's Supper is the reproduction of the life of Jesus, i.e. the reappearance of his table community"

In order to celebrate the eucharist "in a worthy manner" (v.27), "a man must test himself before eating his share of the bread and drinking from the cup" (v.28). The phrase "in a worthy manner" is not related to the act of receiving the elements *per se*. "The mystery of the Eucharist [in worship] is not to be understood in terms of external causal relations between Christ and the Eucharist

²³⁴"The Eucharist is an *acted* sermon, an *acted* proclamation of the death." A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *I Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), p. 249.

or between the Eucharist and ourselves," but in terms of their eucharistic life.²³⁵ The partaking of the meal proper in a worthy manner is the prerequisite to the celebration of the eucharist in a worthy manner. Paul was "drawing out ethical implications from the practice: the gluttony of the rich and their humiliation of the poor is so radical a denial of the authenticity of the rite that it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat (v.20)."²³⁶

Judging from the relationship between the common meal and the eucharist, "to test himself" before one's celebrating the eucharist indicates "to examine himself" on one's relationship with others in the community first, as Jesus said:

If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. First go and make your peace with your brother, and only then come back and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

The word "to test" (*dokimazeto*) connotes "to check against a standard of approval."²³⁷ This word implies that the

²³⁵T.F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1975), p. 109.

²³⁶D.B. Forrester, "Lex Orandi Lex Credendi" in *Theology and Practice*, ed. D.B. Forrester (London: Epworth Press, 1990), p. 75.

²³⁷W.F. Orr and J.A. Walther, *I Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden city, N.Y.; Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), p. 268.

common meal celebrated among the congregation is the standard of approval for the eucharist. A derivative of the word "to test" is also found in v.19, designating "the approved" (*oi dokimoi*), the tested ones through food by God.²³⁸ Putting the situation of the Corinthian church and Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper together, the word signifies that Paul understood the congregation as an extension of Jesus' table community: that is, the meal of Jesus' community is the standard of approval to the common meal among a congregation.

The gist of Paul's instruction of the Lord's Supper is: (i) The three meals -- the historical meal of Jesus' table community, the common meal of the Christian community, and the ritual meal of worship called the eucharist -- are so closely related to one another that any of them cannot be fully understood without the others; (ii) Without the remembrance of Jesus' meal with his followers and the experience of egalitarianism in the common meal, the true meaning of the eucharist cannot but be distorted and become a kind of mere ritualistic activity in worship.

The eucharist does not only reflect "the death of the Lord," i.e. the meal of Jesus in the past and the common meal of the congregation in the present. It is ultimately related to "the return of the Lord" and therefore looks

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

forward to the establishing of a new table community and to being invited to the messianic banquet which the Lord will host. Regarding the new table community, the eucharist "suggests not only a messianic life-style within the church but also a revolutionary impact on the values of the world."²³⁹ The locus of the eucharist is between the two table communities (that of the historical Jesus and that to which the congregation presently belong) and another two table communities (that the congregation ought to establish in the world and that which the Lord will complete when he comes again). In this eschatological sense, the Lord's Supper occupies, among the congregation, the central act both in everyday life and in worship.

Paul's altercation with Peter about his behaviour discloses that the table fellowship in a true sense exceeds the boundary of a particular community, even its social and ethnic boundaries. The process of the incident reported in Galatians 2:11-14 was: (i) During his stay in Antioch, Peter had regularly taken meals with gentile Christians;²⁴⁰ (ii) When certain persons came from James, Peter drew back and acted as if he had not eaten meals with Gentiles; (iii)

²³⁹J.C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980), pp. 31-319.

²⁴⁰"The text clearly indicates that communal meals were already a regular part of the worship gatherings of the various early Christian communities." D.E. Smith and H.E. Taussig, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

The other Jewish Christians, even Barnabas, followed Peter; and (iv) Paul rebuked Peter for the breakdown of table fellowship before the whole congregation.

"In the Middle East table fellowship or sharing a meal with someone is a particularly intimate form of association and friendship. They would never even out of politeness eat and drink with a person of a lower class or status or with any person of whom they disapproved."²⁴¹ As Jesus established table fellowship with publicans and sinners beyond the then social and religious boundaries, the early Christians, like those in Antioch, took part in the common meal between Jews and Gentiles: that is, the Lord's Supper played a role in uniting the two (Cf. Ephesians 2:14). Therefore the sharing of food with those who belonged to different societies was not an ordinary affair, but a striking event which inaugurated a new table community.

Paul recognised that the segregation of other Christians from the table fellowship destroyed the religious and social life among the community. He, from the flow of the context, accused Peter and his followers not of their hypocritical act itself but of their deeds which caused the disintegration of the community. The attitudes of Peter and Paul were distinct. Peter believed that the Gentiles must be circumcised for their salvation; and so

²⁴¹A. Nolan, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

did Barnabas. But Paul insisted that they did not need to be circumcised. He thought that Peter's "conduct [to destroy the table fellowship] did not square with the truth of the Gospel" (v.14).²⁴² The same phrase "the truth of the Gospel" occurs in v.5 in relation to the circumcision of the Gentiles. (In all his epistles, Paul uses this phrase only twice.) Paul's intention suggests: (i) The table community was opened to everyone, i.e. to those circumcised as well as to those uncircumcised; (ii) Circumcision could not be a prior condition for the receiving of the Gospels, i.e. for the participation of the table community; and (iii) The Gentile Christians could develop in freedom their own table community from their life situations -- "How is it, then, you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (v.14).

It is often assumed that Paul's understanding of "the equality of Jew and Greek concerns the intramural life of the church," and thus "the extension of equality into the sphere of the secular family and the social mores of society is hardly discussed."²⁴³ However, since he "had been entrusted with the Gospel of Gentiles" (v.7), Paul must have been convinced that the meaning of Jesus' table

²⁴²The fact the Peter was taking meals with Gentiles until some people from Jerusalem came, signifies that Peter, too, had established a table fellowship with the Gentiles as a sign of love and solidarity.

²⁴³J.C. Beker, *Op. cit.*, p. 319.

fellowship should be reinterpreted within a given context and then be expanded according to its surroundings.

The internal and external significance of the Lord's Supper in the early church demonstrated that its common meal celebration was an act to embodying the kingdom of God. Few may raise an objection to the definition that "both Testaments focus on the kingdom of God."²⁴⁴ The Bible witnesses neither that the reign of God is concerned with his rule over the secular world in general, nor that it has nothing to do with our earthly lives. Rather it is "the ultimately liberating, all-redeeming, and eschatological kingship of God over his creation."²⁴⁵ The reign of God has been revealed through the establishment of the covenant between God and His people, through which a new community is coming into existence. This new community is identified with the "kingdom": *mamleket* in the Old Testament and *basileia* in the New Testament. Through the exodus, God made His people "a *mamleket* of priests" (Exodus 19:6). And through Jesus,²⁴⁶ God made his people "a *basileia* and

²⁴⁴J. Moltmann, *Theology Today: Two contributions towards making theology present* (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 34.

²⁴⁵J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 99.

²⁴⁶Most New Testament authors emphasise the expiating power of Jesus' "blood" and relates it to the building of the Christian community. However, it is more sensible to relate the whole "body" of Jesus to the new community, because he was the passover lamb, the *zebhab*.

priests" (Revelation 1:6; 5:10).²⁴⁷ The people of God are called as a concrete sign of the kingdom: "The kingdom we are given is unshakable" (Hebrews 12:28). The Lord's Supper is the epitome of the Christian community, and thus of the kingdom. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the community proclaims "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). The Lord's Supper is food for the people of God who belong to the kingdom and look forward to a decisive epoch of the Heilsgeschichte.

3. Two tables: the Lord's Table and Church's Table

The Lord's Supper of the early Christian community, as seen in the previous section, played an important role in (i) the preservation and transmission of the Gospel traditions about the historical Jesus, (ii) the sustenance of their eschatological hope for the messianic kingdom, and (iii) the formulation of theology and its influence on worship.

The earliest celebration of the Lord's Supper took place in the setting of an actual meal in diversity of

²⁴⁷"A kingdom and priests" is a hendiadys, so it has the same expression of "a kingdom of priests" in Exodus 19:6. J. Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), pp. 370-371.

practice.²⁴⁸ The early Christian communities recalled the life and teachings of Jesus, in particular when they had gathered for the common meal, the so-called agape meal. As the church became bigger and accordingly more organised, however, the common meal began to be superseded by the eucharist. It is not easy to draw a sharp line between the periods of the common meal and the eucharist, or to say when and how long both meals had been celebrated at the same table: one obvious thing is that the eucharist had a tendency to be strengthened as time went on, whereas the common meal was consistently weakened. Already in New Testament times the eucharist "became disjoined from the common meal of the congregation, and the latter apparently disappeared in most places."²⁴⁹

There are few direct materials to look at on the process of the separation: whether the separation resulted mainly from the church's strategy of evangelisation;²⁵⁰ or from the increasing emphasis on the primary significance of

²⁴⁸"The New Testament does not possess the concept of a *sacrament*, nor is it primarily interested in sacred rites in themselves." A. Heron, *Table and Tradition: Towards an Ecumenical Understanding of the Eucharist* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1983), p. 55.

²⁴⁹D.B. Forrester, I. McDonald, and G. Tellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

²⁵⁰Cf. G.V. Pixley, *God's Kingdom* (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 88-100.

the eucharistic rite;²⁵¹ or from the fact that the common meal had become an occasion for disorder, gluttony, drunkenness, and faction in the communities, as in Corinth.²⁵² Behind these assumptions, it is understood that there had been some ecclesiastical interests: positively speaking, "the unity of the church in the truth of the gospel";²⁵³ and negatively speaking, the church's concern about its own stability and development.

The separation progressed extensively among the early Christian communities, though not simultaneously. It was also made in the Pauline communities. It seems that the separation was not due to Paul's theology but to the particular situation of the church.²⁵⁴ Paul, for example, drew out ethical implications by warning the rich against their disorderly conduct at meals on the one hand (1 Corinthians 11:20); but he hesitated to relate his theology to a matter of specific situation on the other hand. That

²⁵¹J.J. von Allmen, *The Lord's Supper* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), p. 64.

²⁵²D.B. Forrester, I. McDonald, and G. Tellini, *Op. cit.*

²⁵³J.C. Beker, *Op. cit.*, p. 306.

²⁵⁴Paul used the word *ecclesia* forty-six times in his writings, whereas the four Gospels, which were written later, used the word only twice in Matthew.

Byungmoo Ahn assumes that (i) the church has already begun to be institutionalised in the time of Paul, and (ii) the Gospel writers rejected the institutionalisation of the church by emphasising the community of the historical Jesus. *A Story of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: KTSI, 1988), p. 157.

is to say, Paul's concern about the unity of the church made him settle the trouble between the rich and the poor by separating the eucharist (to be celebrated in the church) from the common meal (to be eaten in their own house) rather than by correcting the misbehaviour of the rich.

It is true that the emphasis on the eucharist had greatly affected the church's formulation of doctrine and the development of rite. However, it is also true that the eucharist held in itself the latent possibility of losing its "content" when it became mere ritualistic activity.²⁵⁵ This actually came about; and it led the celebrants to several misunderstandings with regard to ideas of the church, sacrifice, and eschatology, etc.

The original meaning of the eucharistic celebration was, without doubt, participation in the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16), i.e. the continuation of Jesus' table community movement. Paul did not refer to the church as the final object of faith. A Christian community was by no means an artificial institution but a given reality during the following of Jesus. The church was first and foremost the extension of the community of the historical Jesus. As long as the church was engaged in embodying Jesus' community, it could be called "the body of

²⁵⁵"When liturgy is circumscribed by the issue of orthodoxy, then it loses contact with the life of the people." D.E. Smith and H.E. Taussig, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

Christ." Paul's body metaphor, therefore, suggested strong socio-ethical implications among the members of the same community to one another and also among different communities.

With the development of the church, however, the meaning of the eucharist became modified. The church *itself* began to be recognised as the body of Christ. That is to say, the eucharist was not understood in terms of the basic order of a new community, but in terms of the order of the church and its ritual activity. Accordingly, the ritual act of the eucharist *per se* came to be identified with the participation in the body of Christ, i.e. the building of the community.

If it is the element of the bread which, according to the traditional primitive Christian understanding, conveys participation in the Body of Christ, then the Apostle [Paul] modified this tradition to the point where participation in Jesus and his body becomes identical with incorporation into the Church as the Body of Christ.²⁵⁶

Along with the mistaken understanding of the body of Christ as the organisation of the church, the meaning of the death of Jesus was also changed. From the beginning, the eucharist was celebrated in relation to the cross, though it "was never referred to as being itself a

²⁵⁶E. Käsemann, "The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper" in *Essay on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM Press, 1964), p. 110.

sacrifice."²⁵⁷ The intimate relationship between the eucharist and Jesus' death signified that the eucharist "could never be freed from sacrificial connotations."²⁵⁸ The death of Jesus as sacrifice has two-fold meaning: it was not only a kind of sacrifice but also the death of God's faithful servant.²⁵⁹ However, when the category of sacrifice lost its content, a radically distorted understanding developed. The death of Jesus was not interpreted in the light of his whole life and works (*zebhab*), but, almost exclusively, in the light of his vicarious death on the cross, i.e. the expiatory power of his death (*olah*). The eucharist became more closely connected with the exalted Christ rather than the historical Jesus.

With the gradual de-emphasis on the historical Jesus, the significance of the eschatology, which Jesus had cherished in his table community movement, was also de-

²⁵⁷"But gradually in the second century it [the Lord's Supper] became common to refer to it as a sacrifice." D.B. Forrester, I. McDonald, and G. Tellini, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*

²⁵⁹M. Barth, *Was Christ's Death a Sacrifice?* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961), pp. 35-41.

The ebed Yahweh Christology was the most ancient solution given to the death of Jesus in the earliest preaching. However, the church could not long remain content with this Christology. After the New Testament period, the title "servant" receded into the background. R.H. Fuller, *The Foundation of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), p. 154; O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1959), pp. 78-79.

emphasised. Eschatology was to be understood as the end event which would break into the world from somewhere beyond history. This idea robbed the church of its significance for present time in history. The eucharist was rarely celebrated in terms of the anticipation of the eschatological banquet, but "an ordinance appertaining to the church and therefore tied to the *time of the church*."²⁶⁰ As a result, the shape of the eucharistic action was subject not to the eschatological expectation of the community but to the ordinance guaranteed by the tradition of the church.

Towards the end of the first century, the church was more systematically organised: for example, there "appeared the idea that all activity in the church is reserved for a class of men who have received peculiar powers, i.e. a clergy."²⁶¹ Worship became more ritualised, and perhaps the participants became more and more passive in their celebration of the eucharist.

The Gospel of John, which is assumed to be written in the last decade of the first century, seems to reflect resistance to the institutionalisation of the church, especially the ritualisation of the eucharist.²⁶² Instead of

²⁶⁰E. Käsemann, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

²⁶¹M. Goguel, *The Primitive Church* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp. 366-367.

²⁶²Byungmoo Ahn, *Op. cit.*, pp. 242-246.

reporting the institution of the eucharist, John stressed Jesus' feet-washing of his disciples and his feeding of the multitude. John's repudiation of the ritualised eucharist was more directly expressed through his emphasis on *agape* in the fourth Gospel and in the first Epistle of John. "The central concept of *agape* has a dual reference. It is both the love of God in Christ which disciples must manifest to their brethren, and the agape meal in which this idea is made concrete."²⁶³ However, from the second century onwards, the theology and worship of the church suggested the wide disappearance of the agape meal and the ritualisation of the eucharist.

The importance of the eucharist in Christian worship cannot be emphasised too much when its true meaning is fully expressed. The eucharist was at first the ritual expression of (i) the common meal among a congregation shared in the light of Jesus' table community and (ii) the new table community envisioned in the light of the messianic banquet. More inclusively, the eucharist reflects, first of all, the real situation of the society and further the whole life of Jesus; and it anticipates a new society and ultimately the consummation of history. However when the eucharist is celebrated with relation to the church's table, it is related neither to the historical

²⁶³N. Clark, *An Approach to the Theology of the Sacrament* (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 55.

Jesus nor to the messianic kingdom, i.e. it became neither historical nor eschatological.

III. Conclusion

The following implications of the results of the study of the table community movement in the Bible are drawn out as of special relevance to the table community of the Korean minjung (Part Two).

First, the Bible depicts the creation of the world and the consummation of history through the table fellowship metaphor. The former is described in terms of the perfect table fellowship between the Creator and His creatures and the latter in terms of the messianic banquet. Between these two poles, God establishes the covenant with his people through a meal and initiates the table community movement with them. Therefore, the common meal has a protological aspect as well as an eschatological aspect; moreover it also has a soteriological aspect.

Second, a meal trajectory is found in the historical process of the table community movement in each Testament: the Passover meal - (the meal on mount Sinai) - the meals in the promised land in the Old Testament; the various meals of Jesus - (the last supper) - the meals in the early Christian communities in the New Testament. Among these

meal traditions, the Sinai meal and the last supper are interpreted as the covenant meal and the new covenant meal respectively.

Third, each meal tradition reflects its own socio-historical situations; and focuses on the building of a new society. This means that an existing meal tradition is "reinterpreted" in the light of the kingdom of God movement, and then is transformed into a qualitatively different one. The passover meal originated from the ancient nomads' spring feast; The meals in the promised land cannot be properly understood apart from the dietary practice of the indigenous Canaanites (in the Old Testament). Jesus established various kinds of table fellowship with all sorts of people in different situations; The early Christian communities possessed not one fixed meal tradition but developed their own traditions (in the New Testament). In the table community movement, a context, i.e. particularity, is by no means despised; nevertheless it always directs one same text, i.e. universality.

Fourth, the eucharistic community is a microcosm of what the whole community is to be. The participants experience the mysterious purpose of God's table community movement. A ritual meal is, first of all, the reflection both of the present society to which the believers belong and of the future society for which they ought to strive.

It also looks back to the past meal events -- the exodus event in Israel and the table community of the historical Jesus in the early church -- and ultimately anticipates the messianic banquet. However, when the presence of God is not experienced, or when the present social situation is not reflected, the ritual meal can easily be degraded to a mere ritualistic activity for its own sake.

Lastly, the table community of Jesus discloses the significance of the kingdom of God. The three-fold incarnation enabled the church not only to experience the presence of Christ in their midst but also to participate in the table community movement in its new phase. The resurrection is a concrete sign that the kingdom of God is being realised in the present time. The Lord's table is the epitome of the Christian community, and thus of the kingdom of God.

PART TWO

THE MINJUNG'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE TABLE COMMUNITY

I. THE MINJUNG AND RICE

The word *minjung* consists of two Chinese characters, *min* and *jung* meaning "people" and "mass" respectively. It had been used as a common term when designating ordinary people until the early 1970s. At that time various social contradictions during the modernisation of the nation were exposed and gave rise to widespread resistance from many students and a sympathetic intellectual class. Through their co-operative struggle for social justice, the marginalised began to be recognised as the nucleus of social reform. They were called "minjung." Soon the word *minjung* became the most popular term for designating people of the lower social stratum: "those who were politically oppressed, impoverished, and subjected to insult and contempt."¹ And it also functions as an adjective to qualify some social, political, and cultural phenomenon or action

¹Cyris Heesuk Moon, "An Old Testament Understanding of Minjung" in *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history*, ed. CTC-CCA (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 123.

as an antonym of "establishment":² i.e. minjung culture, minjung art, minjung movement, minjung sociology, minjung education, minjung theology, etc.

In spite of the popularisation of the word "minjung," it is not easy to give a precise definition of the minjung, because the term "minjung" is not a fixed concept but a dynamic one. The reality of the minjung neither can be easily defined by those who are outside of their sphere nor can be confined fragmentarily only in a specific time and context. Rather the minjung are "the permanent reality of history. Kingdom, dynasties, and states rise and fall; but the minjung remain as a concrete reality in history."³

During the past history of Korea, the minjung were largely understood as the objects of the ruling power. Accordingly their reality was hidden under the surface of history, and thus the minjung can hardly be traced from written materials. Nevertheless "the minjung have been the reality without which we cannot understand the whole history of Korea."⁴ The minjung's struggle against the

²Jongchul Kim, "Theory and Praxis of the Minjung Culture Movement" in *The Theological Thought* No. 53 (Summer 1986): 230-234.

³Kim Yongbock, "Messiah and Minjung: Discerning Messianic Politics over against Political Messianism" in *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history*, ed. CTC-CCA (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 183.

⁴Lee Kibeck, *A New Study of Korean History* (Seoul: Iljo-gak, 1976), p. 455.

ruling power often caused the reorganisation of the then power structure and sometimes brought about a historical transformation. Through these processes, the minjung, step by step, prepared the ground to become the subject of history.⁵

What was the life-setting which made the minjung desire a new history and sustained their hope in the socio-political dimension? What was the root experience which made them persist in overcoming social circumstances within the intricacies of history?

The life of the minjung was very closely related to rice -- the most popular indigenous food for Koreans. (Until comparatively recently, those who engaged in rice cultivation were in an absolute majority, that is, "the minjung indicated peasants before the early 1970s.")⁶ Rice was fundamentally essential to the life of the minjung; they were born with rice, worked for rice all through life dreaming of a society of abundant rice, and then were buried with rice in their mouths. Rice was important in every aspects of the Korean minjung's lives: in their economic life, social life, religious life, annual customs, rites of passage, and in their mythology. Their very lives

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 456.

⁶Jooyeun Kim, "The Minjung and the Mass" in *Essays on Minjung*, ed. Korea Theological Study Institute (KTSI) (Seoul: KTSI, 1984), p. 33.

were the reflection of rice cultivation (Cf. Chapter 3).

With all the importance of rice in the minjung's life, however, Korea has neither vast rice fields nor an appropriate climate for rice cultivation. Not only are most parts of the country occupied by mountains and hilly areas but the soil is also not adequate for rice cultivation. As there is only a short period for rice cultivation, the timely transplantation of the rice seedlings has always forced the minjung to irrigate paddy fields even in a time of water shortage. In this season, all the families have to pool their labour for the irrigation and transplanting of rice.⁷ Furthermore, the long spell of rainy weather experienced in summer time as an annual occurrence is often ruinous to a rice crop. Besides natural conditions, particular attention must be paid from sowing to reaping in order to have a sufficient harvest because Korea is located, geographically speaking, in the northern margin of rice cultivation. The word for rice "米" is composed of three figures, two "八" (eight) and one "十" (ten) denoting eighty eight, as it is generally recognised that a proper harvest of rice needs eighty eight times of careful monitoring and attentions.⁸

⁷Kwangkyu Lee, "Socio-Cultural Aspects of Rice Cultivation" in *Korea Journal* No. 27 (January 1987): 19.

⁸Kyutae Lee, *The Story of Our Food* (Seoul: Kirin-won, 1991), p. 256.

Korean people cultivate rice because it yields more than any other grain. A good harvest was always the best wish of the minjung: a poor crop led to poverty and debt following year. For the minjung, "rice was recognised as life."⁹ These circumstances made it possible for them to maintain their own community, the so-called "doore community," in most of the farming villages in the central and southern part of the nation, and up to now, even in many parts of the rural areas.

A *doore* community was "a particular *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* of the minjung": the word *doore* means "communal cultivation," "whole community," or "rice field."¹⁰ It was organised for a specific purpose: communal work for a better harvest, but eventually "for the just sharing of rice."¹¹ In this community, the minjung worked and lived together. As long as the minjung relied upon rice for their living, it was a community of common destiny. Autonomy was its most distinctive character. This self-governing

⁹Cf. Kibok Choi, "Umbok in Confucianism" in *The Study on Religion and Theology* No. 3 (April 1990): 189.

¹⁰Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music" in *The Study of Korean Society* (Seoul: Hangil-sa, 1984), pp. 12, 22.; Byungsoo Lee, "A Study on the Etymology of the Doore" in *A Collection of Learned Papers in Praise of Dr. Byungki Lee* (Seoul: Samhwa Press, 1966), pp. 390-392.

¹¹Yongha Shin, *Op cit.*, pp. 26-28.

community possessed its own inner organisation.¹² This fact made the community antagonistic to the existing political structure; the minjung's antipathy to the ruling power sometimes provoked rebellion.

The social life of the minjung in the *doore* community was the *Sitz im Leben* of the minjung's meal tradition. However the *doore* community was not a simple community organised just for the purpose of having a better harvest but a complex community where social, religious, and cultural aspects were interwoven together. It was, above all, "a social community." Despite continuing menaces such as poverty and extortion by the ruling power, the community was the place where the minjung were able to discern their social identity. It was "a religious community" which performed a community ritual. Through their community ritual, the minjung collectively had contacted with Heaven and confirmed that they were one family under the common destiny. Theirs was also "a cultural community." The *doore* community was a fountainhead of the minjung culture, by which their desperate situation was overcome and their desire for a new society was cherished and expressed.

The aim of Part Two is to argue that (i) the minjung have preserved their own community with particular meal

¹²Sangbok Han, "The Custom of the Korean village" in *Korean Society*, ed. Foundation of International Culture (Seoul: Sisa-younggo-sa, 1985), pp. 93-94.

traditions, (ii) their community was not a passive but an active community struggling ceaselessly for a more equal society, and (iii) their social vision, concretised through the common meal experience, played an important role in their social, religious, and cultural life. (This approach also aims in Part Three to help a church, as a local congregation, to find its social role by historicising the minjung's meal tradition in the present social context and linking it to the biblical table community tradition.)

In Part Two the social, religious, and cultural dimensions of the *doore* community as a table community with its significant meal experience behind each dimension will be examined (Chapters Two, Three, and Four). Then the understanding of rice is summed up (Chapter Five) and the character of the table community movement in general follows and concludes Part Two.

II. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE MEAL TRADITION

1. The Social Character of the *Doore* Community

Korea has always been an agricultural country and rice has been the most important grain for the Korean people. Rice has been the staple food and also the basis of various foodstuffs: soups, cakes, alcoholic drink, refresher, etc.

Even rice straw has been used as food for cattle and material of straw rice bag, rope, thatch, shoes, etc.

A sacrificial rite to Heaven praying for a good harvest had been the most important event of the country. Everyone, monarch and ordinary people alike, participated in and celebrated it together. According to *Samkukji*, written by a Chinese historian Jinsoo of Po dynasty in the third century, the peoples of the Tribal Societies (from ca. 400 B.C.) celebrated communal feasts on a countrywide scale which followed ceremonies praying for a good harvest before and after the rice cultivation of that year.¹³

In January [in lunar calendar], all the people of the [Pooyo] kingdom offered a sacrifice to the god of Heaven. It was called *younggo*. At that time, pending cases were judged and prisoners were released. ... They slaughtered an ox ... and shared it together.

In September, festivities were held all over the kingdom [of Kokyro] called *dongmeng*. ... The people performed a sacrificial rite. And there was no prison.

Always in September, sacrifices were offered to the god of Heaven [in the kingdom of Ye]. It was called *moochun*. Drinking, singing and dancing followed for several days and nights.

After planting rice-seeds in May the people [of Jinhan] held a sacrificial rite and celebrated a feast ... for several days and nights. In October, after harvesting, they held the same feast ... in every village of the kingdom. All the ceremonies were supervised by the monarch. ... exiles were received

¹³Dongsik You, *The History and Structure of Korean Shamanism* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1978), pp. 46-48.

into the community. ... They [participants of that feast] called each other *do*.

These descriptions of communal feasts related to rice cultivation make the following suggestions. *Firstly*, certain communities existed with the object of cultivating rice: a collective noun *do* is generally accepted as "a Chinese translation indicating the members of a *doore* community."¹⁴ *Secondly*, rice cultivation united not only people in a particular region together but also all the local communities into one through the common participation in the same feast. *Thirdly*, all the participants were treated equally during the feast: everyone ate and played together without distinction of rank or class. *Lastly*, the feast had an egalitarian character as well as a liberating character: during the festivities, prisoners were set free and strangers were accepted as members of the same community.

Rites praying for a good harvest were regarded as the most important annual events by successive state authorities for thousands of years, and they were larger in scale than any other rites carried out by the state. Through successive generations, a failure of crops was regularly regarded as the responsibility of the king. The

¹⁴Byungsoo Lee, "Study on the Ancient Namdang" in *A Collection of Learned Papers* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1954), p. 7.

Shilla dynasty (57 B.C.-935), for instance, "succeeded to the tradition of agricultural rites of the Tribal Societies."¹⁵ Every year, it performed the Pre-farming Rite after the first day of spring, the Inter-farming Rite after the first day of summer, and the Post-farming Rite after the first day of autumn.¹⁶ This tradition was transmitted, through the Koryo dynasty (936-1391), almost until the end of the Chosen dynasty (1392-1910): it was discontinued in 1908, two years before the Japanese annexation of Korea. The Chosen dynasty, in fact, had not observed the Inter-farming Rite and the Post-farming Rite, but only the Pre-farming Rite. However "the Pre-farming Rite, along with some other agriculture rites, was the biggest national event all through the dynasty."¹⁷

The Pre-farming Rite [called *sulong-je*] was performed on the Day of Swine after "the end of Hibernation" [the third day of the twenty-four seasonal divisions according to the lunar calendar that falls on about the fifth of March]. ...

After the Rite, the king himself rolled up the trouser cuffs and tilled the soil. It was called "Royal Plowing." After the king's plowing, all participants - the king, the royalty, the prime minister and ministers of the state, civil and military officers, elderly persons, farmers, servants, and even beggars - shared the object of sacrifice together. ... because an ox [the object of sacrifice] was regarded sacred, whole parts of it were cooked. ... broths [called

¹⁵Dongsik You, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁷Kyutae Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

sulong-tang] were prepared from the object of sacrifice in order to distribute it evenly.

... no other food was offered to the king but the broth with rice. Those who participated in the Pre-farming Rite ate the same food from the same cauldron.¹⁸

The ancient agricultural festivities directly affected the contemporary political structure. Communal labour was essential for proper rice cultivation, and the communal feast provided the participants with a good opportunity for discussing farming affairs.¹⁹ The basic political structure of the Tribal Societies was borrowed from that of a clan society, whose structure was influenced by a conference for farming affairs held during the communal feast.²⁰ This kind of influence had lasted before absolute power became to be exercised.

The old tradition of the agricultural festivities also influenced the social lives of ordinary people. Besides agricultural festivities, people celebrated community feasts or rituals in order to consolidate one community consciousness at the same time and in every region. Until the end of the Koryo dynasty, there still existed nationwide festivities. *Palkwan-hwe* and *Yondeung-hwe* were

¹⁸"Altar for the Pre-farming Rite" in *The Chosen Ilbo* [Newspaper], 7 December 1991.

¹⁹Cf. Yongha Shin, *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁰Kibeck Lee, *A New History of Korea*, tr. E.W. Wagner and E.J. Shultz (Seoul: Iljo-gak, 1991), p. 7.

the two biggest national events where the whole nation, from king to slave, celebrated together in every village irrespective of sex, age or even social status.²¹

However, with the beginning of the Chosen dynasty, when Confucianism became the state religious ideology, the Confucian culture did not allow the nobility to amuse themselves with common people at the same place. "Its political philosophy, first of all, discontinued *Palkwan-hwe* and *Yondeung-hwe*."²² The political structure was also reorganised with the strengthening of regal authority. The true meaning of the agricultural festivities almost disappeared in the political arena. Nevertheless, however, the idea that "rice is heaven" had been in principle adopted as one of the most important policies by successive authorities all through the dynasty.²³

The fact that the political authorities regarded the minjung as their objects signified that "their concern about the minjung was largely related to their ability to

²¹Jaehe Yim, *Cultural Theory of Folklore* (Seoul: Moonhag-gwa-jisung-sa, 1986), pp. 176-180, 183-4.; Dongsik You, *Op. cit.*, pp. 137, 140.

²²Jaehe Yim, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

²³In the Chosen dynasty the government supervised more than two hundred regular rites. Most of them, directly or indirectly, related to praying for a good harvest. Besides them, several large-scale rites related to the good harvest, such as a rite for rain, were performed on occasion by the government. Kibok Choi, "Umbok in Confucianism" in *The Study of Religion and Theology* No. 3 (April 1990): 171, 192-199.

produce rice."²⁴ In order to justify their exploitation, the rulers not only beautified the painful labour of rice cultivation but also consecrated rice itself by propagating that: "labour for rice cultivation is a most precious task and therefore those who are engaged in rice cultivation are the most important ones."²⁵ But the minjung, as the producers of this rice, had recognised the significance of rice and developed their own meal tradition beyond the propaganda of the ruling power.

The minjung preserved their own particular community ever since they had engaged in rice cultivation. The *doore* community designates generally the community of the minjung throughout Korean history; but strictly speaking it also indicates the community after the popularisation of the rice-planting since the late 17th century: since then, the *doore* community was more systematically organised. Given that all the past social experiences had been accumulated in the *doore* community of those days, it represents the minjung community as such.

The following are social characteristics of the *doore* community. *Firstly*, the *doore* community was organised in most rural villages, not according to administrative division. It was compulsory, except from the aristocratic

²⁴Kyutae Lee, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-83.

²⁵*ibid.*

class, for every adult man aged between 16 and 55 to become a member of it. Without exception it was an organisation of the minjung.²⁶ Though the community was composed of both middle class and low class people, there was no discrimination between them. Like admission into the community, secession from the community was also strictly regulated. This binding force made the community consolidate a one family consciousness. The number in a community was normally between 20 and 30, but sometimes could reach 50.²⁷

Secondly, the community had its own structure. Its meetings progressed democratically like the ancient clan conference. The head of a community and other persons in charge of communal labour were chosen by a unanimous vote at the general meeting; all members of the community associated on an equal status. "The other villagers authorised the *doore* community over the existing social structure as a counter-society."²⁸

Thirdly, a whole paddy, public or private, which belonged to the village was cultivated together by the

²⁶The fact that the public well of the village was called as *doore-jung* and the well bucket as *doore-bag* signifies that women were not isolated from the *doore* community.

²⁷Yongha Shin, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

²⁸Taejin Lee, "An Analysis of the Record on the Stone Tower of the Kesim Temple in Yechun" in *An Academic Report on History* No. 53/54 (June 1972): 53.

community. Agricultural implements were also held in common. Fields of widows, elders, the handicapped, or those who could not provide labour were cultivated gratuitously. The socially weak were the most benefited by the community and no one was excluded from it. After the harvest, within the community, the produce was distributed according to the size of the field, not according to the labour force. However, the aristocratic class had to pay for labour. The reward was not distributed among the community but used for communal purposes such as a common feast or ritual, the cooperative purchase of farming implements and musical instruments, etc.²⁹

Fourthly, the *doore* community had a political character. Not only its own structure but also the existence of the peasant hall demonstrated the subjectivity of the *minjung*. Every *doore* community had its own peasant hall for common interests: community ritual, meeting, indoor labour, relaxation, etc. Bachelors in the community usually slept there and agricultural implements, equipment for the common meal, and musical instruments were also preserved there. It was fenced round and defended in turn

²⁹Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture" in *Modern Capitalism and Theory of the Community*, ed. Institute for Sociology in Seoul National University (Seoul: Hangil-sa, 1987), pp. 463-464.

by the members.³⁰

Each *doore* community possessed its own banner and command flag. The banner was made of quality cloth written on vertically that: "The farmers are the great foundation under heaven (農者天下之大本)."³¹ The banner identified each community and symbolised the pride of the *minjung*. Therefore it was consecrated by the *minjung*. "When the banner was set up, no noblemen were allowed to pass by on horseback, but had to get off a horse and pay his respect to it. If not, the contempt of the banner was regarded as the despise of the community itself and aroused popular indignation."³²

Nongak (peasant music) was also indispensable for the *doore* community. "Each *doore* community had its own peasant band and sometimes the *doore* community itself was called *nongak*."³³ Every morning the members of a *doore* community gathered together at the peasant hall and marched to their field with their banner flying in front of the procession and their peasant band behind it. After work the *doore* community repeated the procession. The banner's message and

³⁰Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music," pp. 24-25.

³¹Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture," p. 443.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 444.

³³Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music," p. 25.

its accompanying band demonstrated that the minjung were neither the objects of the ruling power nor those of the prevailing social structure.

Lastly, above all, however, one cannot fail to notice that the minjung had preserved their own community in the midst of their desperate lives (Cf. Chapter 3).

The above characteristics of the minjung community show that the minjung were not just passively subjugated by the ruling power but ceaselessly struggled to overcome the prevailing social system. *Internally*, the community had an egalitarian character. There was neither social discrimination nor the isolation of the socially weak, who were particularly protected by the *doore* community. "They were poor, but there was no needy person."³⁴ *Externally*, the community had a liberating character. The minjung celebrated their lives despite of continuing menaces such as poverty and extortion by the ruling power. Furthermore they managed to accumulate social energy against the ruling power which tried to restrain them from emerging as a social power.

2. The Common Meal in Social Life

³⁴From the special radio broadcast for the fifteenth day of the first lunar month by the Moonhwa Broadcasting Company on 18 February 1992.

The minjung community has been most distinguished by its common meal experiences: the justification for the existence of the *doore* community was the communal cultivation and celebration of rice. The life of the minjung was so closely related to their meal experience that the table fellowship played a pivotal role in every aspect of their lives.

For the minjung, "their communal labour always accompanied a meal"³⁵ and a meal always meant a common meal. During the rice cultivation period, all the community shared their meal together. They had five common meals a day. Early in the morning, they gathered at the peasant hall to the sound of a peasant band, and marched in line to the field together. After communal labour of about an hour, they had breakfast together. Before lunch time, they had a simple meal with *maggoli*, unrefined rice wine. It was called *geoddoori*. Lunch as a common meal was particularly splendid. The scene at the lunch table symbolised the very character of the minjung community as one family. Rice was shared together from the same cauldron and all the other dishes were also eaten from a common bowl. Singing and dancing followed lunch to the accompaniment of the peasant band. In the afternoon, they had another *geoddoori*, and about an hour before sunset they all had supper together.

³⁵Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music," p. 30.

They came back to the peasant hall with the banner and their band.³⁶

The significance of the common meal in communal labour was: *Firstly*, a common meal taken five times a day made it possible for the minjung to progress through a whole process of communal labour in a festive atmosphere. Having the common meal, they were sustained in their desperate lives and discovered its real meaning. They spent twelve hours together: eight hours for labour and four hours for the common meal and play. They did not draw a line between labour and joy, i.e. between body and soul. This demonstrated that although the minjung lived under the dominant power of the world, their reality transcended the existing value system.

Secondly, the common meal united the whole community into one "family." To become one family by means of the common meal was one of the most powerful signs of community building. The minjung usually designated "family" as a *siggu*, literally meaning "eating mouth or box," that is, "the number of mouths to feed." (Koreans have two words indicating family: *gajog* and *siggu*. The former means "the house of the same tribe" while the latter means "people of the same cauldron.") The minjung became one family when they held in common "the same eating box, i.e. the same

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

cauldron."³⁷ This meant that they thought more of the rice-relationship than blood-relationship.³⁸ This consciousness, acquired from the common meal and the communal labour, was also connected with their real lives.

Thirdly, the common meal itself gave the joy of liberation, especially to the low-class people: it was radically egalitarian. "One of the most distinguishing traits of the minjung was that they ate together at the round table."³⁹ The nobility usually ate alone at a square table: they never ate food with people of another social stratum. At the common table of the minjung, they were able to experience equality.

Lastly, the common meal provided the minjung with a opportunity of mutual contribution. The meal was communally prepared by women in turn. The preparation of the meal also

³⁷Cf. Byungmoo Ahn, *A Story of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: KTSI 1988), p. 320.

³⁸For Koreans in general, "the sharing of rice together from the same cauldron" had a special meaning. It has been the most basic activity to confirm their identities not only in a siggu but also in the social group to which they belong.

Until the end of the Chosen dynasty, for example, a concubine and her children were customarily prohibited to use the same cauldron or to eat the same rice from it. And when wanderers stayed in one's house, they were usually provided only with side dishes at a mealtime: they had to cook rice as a main dish for themselves. Kyutae Lee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

united women into one.⁴⁰ They prepared the meal equally according to each other's financial resources. The meal was shared between men and women alike. "In the common table of the minjung, unlike that of the nobility, there was no sexual discrimination or social discrimination."⁴¹

The accumulated experience of the common meal not only made the minjung refuse the prevailing social order but also endeavour to formulate a new system. The common meal sometimes played a role for the minjung in overcoming their social status. After the final weeding of paddies, the community chose the best worker of the year called *doore changwon*. He marched to the peasant hall and then paraded through the village with a willow or flower crown and sitting on the back of an ox. The banner and peasant band marched in front of him, and all villagers followed behind him. *Doore changwon* was usually elected from among those of the lowest class, for example a servant of a large landowner. At that time, the landowner of *doore changwon* was strongly recommended to hold a feast for his servant

⁴⁰Men and women maintained a very cooperative relationship among a minjung society. Besides preparing the common meal itself, women usually took charge of the financial affairs of their household, regarding the common meal and other community occasions.

"One of the most important organizations for women was the *kye*, a mutual financial association. Everyone who became a member of the association had equal rights and obligations regardless of their age or their social status." Kwangkyu Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴¹Jaehe Yim, *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

and other villagers. Because he was served food by his master, the servant could experience the joy of liberation. This system demonstrated: (i) the minjung's refusal to accept an institutional culture, (ii) their counter-consciousness to resist the contemporary social system, and (iii) "their pride as the subjects of labour and production."⁴²

Besides the *doore changwon* system, "the Day of the Servant" was celebrated on the first of February every year. On that day, the villagers provided servants with good food and paid deep regard to them as the subjects of production. A feast was held at the peasant hall and a common meal was shared among the minjung.⁴³

Large scale celebration of the common meal was that of "the Hoe-gathering Day" and "the Hoe-washing Day." Several days before the minjung started rice cultivation, they held a ceremony to gather hoes together. "It was performed in order to tighten their solidarity."⁴⁴ Hoes were preserved in the peasant hall until the day of hoe-washing. After the ceremony the minjung shared a common meal confirming their solidarity.

⁴²Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music," p. 32.

⁴³Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture," pp. 490-491.

⁴⁴Yongha Shin, "The Social History of the Doore Community and Peasant Music," p. 32.

After the communal labour of that year, the community celebrated the Hoe-washing Day, usually on the 15th of July. "The origin of this event go back to the days of the Tribal Societies."⁴⁵ It was the biggest festivity in every rural society and accordingly all the villagers without exception were invited. The event usually consisted of: (i) a general meeting of the community, (ii) thanksgiving worship to Heaven, (iii) the performance of peasant music and a play with a mask dance,⁴⁶ and (iv) a celebration of the common meal.

Important matters regarding rice cultivation were introduced and decided at the beginning of the feast when each person was counted not as an individual but was united into one organic community through a strong "we(*uri*)-feeling."⁴⁷ Matters were in principle decided with a

⁴⁵Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture," p. 461.

⁴⁶It is well known that the mask dance has its origin in a agricultural festivity. Heewan Che, "The Eruption of the Community Consciousness and the Structure of the Mask Dance" in *Literature of the World* No. 17 (Autumn 1980): 58.

⁴⁷Not only the Chinese but also Korean and Japanese people express one person in a plural form: 人間. The character for "one person" 人 indicates two persons helping each other, and "betweenness" 間 the basic ethical attitude of human life. That is to say, "one person" is not human; but a community is human. If we do not have "betweenness," we are no longer human. Cf. Masao Takenaka, *God is Rice* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), pp. 69-70.

Korean hardly use the first person singular, especially in the genitive case. When a house is owned by an individual, it is also called "our (*uri*) house" by him or her. Even a Korean calls his wife "our wife" instead of "my wife." This custom may be derived from the "we-feeling"

unanimous approval.

After the meeting, thanksgiving worship to Heaven for the harvest followed (Cf. Chapters Two and Three). Worship to Heaven was indispensable in a community festivity because rice cultivation was believed to be entirely dependent upon Heaven. Worship to Heaven also made the minjung realise the meaning of labour and confirm their identity in the world. One of the most famous songs of worship was:

A grain of rice has put forth a young shoot;
 And bears ten thousand times of seed.
 The mystery of rice cultivation;
 The reconciliation of heaven and earth.
 Oh peasants, how splendid you are!
 Oh rice cultivation, how magnificent it is!⁴⁸

In the third stage of the feast, the minjung expressed their social imagination through music and theatre. The big sound of the peasant band expressed the pride of the minjung as village subjects. The central event of this

of the rural community.

Besides "we" or "our," *uri* means "corral of domestic animals." As animals in the same corral are fed together, the word *uri* is not just a plural form of "I" or "my" but designates "a community of common destiny." Byungmoo Ahn, *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

⁴⁸Kyunghee Chung, "Rice of 4,000 Years Old" in *The Hankook Ilbo* [Newspaper], 12 November 1992.

stage was usually a mask dance: before and after it, there was a long procession of dancing by the villagers with the peasant band. "The contents of the mask dance was not divided from the real lives of the minjung":⁴⁹ the time and space *in* the play were always those *of* real life. It played a role in bridging real life and social vision: the minjung expressed their social imagination through the mask dance. The nobility were always portrayed as deformed strangers whilst the minjung were portrayed as the subjects of a new community.⁵⁰ The character of the play was very socio-political.

At the last stage of the feast, a common meal was celebrated among the minjung and rice once again played the most important role in its celebration. By rice, it is meant: (i) steamed rice, (ii) unrefined rice wine, and (iii) rice cake. Side dishes for the common meal were rarely mentioned because rice was the main dish. By sharing rice from the same cauldron, the minjung confirmed that they were one family. Common drinking of the unrefined rice wine had particular significance.⁵¹ The minjung used a big

⁴⁹Heewan Che, *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵⁰Younghak Hyun, "A Theological Understanding of the Korean Mask Dance" in *Minjung and Korean Theology*, ed. Committee of Theological Study of the National Council of Churches in Korea (Seoul: Korean Theological Study Institute, 1985), pp. 356-358.

⁵¹The nobility used to drink refined rice wine. The fact that the minjung drank unrefined rice wine meant that they consecrated rice because unrefined wine was believed

gourd for common drinking in order to share rice wine from the same cup. It was a ceremony rather than the mere drinking of wine. To share wine was generally recognised to share blood of life so the common drinking from the same cup often symbolised "solidarity in blood." The minjung, in fact, regularly performed the ceremony of the common drinking at the peasant hall called *hyangeumre*.⁵² Rice cakes were generally used for a special occasion. Among some sixty-three kinds of rice cakes, one of their favorites was a glutinous rice cake dressed with bean flour, *injulmi*. It was prepared in a half finished condition and put on a big plate in the middle of a table. Every one took a bit from the same lump, covered it with bean flour, and then ate it. This act symbolised that "those who shared the same rice cake belonged to the same community."⁵³

The scene of the communal banquet was called *the feast of great solidarity* and it envisioned *the world of great solidarity* (大同世界) where all humanity would become one

to preserve the spirit of Heaven. Cf. Kyutae Lee, *The Culture of Maggoli* (Seoul: Kirin-won, 1990), pp. 12-13.

⁵²To drink wine from the same cup was a very old and widespread custom of Koreans. When the nation was in a grave trouble, the king drank rice wine with all his lieges, together from the prime minister down to a pawn. The same thing was done in all the government offices. Kyutae Lee, *The Story of Our Food*, pp. 187-189.

⁵³The bride and bridegroom drank rice wine from the same gourd cup and shared a piece of glutinous rice cake together as a symbol of becoming one in body and spirit at the wedding ceremony. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

family. "The symbol of great solidarity was peace":⁵⁴ *pyung-hwa* (平和).

The word *pyunghwa* is a compound word combining two words, *pyung* and *hwa*, both of which mean peace. Strictly speaking, however, *pyung* -- the big peace -- implies a peaceful state without war or a state of political stability, whilst *hwa* -- the small peace -- connotes a peaceful state without any complication among the people or a state where all causes of conflict are removed.⁵⁵ Between these two peaces, the minjung have regarded *hwa* more importantly than *pyung*.⁵⁶

The word *hwa* (和) consists of two words: *mi* (米), which pertains to "rice," and *gu* (口), which means "mouth." Therefore the word "peace" signifies that justice of rice is the point of departure towards the world of great solidarity: because where there is equal sharing of rice there is peace and *vice versa*.

The common meal of the *doore* community was celebrated as a symbolic meal to bridge the gap between the present social situation and the society of which the minjung dreamed. The common meal also gave the minjung liberating

⁵⁴Sasoon Yoon, "Philosophy of Peace in Korean Confucianism" in *Peace in Korea*, ed. Hojae Lee (Seoul: Bubjo-sa, 1989), p. 33.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁶For the ruling power, the world of peace always means *pyung* which can be established through the political power.

joy that their social vision had partly materialised in their real lives. The building of a new community, based on a new family (*siggu*), was its concrete sign.

III. THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF THE MEAL TRADITION

1. The Common Meal of the Community Ritual

A community ritual was generally performed as a religious activity of the *doore* community.⁵⁷ Historically both the community festivity and the community ritual have the same origin in the ancient agricultural rite praying for a good harvest⁵⁸ and therefore the *minjung* did not draw a sharp line between the ritual and festivity.

The community ritual was usually centred around the peasant hall. Before the Tribal Societies period, each clan society possessed its own assembly hall. "It was the nucleus of a society, and historically the society was developed with this hall as its base."⁵⁹ However, as the

⁵⁷As the *doore* community took a leading role in the community ritual (*kut*), it was called *doore-kut* in many regions.

⁵⁸Yolkyu Kim, *Kut and Enthusiasm* (Seoul: Yolhwa-dang, 1985), pp. 105-108.

⁵⁹Byungsoo Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

aristocratic class became powerful, they needed an institutional power structure: accordingly the function of the hall became reduced to the level of a peasant hall available for the minjung class. The peasant hall was used for their common interests: a base for the communal labour, a place for meeting and relaxation, etc.⁶⁰ It was also used for keeping the implements and other paraphernalia used in performing the community ritual.

The community ritual had been held wherever the *doore* community was organised until the end of the Chosen dynasty (1910). According to a statistical report in 1936, the community ritual was being held in 58% of all villages in the nation even under the rule of Japanese imperialism.⁶¹ In 1968, the Cultural Property Preservation Bureau of the Ministry of Culture and Information questionnaired 12,000 villages and was answered by 5,577 villages (46.5%) that

⁶⁰The peasant hall was a central place of the life of the minjung. It was a good place to commune or discuss something with a neighbour. Etymologically, "a visit to neighbourhood" and "a visit to the peasant hall" had the same meaning. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁶¹Imperial Japanese rule strongly prohibited the holding of a community ritual and the performing of a mask dance, because both of them not only cultivated the one community consciousness of the minjung but also provided them with a critical attitude against the present reality and with a vision of a new society.

they still held it.⁶² Traditional community rituals are being held in many regions to these days, but the number is rapidly decreasing. It is because "earth [rice] is no longer the only source of life in these modern days."⁶³

The community ritual in general consisted of three parts: (i) the preparation, (ii) the ceremony, and (iii) the common meal of food and drinks. Between the ceremony and the common meal, various cultural events, like a mask dance, were sometimes inserted.

Once the day was announced, the minjung in a village cooperated in (i) bearing the expense in common, (ii) choosing an auspicious day and an officiant at the rite, and (iii) preparing food and wine for the ceremony and the common meal.⁶⁴ The process of the preparation of the meal was particularly significant because their main concern lay

⁶²The Ministry of Culture and Information, ed., *Report of the Folklore Research* No. 39 (1963): 12, 17. Quoted in Kilsung Choi, *A Study on the Traditional Religion* (Daegu: Kemyung University Press, 1989), p. 138.

⁶³Loosi Hwang, *The Kut of Koreans and Mudang* (Seoul: Mooneum-sa, 1988), p. 88.

⁶⁴The expenses were commonly contributed by every household according to financial circumstances. When the amount was not sufficient, the *doore* community made up the deficiency with the money saved in recompense for its labour in aristocratic fields.

All the minjung participated in the community ritual regardless of their age, sex, or religion. After Christianity was propagated, however, it was held without the participation of the Christians. Loosi Hwang, "The Confirmation of the identity and the Feast of Self-existence" in *The Korean Kut* (Seoul: Yolhwa-dang, 1983), p. 95.

in the common meal. They, men and women alike, brewed rice wine and prepared food together. All meal was prepared not only in a festive mood but also in a ceremonious atmosphere.

The ceremony, the second stage of the community ritual, began when food offerings were set on the table. It was presided over by either the village representative, usually the leading elder of the community, or sometimes by a professional shaman. The usual order of the ceremony was: (i) Calling of Spirits, (ii) Bowing to Spirits, (iii) Offering of Rice Wine, (iv) Chanting of a Spell, (v) Burning of Offertory Paper to Heaven, and (vi) Dismissing of Spirits. The climax of the ceremony was the burning of offertory paper by every household participating in the ritual. The officiant read aloud the intercessions of the whole village one by one written out on the white paper and burnt them to Heaven.⁶⁵ The ceremony as a whole focused on the encounter of Heaven and human beings, by the advent of Heaven into the world and the collective participation of the community in the presence of Heaven.

The second stage of the ritual is called *kut*: the word has its origin in pure Korean language. However, the exact origin of this word still remains unknown. One persuasive interpretation suggests that it might signify "a religious

⁶⁵David Kwangsun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: CTC-CCA, 1991), p. 97.

rite praying for blessings to come," because "kutu" in Tungus, "qutug" in Mongolian, and "qut" in Turkish, which belong to the Ural-Altai languages like Korean, meant "happiness" or "good fortune."⁶⁶ But thinking of the character of the community ritual, this linguistic understanding does not seem to be sufficient or appropriate. Along with the meaning "ritual," the word *kut* also has other popular meanings such as "a pit or hole for the dead body" or "a manger of animals."⁶⁷ Two historical and practical facts -- one that the community ritual has its origin in the ancient agricultural rite praying to Heaven for a good harvest and the other that the petitioners set various kinds of rice cake on the altar -- suggest that the word *kut* connotes "a sacred deed to serve rice in a bowl."⁶⁸ "Fan-standing" of the Jangmal *dodang-kut*, for example, supports this inference. Jangmal *dodang-kut*, substitutes the fan-standing for the burning of offertory paper to Heaven.

When it became dark, every family in the village [of Jangmal in Buchun City in Kyungki Province] brought a small tray called "a flower plate," in which rice was put on white paper. Soon the hall was filled with

⁶⁶Dongsik You, *Op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.

⁶⁷Howan Jung, *Imagination of Our Language* (Seoul: Jungsun-sege-sa, 1990), pp. 31-35.

⁶⁸A long established custom and habit, that people place rice in the mouth of the body in a funeral ceremony, can be understood in the same way.

flower [rice] plates. ... Dodang Grandfather [the officiant at the rite for generations] began to dance among the plates with a fan in his hand. After dancing in the excess of mirth calling some spirits, he tried to stand the fan in the rice on the plate one by one. [In order to stand the fan properly, the officiant should get the rice together.] It was believed that the family would receive blessings of Heaven when the fan stood at once. If the fan did not stand at one time, he tried again and again until it stood properly.⁶⁹

The above inference that "kut means to serve rice in a bowl to Heaven" becomes more convincing from the fact that the petitioners believed that a "gift from Heaven" dwelled in the food offerings and it could be efficacious when they were shared among the people. Food offerings should be distributed among all the villagers no matter how little it was.⁷⁰ When somebody could not participate in the ritual, his or her share should be left, even though he or she might be a small child. The most significant food in the *kut* ceremony, and also in the popular religiosity, was the rice cake (*ddok*). "*Kut ddok* was eaten in order to experience the bonds of human relationships and to cure mental and physical illnesses by tapping the power of

⁶⁹Loosi Hwang. *The Kut of Koreans and Mudang*, p. 78.

⁷⁰To give a present or gift, etymologically speaking, means to share food laid on a ritual table. Kyutae Lee, *The Korean Way of Thinking*, 2 vols (Seoul: Moonri-sa, 1977), 1:109.

spirits."⁷¹ Consequently, in the *kut* ceremony, the minjung dedicated their true hearts through the symbolic act of "serving rice in a bowl," and so received a gift from Heaven symbolised through "the rice cake."

The common meal of food and drink with dancing was always celebrated in the final stage of the ritual. However the common meal was never understood as a supplement of the ritual, but the central part of it because the community ritual was regarded as a feast to celebrate a heavenly banquet in order to share "the will of Heaven." The minjung were more concerned with the common meal than with the second stage of the ritual, which usually progressed in abstruse language except the burning of offertory paper to Heaven. The minjung, in fact, already got to the heart of the ceremony through their preparation of the meal. They knew that "the celebration of the common meal was more of a religious activity than just mere eating together."⁷²

Food should be distributed, as evenly as possible among all the participants because the food was believed to be a gift from Heaven. "The most typical common food of the community ritual was *bibim-bab*, a bowl of rice mixed with all sorts of prepared side dishes."⁷³ The reason for

⁷¹Ilyoung Park, "The Community Feast of Shamanism" in *Inculturation* No. 3 (Autumn 1989): 50.

⁷²Kyutae Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁷³Kyutae Lee, *The Story of Our Food*, p. 93.

mingling all food (rice and side dishes) together was: (i) to consolidate the consciousness of the community as one family, (ii) to share even the smallest portion of Heaven's blessings together, and (iii) to demonstrate their egalitarian spirit beyond contemporary social distinctions. The principle of this commensalism made it possible for the villagers to shape their own community of common destiny.

Besides *bibim-bab*, rice with broth was often taken. Korean broth was always prepared on the assumption that steamed rice had to be put into it. Rice with broth was the most popular common meal of the *minjung*, both as a family meal and as a community meal, all through Korean history. Its popularisation, above all, was caused by poverty: to make a broth was the best way to share a small amount of food together. For the *minjung*, however, joy and abundance of the common meal did not hinge on the beauty of the table but in the sharing of the meal together itself.

Next door to my house, I had a poor friend named Kildong. His father, because he did not have even a patch of paddy, took on all the troubles in the village. One day in a house in the village, Kildong's father undertook to slaughter a pig. As a reward, he was given few pieces of the pig's bowels. With a little of them, he made a broth and invited his neighbours. I could never forget the nice warm atmosphere of the table. Actually the broth was poor and insufficient in quantity, but all the invited said by common consent: "How abundant this table is!"⁷⁴

⁷⁴Kyutae Lee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

Through the common meal, the minjung experienced that the will of Heaven was being materialised in their midst. After the common meal, there always followed a long procession of a peasant band with dancers as an extension of the ritual. The band visited every house in the village one after another. This procession signified that the whole village was filled with the blessing of Heaven.

Even with all the importance attached to the common meal, there remain very limited materials about the procedure of it because it progressed in general without any particular formality. Nevertheless one obvious thing is that the common meal, also the whole ritual as such, was closely related to the coming of Heaven into the world: the meal played a role for the community to collectively contact Heaven.

In the festive atmosphere of the community ritual, the minjung experienced that Heaven was descending upon the community. This experience of Heaven made it possible for the minjung to overcome all kinds of dualistic thought which could justify the absurdity of this world. By uniting heaven with earth, the community could be identified with a heavenly community. For the minjung Heaven and the human community were not two different entities: the word "heaven" (天) was interpreted both "the one (一) and greatness (大)" and "two (二) and person (人)" meaning "the only and the greatest possible" and "a human society or

community" respectively.⁷⁵

The minjung's understanding of the kingdom of Heaven was distinguished by the transcendence of Heaven into the world. For the minjung, Heaven beyond this world was too far to touch so they eagerly expected Heaven to descend into the world. The state-founding myths of ancient kingdoms clearly testified in common that the will of Heaven could be realised on earth only through the advent of Heaven.⁷⁶ Because of this expectation of Heaven, the expectation of the coming of Maitreya, the future Buddha, prevailed among the minjung since Buddhism was introduced to Korea at the end of fourth century.⁷⁷ From the beginning, the belief of Maitreya had a strong tie with Shamanism.⁷⁸ In Shamanistic rite, in fact, the call of Maitreya Buddha has been hardly omitted.⁷⁹

No doubt, the main reason to wait the coming of Heaven into the world was that the living situations of the minjung were so desperate. For the rich, who were affluent

⁷⁵Junggi You, *The Dictionary of the Oriental Thought* (Daejeon: Woomoon-dang, 1965), p. 79.

⁷⁶Cf. Dongsik You, *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31, 37-38, 42-43, 45.

⁷⁷Eun Koh, "Maitreya and the Minjung" in *Essays on Minjung* (Seoul: KTSI, 1984), pp. 474-485.

⁷⁸Lewis Lancaster, "Maitreya in Korea" in *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, eds. A. Sponberg and H. Hardacre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 146.

⁷⁹Eun Koh, *Op. cit.*, p. 478.

with every material blessing, *tomorrow* could be another *today*, just as *today* was another *yesterday*. But the minjung expected to taste *tomorrow*, which was qualitatively different from *yesterday*, in the present time. As they waited for the intervention of Heaven in their concrete life situation, the minjung also expected a new society filled with "the righteousness of Heaven."⁸⁰ This desire was expressed and anticipated through the community ritual, especially through the common celebration of the meal.

The idea of the unity of heaven and earth suggests the following characteristics regarding the common meal of the community ritual. *Firstly*, the common meal was more of a social meal than a religious meal. When the minjung partook of the common meal together among a community, they experienced the presence of Heaven among themselves, and thus a minjung as an individual was not counted but integrated in a new family. In other words, the common meal not only bound an individual to a community beyond socio-economic barriers but also reconciled the community with one another. The presence of Heaven enabled the minjung to experience that within this world there could exist another world and to envision a new society.

⁸⁰The relationship between the meal and the righteousness of Heaven will be dealt with in the next section, "The Common Meal in Religious Life."

Secondly, the common meal functioned to awaken the minjung that they were not the objects of the ruling power but were the subjects of the new society. In the celebration of the common meal, the minjung experienced the will of Heaven being realised. When Heaven (天) was experienced in the human community (二人), Heaven was no longer transcendental. This communal experience helped the minjung to transcend over the prevailing social system in the conviction that the new society should be established.

Thirdly, the ethical aspects of the common meal revealed the right way to struggle. Korean Shamanism was generally recognised as not concerned with social changes, but only with individual blessings. It is true that Shamanism had, in some respect, asocial or even antisocial aspects in itself. However, owing to social and ethical aspects expressed in the community ritual, the Korean minjung seemed to overcome the limitation of Shamanism as such. It is because the minjung endeavoured (i) to keep the communal experience of the intervention of Heaven from being reduced into a individual dimension and (ii) to accept and indigenise other religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, in their religiosity so that their religious life could be sublimated into a social dimension.

2. The Common Meal in Religious Life

The religion of the minjung has been Korean Shamanism. It had existed long before Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced in the early years of the fourth century. There has been no theology of Shamanism as such. It has not possessed any permanent shrines or sheltered places of assembly, or institutions for the training of workers, or other means of propagation. However, it has been, beyond any shadow of doubt, the religion of the Korean minjung for thousands of years.

It [Korean Shamanism] is a religion which is pervasive in Korean minds, and which is alive in the Korean way of life. It may not properly be called Shamanism, and we have no popular Korean term for it. It cannot strictly be called an "ism" because it has neither explicit doctrine nor sacred texts. It is no ideology, nor does it have systematic teachings. It may be called the religion of *mudang* [shaman], but it is not practiced by *mudangs* alone. It is the basic religious mind-set of the Korean people high and low, the basic religious mentality of the Korean people. It is an old, indigenous, informal and nearly unconscious kind of popular religion, the religion of the Korean minjung.⁸¹

Scholars often avoid the term "religion" in defining Korean Shamanism. They have called it, in Korean, not *mu-kyo* meaning "religious teaching of *mu*," but *mu-sok* meaning "custom of *mu*": behind the term *mu-sok*, there is an

⁸¹David Kwangsun Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

intention to place Korean Shamanism under the category of social customs. However, the etymological understanding of the word *mu* (巫) clarifies that Korean Shamanism has been regarded as a religion rather than a social custom, because it shows that Korean Shamanism functions to unite a person with a divine being. Two similar interpretations of the word *mu* have been suggested: (i) the letter as a whole describes a scene of "dancing of a shaman in a trance"⁸² and (ii) it represents "a dancing shaman who is linking heaven to earth (亼)."

In addition to the above explanations, the following interpretation is also possible: the word *mu* connotes "a community (two persons: 人+人) which links heaven to earth." From the standpoint that Korean Shamanism has been rooted in the communal life of the *minjung*, it can be called "a custom" when its social functions are emphasised. But it is indisputably more than a custom. Putting all accounts together, socio-religiously speaking, Korean Shamanism can be defined as "a religion uniting heaven with earth through a communal festivity."

Ever since Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced, the three religions were intermingled together in considerable measure. The Shamanisation of Korean Buddhism, for example, allowed a building for shaman spirits, where

⁸²The figure 亼 and two 人 symbolize a dancing shaman and two fluttering wide bottoms of sleeves respectively.

no Buddha statue was placed, to be located brazenly in the temple ground⁸³ and the Confucianisation of Korean Shamanism made most ceremonies of its ritual progress in the same style of the Confucian rite.⁸⁴

However the mutual influence, as far as the minjung's meal tradition was concerned, did not mean that the three religions were simply syncretised. Rather, in fact, the imported religions were ceaselessly indigenised in the real life of the minjung so that their meal experience could be sublimated into a social dimension. Even during the period when Buddhism was adopted as the state religion of the Koryo dynasty and Confucianism as the state religious ideology of the Chosen dynasty, the minjung accepted and reinterpreted the meal understanding of these religions (and later of Christianity) on the principle that a religion functioned to unite heaven with earth by community building (Cf. Part Three).

The minjung's understanding of the meal, which was expressed through their religious life, witnessed how they compounded the strong points of the traditional and imported religions together: the vitality of Korean Shamanism enabled the minjung to experience a new world in

⁸³David Kwangsun Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁸⁴Institute for Study of Korean Religion and Society, ed., *The Reflection and Perspective of Korean Religions since 1945* (Seoul: Minjog-moonhwa-sa, 1989), p. 169.

their communal festivity and Buddhism and Confucianism helped them to learn a way to practice their meal experience for *the world of great solidarity*, that is, Korean Shamanism gave the minjung clear recognition of the text of a new society and the other two religions provided them with underlying principles to bridge the gap between the text and context so that the meal experience might not be restrained within the boundary of the text but be liberated for its social context.

The distinctive character of the Shamanistic rite was its festive atmosphere and vitality which were not found in ordinary life: abundant food, loud music, trance dances of the petitioners, etc.⁸⁵ All these elements helped the participants to be in contact with Heaven. What did the encounter of heaven and earth in the Shamanistic rite really mean?

On the one hand, the encounter meant that food once offered to Heaven was also food granted to human beings on earth. The minjung offered food, the result of their labour, to Heaven and then were given back the food as a gift from Heaven. The fact that the minjung identified food offered to Heaven with food granted to them signified not only did they not draw a dividing line between spiritual food and material food but also that they believed that

⁸⁵David Kwangsun Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

food contained the will of heaven. Owing to this idea, the minjung thought that "one's mind, soul, and spirit were all located in the stomach" not in the heart or brains.⁸⁶

During the Shamanistic rituals, all the participants were allowed to take food from the altar whenever they felt hungry. At any time the sacred table could become a dining table.⁸⁷ This seems that the understanding of food in Korean Shamanism can give a clue in clarifying the relationship between ritual and social ethics. However, the religious vitality, in fact, was hardly applied to social needs.⁸⁸

All food placed on the altar is called Life Food and is believed to have a particularly good influence on the health and long life of the family.⁸⁹

On the other hand, the encounter of heaven and earth through the meal made the minjung pass from their desperate life to a new world. The Korean minjung are the people of *han*.⁹⁰ As the Korean poet Eun Koh exclaimed, "The minjung

⁸⁶Kyutae Lee, *The Story of Our Food.*, p. 30.

⁸⁷Ilyoung Park, *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

⁸⁸In some rituals, like *youngdung-kut* in Jaeju Province, food on the sacred table is shared first among the participants. Loosi Hwang, *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

This signifies that the efficacy of food is restricted within the circle of the ritual participants.

⁸⁹Ilyoung Park, *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁹⁰Kwangsun Suh, "People of Han, Nation of Han" in *The Story of Han*, ed. Kwangsun Suh (Seoul: Bori Press, 1990), pp. 5-9.

are born from the womb of *han* and brought up in the womb of *han*."⁹¹ It is usually understood as a feeling when the weak are oppressed but do not find any one to hear them or to accuse the injustice of their oppressors. Therefore "*han* exists only in the minjung society; not on the surface of the minjung society but in the bosom of it."⁹² *Han* was understood sociologically as well as psychologically.

Han is an underlying feeling of Korean people. On the one hand, it is a dominant feeling of defeat, resignation, and nothingness. On the other hand, it is a feeling with a tenacity of will for life which comes to weak beings.⁹³

Behind the above definition of *han*, it seems to have a more fundamental meaning. The word *han* (恨) is composed of two words: "心" and "艮" meaning "mind" and "stop" respectively; that is, the semantic meaning of *han* designates "the state of an empty stomach" as the mind was believed to be located in the stomach.⁹⁴

⁹¹Quoted in Namdong Suh, "Towards a Theology of Han" in *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history*, ed. CTC-CCA (London: Zed Press), p. 58.

⁹²Eun Koh, "In Order to Overcome Han" in *The Story of Han*, ed. Kwangsun Suh (Seoul: Bori Press, 1990), p. 50.

⁹³Namdong Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁹⁴It is often said among the minjung that *han* is vomited from the stomach or bowels. Cf. Younghak Hyun, *Op. cit.*, pp. 353, 357.

Han is overcome by *dan* (斷), which literally means "cutting." "Personally, it is self-denial. Collectively, it is to cut the vicious circle of revenge."⁹⁵ Judging from the fact that *han* is generated from an empty stomach, *dan* is no more than "the providing of food for the stomach." Therefore it can be said that one's "stopped heart" (*han*) is to be treated by "filling with food in the stomach" (*dan*).

The words *han* and *dan* are not only words to explain one's physical state but they have a revolutionary character. In order to become a revolutionary religion, *han* and *dan* should be dialectically unified.

The minjung's *han* and rage ought to be liberated from its masochistic exercise to be a great and fervent clamour asking for the righteousness of God [the coming of Heaven]. If needed, it ought to be developed into a decisive and organised explosion. This miraculous transition lies in religious commitment and in internal and spiritual transformation.⁹⁶

Did the meal of Korean Shamanism have any revolutionary aspects in itself? How much did the coming of Heaven exercise upon the community in overcoming their desperate situation, personally or collectively? To the first question: Korean Shamanism in itself did not have

⁹⁵Namdong Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁹⁶Jiha Kim, *The Boating with Remnant People of Chosen* (Seoul: Doore Press, 1985), p. 53.

catalytic power which could have sublimated its liberating potentiality into the socio-political dimension. Therefore an answer to the second question could be: the intervention of Heaven operated mainly on an individual or family, or at the very most, on the community to which the ritual participants belonged in order to restore broken community order.

Then how did the minjung make use of the meal tradition of the imported religions in order to overcome the limitation of their traditional religion?

Firstly, these religions gave the minjung a social imagination for a new society. In Korean Buddhism, a common meal among the minjung played an important role in their religious life. Even today, the minjung often say "[We] go [to a temple in order] to eat temple-food" when they go to the temple in order to worship Buddha. The climax of the Buddhistic ritual was "*daejung-kongyang*," literally meaning "the communal offering (or sharing) of food with a Buddhist mind," among all the participants.⁹⁷ At that time, monks and ordinary believers sat in a circle and shared food together. Unlike the Shamanistic table, they ate simple meal and that very ceremoniously: food was shared in order

⁹⁷Cf. Yoonsik Hong, "Kongyang: the Sacred Meal in Buddhism" in *Inculturation* No. 3 (Autumn 1989): 44.

according to the *sigdang-jakbub*, "the Order of Food."⁹⁸

It is believed that "the more people who share in this mass *kongyang* the greater the merit that accrues to the people."⁹⁹ The Order of Food manifests the following significance regarding the world to come: (i) food is not [cannot be] taken for pleasure, (ii) the Maitreya Buddha [future Buddha] is expected to come, (iii) food leads everyone to a new world when it is evenly shared, (iv) [simple] food taken in thanksgiving moves people into ecstatic gladness, (v) people are given new energy [towards a new world] through food, etc.¹⁰⁰ Therefore food justice became the basic condition for equality, as Buddha said: "if people could be equal in food, they would be equal in every law and if people could be equal in every law, they would be equal in food."¹⁰¹ This understanding of the meal took root gradually in the mind of the *minjung* with the expectation of the Maitreya Buddha.¹⁰²

Confucian understanding of the meal also affected the

⁹⁸Today the Order of Food is not kept in the communal meal but only in the Buddhist world. Interview with Hekwang, monk of Pagye Temple, 4 March 1992.

⁹⁹Interview with Sedung, monk of Hein Temple, 20 January 1992.

¹⁰⁰Interpretation of "the Order of Food" by Hekwang on the same day.

¹⁰¹Quoted in Kilhwan Kim, *Oriental Ethical Thought* (Seoul: Ilji-sa, 1990), pp. 278-279.

¹⁰²Dialogue with Hekwang on the same day.

minjung concretising their vision of an ideal society. "Umbok, the partaking of the food and wine of the sacrifice, was a key point in Confucian rituals."¹⁰³ And "this scene of communal sharing of food was recognised as the basic figure of the world of great solidarity."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, because ever since the beginning of the Chosen dynasty the ritual service for ancestors became indispensable even among the minjung, it is not difficult to imagine that the minjung dreamed of a new world when they partook of the sacrificial meal together.

Secondly, both Buddhism and Confucianism presented an ethical impetus to the minjung religion. The Buddhism introduced to Korea was Mahayana Buddhism, not Hinayana Buddhism. Korean Mahayana Buddhism emphasised the equality of all mankind on the principle of *dharma*.

When "this" existed;

"That" also existed.

When "this" came into being;

"That" also came into being.

When "this" does not exist;

"That" does not exist, either.

When "this" does not come into being;

¹⁰³Kibok Choi, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴Interview with Chunghee Kang, Chairman of the Committee for the Confucian Sacrament of the Sungkyunkwan (the Headquarter of Korean Confucianism), 23 January 1992.

"That" does not come into being, either.¹⁰⁵

In order to embody the mind of Buddha in the world, the practice of offering (or sharing) food was particularly underlined as a religious requirement.¹⁰⁶ This practical attitude, along with an eager expectation of the coming of Maitreya, made it possible for the minjung to struggle against the ruling power for the world of *Yonghwa*;¹⁰⁷ that is, against the power of monopolising food for the world of "equal sharing of food."

The practical sharing of food in Confucianism showed more vividly the relationship between food and ethics. "The efficacy [blessing] of a rite depends upon the sincerity of the petitioners and it is most clearly examined in the sharing of food offerings."¹⁰⁸ Because of this belief, food offerings were always distributed among relatives, friends, and neighbours. Food was sent with the note: "I am saying with due respect and a bow. We humbly present food offerings of the ritual service of ancestors. Please take

¹⁰⁵Byungjoo Chung, "The Koreans' Concept of Peace" in *Peace in Korea*, ed. Hojae Lee (Seoul: Bubjo-sa, 1989), p. 42.

¹⁰⁶Yoonsik Hong, "Kongyang in Buddhism" in *The Study of Religion and Theology* No. 3 (1990): 155-156.

¹⁰⁷Eun Koh, "Maitreya and the Minjung: for the Historical Pursuit" in *The Thought of the Modern Minjung Religion of Korea*, ed. Hakmin-sa (Seoul: Hakmin-sa, 1985), pp. 259-270.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Chunghee Kang on the same day.

a kindly interest in this food and accept it." The reply note was: "You do not monopolise blessings of the rite but share them with us. We are deeply touched by this and take comfort in it."¹⁰⁹ This scene of food sharing was recognised as a symbolic society in which all mankind should pursue the idea of the world of great solidarity, which the minjung identified with the realisation of the will of Heaven. "When this sharing of food is perfectly applied in the real life of people, the world of great solidarity will come. Therefore the sharing of food is interpreted in terms of practical ethics, i.e. the practice of benevolence."¹¹⁰

Benevolence, the basic virtue of Confucianism, is concerned not about the recognition of its meaning but about the practice of the will of Heaven.¹¹¹ What then is the relationship between "benevolence" and "Heaven"? Benevolence (仁), just like Heaven (天=二+人), is composed of two words, "人" and "二" signifying two persons, or a community. This semantic approach shows that both benevolence and Heaven have the same origin and are properly understood through a community; and the sharing of food is a pivotal activity to link benevolence, Heaven and a community: "benevolence" as the practice of food,

¹⁰⁹Kibok Choi, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

¹¹⁰Dialogue with Chunghee Kang on the same day.

¹¹¹Hongchul Kim, *A Study on the New Religion of Korea* (Seoul: Jibmoon-dang, 1989), pp. 70-71.

"Heaven" whose will is revealed through food, and "community" where the life of the minjung is so closely related to rice. Therefore the basic ethics of Confucian teaching can be summarised thus that "the will of Heaven" is practiced through "the benevolent sharing of rice" among "a community."

The vitality of Shamanism and the ethical teaching of Buddhism and Confucianism met in the social life of the minjung. In their community life, their culture played a role not only as a catalyst to link the different meal traditions of these religions but also as a storehouse to accumulate the socio-religious experiences of the minjung.

IV. THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE MEAL TRADITION

1. The Significance of the Common Meal in the Minjung Culture

The life of the minjung as a whole was directly related to rice cultivation. They devoted most of their life to rice: they lived on rice, lived with rice, and fundamentally lived for rice. Rice was important in every aspect of their everyday life. As the social and religious activities of the minjung were inseparable from rice cultivation, so was their cultural lives. Therefore it can

be said that culture of the minjung was also the reflection of rice cultivation.

However the culture of the minjung was ultimately community culture. This meant that rice could not be produced alone, but only through communal labour, and likewise the culture of the minjung could not be enjoyed individually, but collectively. This section discusses how rice was understood in the cultural life of the minjung. And the next section deals with how the minjung community possessed and developed its culture against the culture of the ruling class.

Before we look at the function of rice in the concrete life situation of the minjung, let us look at one part of the *Hungbo Story* so that we may understand the basic attitude of the minjung to rice. It has been one of the most favorite stories among the minjung: even today, it is easily found in school textbooks. The story was originally written in the language of the minjung and was gathered in the *pansori*, the Korean opera. The scenario was as follows: Hungbo was so poor that his family were always hungry. Their desire was to gorge themselves with rice. Hungbo was a very sympathetic person. One day he treated the broken leg of a swallow. In the next spring the bird brought a gourd seed and Hungbo planted it in his yard. In the autumn gourds grew in clusters on the roof. When he and his wife

halved the first gourd, gold coins and rice poured out.

... "Look at this, darling! Gosh, we have lots of money and rice. But first of all let's cook the rice because I am dying of hunger. Rice is better than anything else, isn't it? Well, how many *siggu* [numbers of eating months] are there in our family? Nine children and ourselves, yes, eleven in all. We all have been starving until now, so can't each of us eat one sack of rice [80 kilogrammes]? Let's cook eleven sacks of rice!"

... [After cooking the rice] The heap of steamed rice became as large as Hungbo's house. Hungbo commanded his children. "All right, you mischievous lot! If you eat this rice before I order you to ... or [eat the rice] thoughtlessly, I will cut off your heads with rice." [Children replied,] "We understand." [Hungbo said,] "You mischievous lot, then, eat the rice!"¹¹²

... [When children were eating the rice] the wife of Hungbo said, "My dear, you too had better eat the rice." "No, I would not eat like the children, I will go into the heap of rice and eat it laying down on the rice." ... Hungbo pressed the rice into a small ball, tossed it up in the air, and took it as a toad pounces on a fly, and that very rhythmically.

"Hungbo is eating rice. Hungbo is eating rice. HUNBO IS EATING THE RICE! Hungbo is pressing the rice into small balls and tossing them in the air. Hungbo is eating rice. Hungbo is eating rice. HUNBO IS EATING THE RICE! [He is] Tossing one ball and catching it, and tossing another and catching it. Oh dear, [because he] ate too much rice, Hungbo is dying as [he] eats the rice"

... [Hungbo was singing joyfully with a dance] "How happy I am, because I am satisfied! I am so happy because I gorged myself with rice. Hurray! Hurray! ...

¹¹²This scene seems to reflect the common meal of the *doore* community during communal labour. "They worked together and ate together in an orderly manner. When one finished a meal earlier than others, he was not allowed to act individually but had to wait until the rest had finished it." Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture," p. 441.

Rice makes me happy! Nobody can live without rice, even an emperor. Rice is more important than anything else. Hurray! Hurray! I am happy in rice."¹¹³

The above scene symbolically shows how rice was significantly recognised by the minjung. Rice was both the basic and ultimate demand of the minjung. When Hungbo had rice and money, neither was he concerned about gold coins nor did he halve another gourd in order to get other valuables. He showed interest only in the rice: "rice is more important than anything else."

Rice not merely acceded a physical demand but changed completely the life of the minjung. Rice was regarded as a mysterious medicine which could bring the minjung to life or put them to death. It was believed that "food and medicine came from the same source (醫食同源)." "For the minjung, medicine was not primarily some manufactured product but was basically rice eaten in a particular way."¹¹⁴ Therefore rice would not be eaten without discretion: "If you eat rice thoughtlessly, I will cut off your heads with rice." Because of this concept, to eat a great deal of rice or not to finished rice in a bowl at table was regarded as immoral.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Quoted in Jiha Kim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 324-326.

¹¹⁴Sean Dwan, "Korean Meals - Ordinary and Extraordinary" in *Inculturation* No.3 (Autumn 1989): 37.

¹¹⁵A confucian philosopher of the eighteenth century Ik Lee said: "I love to study and make efforts in studying; but I am nothing but a moth under heaven because I do not

Rice also symbolised the ideal society. As "most of minjung's stories about paradise were filled with a description of eating rice,"¹¹⁶ Hungbo was carried away by rice. When his family cooked eleven sacks of rice and heaped them up in front of his house, they all had already passed from this world into another world. Hungbo entered into the rice and played with the rice. This scene shows how the culture of the minjung expressed the joy of a new society.

Above all, however, rice in itself held the key to the liberation of a dehumanised personality in an actual life situation. Dying Hungbo was "breathed on by rice." Being satisfied, he was filled with "a new energy" and sang and danced in a trance. Through rice he recovered his energy and became a real human being.

With the above pervasive understanding of rice, the minjung consecrated rice in their lives. The word "culture" means cultivation or the state of being cultivated. "Cult" means religious worship and ritual.¹¹⁷ As two different

produce even a grain of rice. Therefore I will reduce the amount of rice to one *hop* [about 0.18 litre] at each meal." Quoted in Kyutae Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁶Kiwan Baek, *A Great Story of the Minjung* (Seoul: Minjog-tongil-sa, 1991), p. 108. "The desire of the minjung in paradise [expressed through their stories] were not concerned about to be non-minjung but to be equal." *Ibid.*, p. 130

¹¹⁷Masao Cakenaka, *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

activities have the same origin, both of them became one in the lives of the minjung. Their lifestyle was not only the reflection of the cultivation of rice but also the adoration of rice. This attitude was found everywhere: in their personal, family, and community lives.

As far as the personal life of a minjung was concerned, rice went with him or her from the cradle to the grave. When a woman was expecting a baby, the minjung made it a rule to lay rice straw on the delivery room.¹¹⁸ At the time of the child's birth and again on the 21st day after birth, a special offering table was prepared in honor of Granny *Samshin*, the spirit in charge of child birth. On the offering table were placed three bowls of rice, three dishes of rice cakes, seaweed soup, and clear spring water, preferably drawn from the well at sunrise. After the ceremony, the foods were given to the mother. Rice in this case symbolised life itself. And on the 100th day celebration, they tried to share rice cakes with 100 families.

The ceremony of marriage was held in front of the ceremonial table. On the table there were candles, rice,

¹¹⁸In some areas, the minjung laid rice straw in front of the delivery room so that the parturient woman might tread it down. Or a new born baby was put on the lid of a rice cauldron first and then moved to a rice straw bag. Even in the Royal Court, people hung a straw blind in front of the delivery room. Kyutae Lee, *The Story of Our Food*, pp. 83-84.

chestnuts, jujubes, a live chicken, etc. These items on the table symbolised long life, harmonious life, many sons, and wealth. The central gesture of the wedding ceremony was the exchange of rice wine between bride and bridegroom from the same gourd cup, which was then fixed to the wall of their bed room. Family, the basic unit of the community, was created through rice.

During a funeral, the minjung held a ceremony where they washed the body and put three spoonfuls of rice in its mouth before it was placed in the coffin. As the three spoonfuls of rice were put into the mouth, those present exaggerated the amount of rice shouting "A hundred sacks of rice!", "A thousand sacks of rice!", and "Ten thousand sacks of rice!" It was generally believed that "the living gave rice to the ancestors so they would give back rice to the offspring."¹¹⁹ But a more persuasive explanation could be: This ceremony symbolised the desire even after death of the living to send the dead to the world overwhelmed with rice. The minjung all experienced that they could not be liberated from their anxiety about rice throughout the whole course of their lives even though they worked for rice to the end of their days. Therefore their lifelong desire was above all for the world where there would be no anxiety about rice.

¹¹⁹Sean Dwan, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

Rice played an important role in family life, too. Owing to the pivotal importance of rice, the rice bowl was always consecrated because to eat rice was more than a satisfying of physical demand. Therefore a rice bowl was personalised. In family life, though rice was shared from the same cauldron, each member of the family possessed his or her own rice bowl no matter how poor they were. When a bride left her house, sedan chair carriers tramped her rice bowl to pieces at the gate symbolising the bride no longer belonged to that house. During the funeral ceremony, bier-carriers did the same thing. When a rice bowl was broken in pieces, all other members of the house bewailed loudly the passing of the dead person.

The consecration of rice in family life made the minjung serve various household gods with rice. Rice was not only a medium to link the minjung to the household gods by the family ritual called *gosa* but also was regarded as the symbol of the presence of the household gods. Every year after harvest, for instance, a housewife filled three jars with new rice for the household gods. After a wholehearted ceremony, jars were placed in one corner of the inner room, on the wooden floor, and in the backyard. They were for the ancestor god, the house god, and the house site god respectively. "The minjung identified the

rice kept in a jar with the body of the god."¹²⁰ The old rice was cooked and shared among the family before the jars were filled with new harvested rice. "A special jar was also prepared by the community and was offered to the village god during the community ritual. The cooked rice was called *nogomae*."¹²¹

Rice also played an important role in the community life of the minjung. Some special days -- the 100th day from birth, the wedding day, the 60th birthday, etc. -- were remembered through the common meal by the whole community. Once the date was announced individual affairs were postponed for some time. The community as a whole became excited anticipating the feast and participated in the sharing of work and material together. "To the participants the matter of primary concern was always the common meal."¹²² The feast was prepared on the principle of equality. Economically, each family offered something -- money, food, labour, etc. -- according to their circumstances. The feast was by no means a burden even to the poor. Rather "mutual contribution provided the wealthy with an opportunity to share their belongings with the

¹²⁰Kwangkyu Lee, *Op. cit.*, pp. 25, 28.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²Dongsik You, *Op. cit.*, p. 256.

poor."¹²³ Socially speaking, eating at the same table meant the acceptance of one another as persons of the same social standing. The common meal made all the participants experience egalitarianism.

Besides the common meal on special occasions, the same kind of food on a particular day also played an important role in their confirming of social identity to one another. The twenty-four divisions of the year in the lunar calendar were generally connected with the cycle of rice production or the celebration of rice cultivation.¹²⁴ The same food was celebrated on each of the major calendar festivities of the year in order to remember times and seasons: rice dumpling soup on the first of January (New Year's Day), a sweet rice dish on the fifteenth of January (First Full Moon Day), a half-moon-shaped rice cake on the first day of February (Servant Day), etc. The experience of the same food, however, provided the minjung with a consciousness of common destiny as well as that of one family. The celebration of the same food also demonstrated the solidarity of the minjung in overcoming social and economic distinction.

The custom of eating the same food on the particular days was kept not merely among the minjung but among all

¹²³Jaehe Yim, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹²⁴Chungjin Park, *Korean Culture as a Culture of Feeling* (Seoul: Mire-moonhwa-sa, 1990), pp. 191-193.

the people of the nation even the king. Even today most Koreans customarily eat the same food according to calendar events. However it is difficult to imagine, when the aristocrats ate the same food, they experienced any sense of equality with the minjung. They might feel at most a sense that all the people belonged to the same nation. Therefore, "the minjung" and "people in the same nation" should be distinguished; otherwise, the minjung could easily be absorbed into the people of the same nation, as one theologian said: "in the past history, the concept of people of the same nation existed but that of the minjung did not."¹²⁵ The minjung, unlike the aristocrats, shared the same food together as part of the community feast. They expressed and experienced every meaning of the community feast, especially becoming the same family, not just belonging to the same nation: that is, their eating of the same food gave a broader understanding of the extended families.

The function of cultural activities of the minjung was, according to folklorists, to recover "energy" for the recreation of life.¹²⁶ From the point that the minjung got new energy when they ate rice, the culture of the minjung

¹²⁵Byungmoo Ahn, "Nation, Minjung and Church" in *Minjung and Korean Theology*, ed. Committee of Theological Study, NCKK (Seoul: KTSI, 1985), p. 19.

¹²⁶Jaehe Yim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 151-155.

is called a culture of rice. In other words, the various ways they enjoyed the common meal *per se* represented cultural activities.

The word for "energy" is *gi* (氣). Besides energy, it is translated into spirit, vitality, vigor, etc. "For Koreans, in a broad sense, *gi* itself is a sacred reality.¹²⁷ It can create any kinds of divinity."¹²⁸ The word *gi* consists of two words: "汽" and "米" meaning "air" and "rice" respectively. *Gi* suggests that energy should not be understood alone either spiritually or materially but that it is invigorated when spirit (air) and matter (rice) combine together.

With energy generated from matter and spirit, the minjung experienced that: *First*, "the material" and "the spiritual" were not two separate entities. *Second*, "this world" was not isolated from "the world to come." And *lastly*, their accumulated *han* was resolved by both "material *dan*" and "spiritual *dan*." The community culture, e.g. the mask dance, showed how this energy was vitalised by the unity of the spiritual and the material.

¹²⁷J. Moltmann sees *gi* as an equivalent for Greek *eros* and Hebrew *ruach*. All of these are understood in terms of the Divine Spirit of Christianity. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM Press, 1992), p. 227.

¹²⁸Chungjin Park, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

2. The Common Meal and the Community Culture

At the same time and place, cultural activities functioned to unite the whole community. These were performed mostly during the slack season after harvest in the form of the community feast. It progressed in general by: (i) worship to the village god,¹²⁹ (ii) various cultural events of the season,¹³⁰ and (iii) celebration of the common meal. The role of cultural activities was to link the ritual and the common meal. In other words, the community culture bridged the gap between the descent of Heaven and the realisation of the will of Heaven.

One particular cultural event can be selected for the convenience of argument concerning the significance of the community culture in relation to the celebration of rice — the mask dance. The reasons: *First*, the mask dance was the oldest and the most popular cultural event. It originated from the ancient agricultural rite of praying for a good harvest like the community feast or ritual.¹³¹ The fact that

¹²⁹The village god was called *golmegi*, meaning "the one who fills up gaps." The name of the village god gave the character of the community feast. Cf. Heewan Che, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹³⁰During the farming season the communal labour and the common meal themselves represented cultural activities.

¹³¹Yolkyu Kim, "Kut and the Mask Dance" in *The Thought of the Mask Dance*, ed. Heewan Che (Seoul: Hyunam-sa, 1984), p. 103.

it was performed as a part of the rite rather than as an independent play signified that the mask dance was closely related to rice cultivation from the beginning. *Second*, it was often performed on festive days when the same food was shared among the community.¹³² The mask dance was performed to celebrate not only a festive day but also the joy of eating the same food. *Third*, it was performed by the *doore* community, whose activity was always related to rice. *Forth*, through the mask dance the mystery of rice -- the encounter of heaven (spirit) and earth (matter) -- was powerfully expressed and experienced. *Lastly*, above all, it well demonstrated the process of how the presence of Heaven experienced in ritual meal is linked to the minjung's desire for a new society partly realised in the common meal.

The mask dance was characterised by its contemporary nature. Its time and space were those of the real life of the minjung and thus it could be performed whenever and wherever they gathered together. Unlike other plays, the mask dance by no means allowed the distinguishing of time and space *in* the play from those *of* the audience.¹³³ It united the players and the audience: they could communicate

¹³²Heewan Che, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹³³Dongil Cho, "The Relationship between Place of the Play and Place in the Play" in *The Thought of Mask Dance*, ed. Heewan Che (Seoul: Hyunam-sa, 1984), pp. 204-206.

to each other and the words of the play could be also changed according to the contemporary circumstances.¹³⁴ Moreover, the mask dance expressed their envisioned community: it always played a role to bridge the gap between the society as it was and the society as dreamed of by the minjung.

The mask dance consisted of three stages: pre-performance, main-performance, and post-performance. Among them, "originally the pre-performance, the so-called Street Play, was more boisterous than the other two stages."¹³⁵

The pre-performance: It began with the wearing of masks right after the ceremony of the community ritual, in which the descent of Heaven was the main function.¹³⁶ (This ceremony is an extension of the food offering to Heaven during the community ritual.) The mask symbolised one's escape from one's real situation and one's encounter with Heaven at the same time. "Traditionally Koreans neither excluded humanity from divinity nor did they excluded the possibility of divinity from humanity."¹³⁷ Under the mask

¹³⁴Yolkyu Kim, *Op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

¹³⁵Heewan Che, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹³⁶In the Hahwe mask dance, before fitting the masks on, a particular ceremony praying for the descent of Heaven was separately performed. Younho Suh, "The Theatrical Element of the Hahwe Mask Dance" in *The Thought of Mask Dance*, ed. Heewan Che (Seoul: Hyunam-sa, 1984), p. 9.

¹³⁷Chungjin Park, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

the player expressed divinity and humanity at the same time.

The players danced through the village with the peasant band. "The number of the procession was between 30 and 50 and the music was sonorous and lilting."¹³⁸ Loud music was believed to have power to expel evil spirits. "The group dancing in the procession was very dynamic and powerful."¹³⁹ It changed "the space of ordinary life to the space of recreation, the time of oblivion to a time of consciousness, and the motion of meaningless habit to a motion of meaningful movement."¹⁴⁰ The procession demonstrated that the village was full of "new energy." As the villagers joined the procession and danced to peasant music, they had already transcended this world. They were on the way to the new world.

Why did Heaven have to come down in the present world? Why was the intervention of Heaven so important, or even indispensable, to the minjung? Without the answer to these questions, neither the nature of the minjung's cultural activity nor the relationship between the community culture and the common meal can be clarified.

From ancient times, the minjung engaged in rice

¹³⁸Yongha Shin, "The Doore Community and the Peasant Culture," p. 469.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 464.

¹⁴⁰Younho Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

cultivation,¹⁴¹ and served Heaven which controlled rice, their staple food. Moreover rice itself was recognised as "the embodiment of Heaven." As long as the minjung relied upon rice for their living, their life was more controlled by Heaven rather than by a political power. "The minjung transcended the power structure which attempted to confine them" through the cultivation of rice.¹⁴²

The realities of life, however, did not allow the minjung to experience Heaven in the midst of their lives. They were annoyed greatly by the powerful who controlled them by extorting their own rice production from them. The religious groups, which colluded with the powerful, distorted the realisation of the minjung's social vision and moved it to the transcendental world on the one hand and justified the politics of oppression on the other hand. When the minjung were deprived of rice they were also robbed of their Heaven and *vice versa*. But when the minjung communicated with Heaven, they also experienced "a critical transcendence" over this world.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹The oldest grains of rice were those of about 4,300 years ago excavated at Gahwa-ri in Kyungki Province. Kyunghee Chung, *Op. cit.*

¹⁴²Yongbock Kim, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

¹⁴³Younghak Hyun, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance" in *Minjung Theology: People as the subjects of history*, ed. CTC-CCA (London: Zed Press, 1983), pp. 50-53.

A man under a mask symbolised a minjung who was liberated from the oppression of the powerful and a minjung who regained his or her lost Heaven from the deceitfulness of religion. The procession of the pre-performance demonstrated that the mask dance was not just a cultural activity but also a political and religious activity, inviting the minjung into the presence of Heaven and out of existing socio-political circumstances.

The main-performance: The intervention of Heaven was also a central theme in the main-performance. It represented the joy of the minjung who had regained their Heaven. The minjung got the worst possible deal in this world. There was no exit for them but Heaven; however it should not be metaphysical. In the presence of Heaven, the absurdity of this world was exposed without hesitation and another world was unfolded by the participation between the players and the audience.

The anticipation of the righteousness of Heaven gave the minjung the conviction that a new society would be established. With this confidence, the minjung could endure the present sufferings on the one hand and entrust the judgement of the non-minjung to Heaven on the other hand.

Through the words of the play, the minjung "vomited" their accumulated and suppressed *han* "from the stomach." But their *han* was resolved not through malicious revenge but by laughing, humour, and satire. Only the experience of

Heaven made it possible for the minjung to experience "the critical transcendence" in a true sense.

This experience of critical transcendence places them [the minjung] not only over against others who oppress the minjung but also over against the minjung themselves. Self-transcendence rather than self-righteousness makes it possible for the minjung to insert a wedge (grace) into the vicious circle of the ruled becoming the same kind of oppressive rulers by seeking revenge.¹⁴⁴

The post-performance: The players again threaded through the village demonstrating their triumph over the present world. Then they burnt up their masks to Heaven praying for a new world. In the community ritual, offertory papers were burnt individually, but in this case the desire of all the participants was the same and thus collectively offered to Heaven.

The common meal was usually celebrated during the post-performance. As the mask dance was understood as a part of the community ritual, the common meal was also

¹⁴⁴Younghak Hyun, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

The term "critical transcendence of the minjung" was first used by Younghak Hyun, a Korean minjung theologian. But he did not deal with the religious experience of the minjung seriously. He simply indicated the vice of existing religions and related only life experience to the critical transcendence. "The stance of critical transcendence is not given by some gods out there or by some objective existing reality in the other world. It is provided by the minjung's own life experience." *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Without the understanding of the religious experience of the minjung, however, the vicious circle of revenge cannot easily be "cut" through laughing, humour, and satire.

celebrated as the continuation of the mask dance. In this respect, the common meal was the culmination of the mask dance, and moreover of the whole cultural event.

The minjung's cultural activity basically operated to unite the community into the presence of Heaven and provided them with a social imagination of a new society. Its function was symbolised by two meals: a ritual meal offered to Heaven before the cultural event and the common meal shared among a community after the event. In other words, the cultural activity helped the minjung to participate in the process of the realisation of the will of Heaven in a community.

The significance of the common meal: *First*, the minjung experienced the overcoming of their desperate life situation and expressed their social vision for a new society through their cultural activity. The common meal enabled them to anticipate a new society more concretely, because the very scene of the common meal was recognised as a partial realisation of the new society and thus suggested powerful ethical implications. *Second*, the relationship between Heaven and the minjung, experienced through the critical transcendence in their cultural activity, was ratified by the common meal. It provided the grounds for reconciliation between the minjung and the non-minjung: that is, the common meal made it possible for the minjung not to reject but to embrace the non-minjung as

constituents of a new society.

V. PRACTICE OF HEAVEN THROUGH RICE

It is in the *Donghak* Thought (or *Donghak* Religion) that (i) the relationship between Heaven and the *minjung* through rice and (ii) their desire for a new society, envisioned and developed through the common meal, were most clearly disclosed.¹⁴⁵ The *Donghak* believers, during the *Donghak* Revolution, proclaimed that they were practicing "the way of Heaven" in order to establish a new society.

Heaven teaches us the way of doing good and promoting the welfare of society so that we all may live in peace and prosperity.

... we the believers in the Heavenly Way have behind us 30 years of hard discipline and are now about to be enlightened about the Way. ...¹⁴⁶

"The idea of Heaven was directly derived from the same concept of Heaven in which the *minjung* believed from

¹⁴⁵*Donghak* (meaning eastern philosophy) Religion, which emerged in 1860, gave rise to the *Donghak* Revolution (1894), the biggest *minjung* uprising in Korean history.

¹⁴⁶From "The Circular Notice to the *Donghak* Believers" issued in August of 1894. Quoted in Bockyong Shin, *Donghak Thought and Kabo Peasant Revolution* (Seoul: Pyungmin-sa, 1985), p. 447.

Donghak Religion was renamed *Chundokyo*, meaning the Heavenly Way Religion. Its name signified the nature of the religion.

ancient times"¹⁴⁷ and "throughout their history."¹⁴⁸ In this respect, "the new world which *Donghak* Religion stood for, was by no means different from the new society of which the *minjung* dreamed in their sharing of rice."¹⁴⁹ The fact that the *doore* community positively participated in the Revolution, especially in organising of the revolutionary peasant army, implies that the *minjung*'s desire for a new society was directly reflected in the *Donghak* Thought.¹⁵⁰

The basic doctrine of *Donghak* Religion was "Humanity is Heaven": *in-nae-chun* (人乃天). This doctrine was widely known as "the unity of man with Heaven, that is, mankind and the Supreme Being are one and the same."¹⁵¹ However this interpretation does not seem to be adequate because the theory of *innaechun* was not derived from oriental naturalism as such. Rather "it integrated the *minjung*'s experience of Heaven."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷Changhwa Hong, ed., *The Doctrine and Thought of Chundokyo* (Seoul: The General Assembly of Chundokyo Press, 1990), p. 11.

¹⁴⁸Interview with Woongil Yim, Chairman of the Education Department of the General Assembly of the Chundokyo, 12 February 1992.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰Yongha Shin, "The Kabo Peasant Revolution, the Doore Community, and the Reform of the Jipgangso" in *Social Class and Social Changes of Korean Society* (Seoul: Moonhak-gwa-jisung-sa, 1987), pp. 87-96.

¹⁵¹Kibeck Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 258.

¹⁵²Interview with Woongil Yim on the same day.

The theory of *innaechun* clarified the relationship between Heaven and humanity. *Firstly*, "Humanity is Heaven" did not mean that the people could be identified with Heaven, the Supreme Being. It was just the reverse: Heaven was identified with the people.¹⁵³ In other words, the dignity of humanity was the same as the dignity of Heaven though humanity was never qualitatively the same as Heaven. It implied that the character of Heaven could be manifested only through humanity, that is to say, "Humanity is the best expression of Heaven."¹⁵⁴

Secondly, "humanity is Heaven" was crucial in order to understand the reality of the *minjung*. The *minjung* were suffering beings in this world. Therefore, on the one hand, they were eschatologically waiting for the righteousness of Heaven which would judge the evil of the present world. On the other hand, they learnt by their experience the way to celebrate the immanence of Heaven in real lives. It was because the *minjung* could contact Heaven that they could continue their own community life for such a long time. "Jaewoo Choi, the founder of *Donghak* Religion, also found Heaven in the midst of *minjung*'s sufferings. [He saw that]

¹⁵³From the point that Heaven cannot be monopolized by a particular person, "Humanity is Heaven" indicates "Community is Heaven."

¹⁵⁴Charles A. Clark, *Religion of Old Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society in Korea, 1961), p. 160.

Heaven was screaming within the *han*-ridden *minjung*."¹⁵⁵ In this respect, "Humanity is Heaven" meant "The *minjung* are Heaven."

Lastly, "humanity is Heaven" connoted "the egalitarian society is Heaven." Neither unequal social status nor an "ism" which allowed oppression by the powerful could be justified when "humanity is Heaven." Rather, the *minjung* as Heaven were required to serve other people as Heaven (事人如天).¹⁵⁶ Therefore the egalitarianism of *innaechun* had a revolutionary character which promoted "social sanctification of humanity."¹⁵⁷ If humanity was Heaven, "all human beings are socially equal. There should be no higher and lower among all humanity. Social inequality by human power is a violation of the will of Heaven."¹⁵⁸ This idea enabled the *minjung* not only to be conscious of contradictions in the existing society but also to fight for a new society in order to enlighten "the Heavenly Way."

¹⁵⁵Donghwan Moon, "Han - Turning Point of Life" in *The Story of Han*, ed. Kwangsun Suh (Seoul: Bori Press, 1990), pp. 354.

¹⁵⁶Cf. "The Teaching of Hewol [the second patriarch of Donghak Religion]" in *Chundokyo Bible* (Seoul: The General Assembly of Chundokyo, 1992), p. 278.

¹⁵⁷Nobin Yoon, "The Meaning of Donghak in World Thoughts" in *The Donghak Thought and Donghak Religion*, ed. Hyunhee Lee (Seoul: Chunga Press, 1984), p. 145.

¹⁵⁸The Complication Committee of the Chundokyo History, ed., *One Hundred Years History of Chundokyo* (Seoul: Mire-moonhwa-sa, 1981), p. 120.

The minjung's meal tradition contained the above essentials of *innaechun*. It is because the minjung, through the cultivation and celebration of rice, had already (i) experienced the descent of Heaven in the present world, (ii) recognised themselves as the subjects of the new world, and (iii) dreamed of an egalitarian society. In this respect, "the basic principle of *Donghak* Religion, humanity is Heaven, can be understood as an interpretation of the minjung's meal experiences."¹⁵⁹

The declaration that "Humanity is Heaven," was developed by theories of *si-chun-joo* (侍天主: Receiving of the Lord of Heaven), *yang-chun-joo* (養天主: Nurture of the Lord of Heaven), and *che-chun-joo* (體天主: Practice of the Lord of Heaven). All these theories were explained through the minjung's understanding of rice.

The Receiving of the Lord of Heaven: The starting point of *innaechun* is "to receive the most holy spirit (infinite energy) of Heaven in the body."¹⁶⁰ By receiving of Heaven, the minjung are: (i) to recognise the secret of eternal life, (ii) to receive all humanity with one community consciousness, and (iii) to sacrifice themselves to others.¹⁶¹ Therefore those who receive Heaven in their

¹⁵⁹Interview with Woongil Yim on the same day.

¹⁶⁰"The Lesson of *Donghak* Doctrine" (titled *Dongkyung Daejeon*) in *Chundokyo Bible*, p. 69.

¹⁶¹"The Teaching of Hewol" in *Chundokyo Bible*, p. 355.

bodies can communicate with each other through the spirit of Heaven and devote themselves in order to establish an egalitarian society according to the will of Heaven.¹⁶² When the minjung receive Heaven, they overcome the temptation of materialism as well as a dualistic idea which divides Heaven and humanity.

When the minjung do not receive Heaven, they cannot but live either a Heaven-centred life or a matter-centred life. The former compels the minjung only to serve Heaven as a servant of Heaven. [Rather it is silent about oppression by the powerful as a matter of the world.] The latter subordinates the minjung to matter.¹⁶³

The minjung are the subjects of a new history. A new creation of history and the development of a society depends upon neither Heaven nor matter alone, but rather upon the minjung who dedicate the spirit of Heaven.¹⁶⁴

The minjung receive Heaven through the eating of rice. It is produced by the grace of Heaven and is granted as the will of Heaven. "Heaven creates rice and resides in rice."¹⁶⁵ "When [the minjung] eat rice, Heaven eats Heaven

¹⁶²Byungduck You, *Donghak: Chundokyo* (Seoul: siin-sa, 1987), pp. 29-30.

¹⁶³Ikjae Oh, *Introduction to Chundokyo* (Seoul: The General Assembly of Chundokyo Press, 1991), p. 45.

¹⁶⁴Changhwa Hong, *The Doctrine and Thought of Chundokyo*, p. 57.

¹⁶⁵"The Teaching of Hewol" in *Chundokyo Bible*, p. 418.

(以天食天). It is the very act to receive Heaven."¹⁶⁶

Heaven is to be received through right celebration of rice. Those who want to maintain the *status quo* or try to justify the existing social order are not allowed to receive Heaven. "New rice should not be mixed with old rice or be served in a chipped or cracked rice bowl"¹⁶⁷ The minjung, who eat rice as a banquet for the new society in the eschatological hope, have the privilege to receive Heaven through rice.

The Nurture of the Lord of Heaven: To receive Heaven in the body does not mean "to imprison Heaven but to bring up Heaven"¹⁶⁸ because Heaven is not a concept but a living One. Therefore "only those who can nurture Heaven, strictly speaking, can receive Heaven."¹⁶⁹

Heaven is nurtured through rice. To eat rice not only means "Heaven eats Heaven" but also "Heaven nurtures Heaven."¹⁷⁰ In order to bring up Heaven, the minjung (Heaven) should eat rice (Heaven) in a Heavenly Way.

Heaven cannot exist without humanity and humanity cannot exist apart from Heaven. ... Heaven depends on Humanity and Humanity depends on rice (天依人人依食). Therefore all truth of the universe is contained in a

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 364-365.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.

¹⁶⁸Nobin Yoon, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁶⁹"The Teaching of Hewol," p. 367.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

bowl of rice (萬事知食一碗).¹⁷¹

The friction between the powerful and the minjung fundamentally lies in the injustice of rice. The powerful exploit rice from the minjung which is a violation of the Heavenly Way. The powerful cannot understand the true meaning that "all truth of the universe is contained in a bowl of rice." But the minjung, who are deprived of rice can easily recognise its deepest meaning because rice is life for them.

To share rice together, not to monopolise it, is essential to the practice of *yangchunjoo*.¹⁷² As all humanity possess Heaven together, rice should be shared together for a new society. The living Heaven is most basically nurtured through the every day meal. "A network of rice is a fundamental step but the most profound way to nurture Heaven."¹⁷³ The *Donghak* believers, in fact, separately gathered a spoonful of rice from every meal with a sincere prayer for the independence of the nation. "It became later one of the most important foundation stones of the March First Independence Movement under the rule of Japanese

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁷²Interview with Woongil Yim on the same day.

¹⁷³Dialogue with Jiha Kim, a poet and philosopher, 3 March 1992.

imperialism."¹⁷⁴

The Practice of the Lord of Heaven: Heaven is "a labouring One" rather than just a living One.¹⁷⁵ Heaven works through the minjung (Heaven). When "Heaven eats Heaven (rice)," the minjung not just receive and nurture Heaven but are called to participate in the movement of Heaven. In this respect, "the practice of Heaven" is *imperative* while "the receiving of Heaven" and "the nurture of Heaven" are *indicative*. "Humanity is Heaven" is completed in *the heavenly kingdom on earth* (地上天國) where "all humanity should be treated as Heaven"¹⁷⁶ through the ethical practice of Heaven.

If the minjung receive and nurture Heaven in this world and they envision a new society in it, the heavenly kingdom on earth is not established by supernatural power but by the active struggle of the minjung themselves in this world.

The minjung are deprived of both Heaven and rice -- rice through Heaven by false gods and Heaven through rice

¹⁷⁴The General Assembly of Chundokyo, *Guideline of Chundokyo* (Seoul: The General Assembly of Chundokyo Press, 1990), p. 29.

¹⁷⁵As "Heaven is labouring [through rice]," Hewol said, "humanity must work as long as [he or she] eats rice which is granted by Heaven." Quoted in Changhwa Hong, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶The General Assembly of Chundokyo, *Chundokyo: Religion of Heavenly Way* (Seoul: [1992]), p. 14.

by the powerful. The practice of Heaven is the revolutionary process whereby they regain their bereaved Heaven and rice. Therefore it concerns both the religious and the political dimensions of life. The kingdom of Heaven on earth begins with the turning of an offering table around towards the minjung (向我設位) which had previously faced towards false god for a long time (向壁設位).

Hewol asked, "Which is right to put an offering table towards a wall or towards human beings?" Byunghee Son replied, "Towards human beings ... is right." Hewol said, "You are right! The offering table should be faced towards [living] human beings." ... "[By turning the table around] you can receive Heaven in your body."¹⁷⁷

"To change the location of a rice bowl" made the minjung realise that the new world was not entrusted to false god or the ruling power but to those who would participate in "the labour of Heaven" here and now as the subjects of "the world of peace and social justice."¹⁷⁸ The religious understanding of rice was sublimated to the social dimension. "The *Donghak* Revolution was the very realisation of the practice of Heaven."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷"The Teaching of Hewol," pp. 344. 346.

¹⁷⁸The General Assembly of Chundokyo, *Chundokyo: Religion of Heavenly Way*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁹Interview with Woongil Yim on the same day.

The basic doctrines of the *Donghak* Thought were derived from the real experience of the minjung, particularly from their experience of rice. Through rice granted by Heaven, the minjung were conscious not only of the true meaning of rice to the world, but also of their responsibility in history. With this understanding of rice,¹⁸⁰ a poet was able to sing:

Rice is Heaven.

Rice cannot be made alone.

Rice is to be shared.

Rice is Heaven.

Everyone sees

The same stars in the sky.

It is natural that

Everyone shares the same rice.

Rice is Heaven

When we eat,

Heaven comes in and

Dwells in us.

Rice is Heaven.

Oh, rice should be shared

By all of us.

¹⁸⁰Interview with Jiha Kim, a poet and philosopher, 3 March 1992.

As rice was celebrated for the world of great solidarity, i.e. for one big family, the minjung's tradition of rice provided them with the liberating ethics to participate in the revolution for *the heavenly kingdom on earth*.

VI. THE CHARACTER OF THE TABLE COMMUNITY MOVEMENT

Rice, which symbolised food as such, played a crucial role in the social, religious, and cultural life ever since the minjung engaged in rice cultivation. Because rice cultivation was so much dependent on natural conditions, from ancient times, an agricultural rite to Heaven became the most important event on the one hand and communal labour among the community was indispensable on the other hand. Therefore rice, the produce by the cooperative work of Heaven and human beings, was always recognised in relation to both the will of Heaven and the communal lives of the minjung.

The significance of rice made it possible for the minjung to preserve their own particular community, the so-called *doore* community, beyond administrative division. Its characteristics were: *First*, through this community the minjung cultivated and celebrated rice together. No one was isolated from rice as long as he or she belonged to the community. Not only were the paddies of the socially weak

cultivated gratuitously by the community but also the unity of the community was consolidated through a common festivity. *Second*, the community struggled to establish a more equal society. There was no social distinction among the community. Moreover the community partly challenged against the prevailing social system. The *doore changwon* system and the Day of Servant made people of the lowest class experience the joy of liberation in the name of the *doore* community. *Third*, it gave the minjung the consciousness of subjectivity in the world. Through the process of rice production, with the help of Heaven, the minjung realised that they were not the objects of the ruling power but the people of Heaven: the fourth century slogan, "The peasants are the great foundation under heaven" is still promoted today in the minjung's mind, in spite of the fact that the structure of the modern Korean economy is strangling the farming community. This consciousness made the minjung transcend the prevailing socio-political structure.

Rice was understood as a gift from Heaven. It contained the will of Heaven. Often rice was identified with Heaven. Therefore rice had to be shared with one another: it should not be monopolised by just a few people. The common sharing of rice was the point of departure for the realisation of the will of Heaven, i.e. for the building of a new society.

For the minjung, a meal basically meant the common meal. They shared most of their meals in and through the community, especially during the farming season. They also celebrated the common meal at the community feast and ritual, at the ritual service of ancestors, and on other special occasions. On festive days, they celebrated with the same food together as a sign of becoming a new family. The minjung thought more of the food-relationship than blood-relationship in their communal life.

The significance of their meal experience: *First*, the common meal linked not only Heaven to the minjung but also the minjung to their community. It was a sign of a ratification that the will of Heaven was communicated to the minjung. *Second*, the minjung experienced that the will of Heaven was materialised in their midst. The sharing of rice in the presence of Heaven enabled them to realise that in this world there could be another world.¹⁸¹ *Third*, the common meal enabled the minjung to taste a new society: the scene of the common meal reflected their desire for it; and they were provided with a more concrete socio-political

¹⁸¹Cf. "Festivity is never an end in itself. It expresses our joy *about* something. It celebrates something that has a place in human history, past or future. But celebration is more than a mere affirmation of history. It also provides the occasion for a brief recess from history-making. ... It reminds us that we are fully within history but that history also is within something else." H. Cox, *The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), p. 46.

imagination for it. *Fourth*, the common sharing of rice gave the minjung a basic principle for their economics and politics. It suggested strong ethical implications. *Lastly*, the common meal played a role not only to overcome the existing value structure but also to unite them into a new family for a new society.

The table community movement of the minjung progressed on the basis of the above meal experiences. The community they envisioned was "the core of the history for which the suffering people, the poor and the oppressed, struggled."¹⁸² The table community movement would be carried out by those who could take rice as Heaven, that is to say, those who could *receive, nurture, and practice* the will of Heaven through rice. This practical theory was formed from the minjung's understanding of rice and that: "All truth of the universe is contained in a bowl of rice."

The goal of the table community movement was to establish "the world of great solidarity" which was later expressed by *Donghak* Religion as "the heavenly kingdom on the earth." In this respect, the table community movement was able to be a political movement rather than just a religious one. The heavenly kingdom on earth was explained as follows:

When the heavenly kingdom on the earth arrives all mankind shall enjoy immortality. It means neither

¹⁸²Yongbock Kim, *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

immortality of the body nor immortality of the spirit. Rather the heavenly kingdom on earth indicates the society where all human lives are organically intercommunicated. In the heavenly kingdom on earth, the true self called the organic society is immortal. ... There is no ruling power nor social discrimination in the new society, but benevolent administration.¹⁸³

In order to establish the new society, the minjung, above all, relied upon the intervention of Heaven because they believed that the absurdity of the present world was caused by the power of evil spirits: wicked government officers were usually described as the embodiment of those evil spirits.¹⁸⁴ Therefore the function of their culture was particularly emphasised in their exorcising of evil spirits.

Song of Chuyong of the ancient Shilla dynasty, for instance, showed the basic attitude of the minjung to the evil power of the world. The background of the song was: When Chuyong returned one day to his house late at night, he saw that his wife was being raped by an evil spirit. He was very furious, but, instead of fighting the evil spirit directly, he started singing and dancing to Heaven.

After playing in the bright moon light;

¹⁸³Donhwa Lee, *Lecture on the Doctrine of Suwoon* (Seoul: The General Assembly of Chundokyo Press, 1968), p. 106.

¹⁸⁴Yolkyu Kim, "Han of the people and Han of Heaven" in *The Story of Han*, ed. Kwangsun Suh (Seoul: Bori Press, 1990), 204.

Returning home and [I] found four legs in the bed.
 Two of them are mine; but whose the other two?
 Oh, I have lost mine; How can I accuse?

The evil spirit, greatly moved by the Chuyong's song and dance, knelt down at last before him and begged his forgiveness.

The above attitude is more clearly disclosed in the dialectical relationship between *han* and *dan*. Not only the Chinese but also the Koreans and Japanese use the word *han* in common. But, unlike the Chinese and Japanese, Koreans do not have a concrete object of their *han*.¹⁸⁵ This understanding of *han* determines the character of *dan*: the way to resolve the *han*. The basic practice of *dan* is, for the *minjung*, to entrust their *han* to Heaven and then wait for the judgement of Heaven.

Two characteristics of the *dan*: *Firstly*, the transcendence of Heaven into the world made it possible for the *minjung* to transcend not only their oppressor but also the *minjung* themselves. Through this transcendental experience, the *minjung* as "the collective souls" cut the

¹⁸⁵Soontae Moon, "What is *han*?" in *The Story of Han*, ed. Kwangsun Suh (Seoul: Bori Press, 1990), p. 146.

The Chinese and Japanese do not differentiate *han* and *won* (怨). In fact, they hardly use the word *han*, but rather *won* which has a clear object against the feeling of hatred. However, Koreans, especially the *minjung*, distinguish *han* from *won*. They rarely use the word *won* alone; when they have an object of their resentment, they use both of them together, *wonhan* (怨恨), but not frequently.

vicious cycle of revenge felt with love and forgiveness. The minjung's understand of *dan* revealed the social dimension of love and forgiveness. *Secondly*, the experience of Heaven made the minjung realise that they no longer belonged to the society as it was, but to the society as it ought to be. "The strongest political struggle of the minjung was to refuse compulsory labour under the evil political structure and to practice the meaning of rice among themselves."¹⁸⁶ In this respect, the most profound meaning of *dan* lay in "passive positiveness."¹⁸⁷ (The basic relationship of *han* and *dan* is interpreted through food: the minjung understood that "*han* is generated from an empty stomach and *dan* is no more than the providing of food for the stomach.")

As long as the table community movement of the minjung aimed at the liberation of the minjung and the establishment of the new society in history, the relationship between the table community movement and the existing political power had to be clarified. Historically the minjung never refused the justification of the existence of the political structure itself. Nevertheless the minjung dreamed of a society where there would be no governing by the ruling power. The fact that the minjung

¹⁸⁶Interview with Jiha Kim on the same day.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*; Also Jiha Kim, *Rice* (Wekwan: Bundo Press, 1984), p. 12.

interpreted their revolution "not as a rebellion against the political system itself but as the suppression of the rebellion [the violation of the will of Heaven] by the powerful,"¹⁸⁸ signified that they limited the role of politics to a political service for the realisation of the will of Heaven. In this sense, the process of the table community movement could be identified with the expansion of the "rice network" in the world so that the minjung's political participation might have a restraining influence on political decisions.

¹⁸⁸Kwang Cho, "Study on the Consciousness for the Protection of the Minjung's Rights of Yakyong Chung" in *Essays on Minjung*, ed. KTSI (Seoul: KTSI), pp. 305-306.

PART THREE

THE KOREAN CHURCH AND THE TABLE COMMUNITY

The purpose of Part Three is (i) to examine how the Korean church has understood the biblical meal tradition and the minjung's meal tradition in its celebration of the Lord's Supper and (ii) to look at to what extent the church's experience of the Lord's Supper has affected both the building of the Christian community and the transformation of the society to which it belongs.

Part Three consists of three chapters. The first chapter as an introductory part gives a socio-historical survey of the Korean church in general (section one) and then of the relationship between the Korean church and the Lord's Supper (section two). This prior knowledge should be helpful to comprehend the particular situation of the Korean church today in relation to the Lord's Supper, i.e. the church where the importance of the Lord's Supper has rarely been underlined.

The main body of Part Three is the second chapter, in which empirical materials regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church are dealt with. Unlike major churches, the Lord's Supper plays an important role in the life and work of the minjung church. After a brief

introduction of the minjung church as the extension of Jesus' table community (section one), two meal practices of "the common meal" which has been mainly transmitted from the Korean people's own meal tradition (section two) and "the eucharist" which has been inherited from the Church (section three) are looked at. Then section four studies how the two different meal traditions are complementarily related in the specific situation of the minjung church.

The last chapter as a concluding part suggests several new possibilities for the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is concerned about how its experience of the minjung church could affect major churches on the one hand (the renewal of the church); and about how the socio-ethical implication of the Lord's Supper could be related to contemporary social issues on the other hand (the transformation of society).

I. THE LOCUS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE KOREAN CHURCH

1. The Korean Church and Its Quantitative Growth

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Korean church is its rapid growth which is unprecedented in world church history. As far as the history of Christian mission in Asia is concerned, the Korean church is one of

the youngest among Asian churches: the Roman Catholic mission commenced in 1784;¹ and one hundred years later the Protestant mission was inaugurated by Horace N. Allen in 1884. The following chart shows how missionary work in Korea started relatively late in comparison with others.²

COUNTRY	R.C.	Prot.	COUNTRY	R.C.	Prot.
Mongolia	1246	1817	Philippines	1546	1899
India	1291	1706	Japan	1549	1859
China	1294	1807	Indochina	1658	1911
Indonesia	1490	1822	Thailand	1662	1828
Sri Lanka	1544	1642	Manchuria	1682	1868
Malaysia	1546	1813	Burma	1692	1807

¹Unlike other Asian countries, the earliest Catholic mission in Korea was carried out not by foreign missionaries but by Koreans themselves. It is in 1784 that a Korean named Sunghoon Lee was first baptised in Peking, China and then the first Catholic community was established in Seoul, Korea.

However, before 1784, several kinds of books regarding the Catholic principles had already been studied as "practical philosophy" and the teachings were practiced by a considerable number of people. When the first foreign missionary came to Korea in 1794, there were more than four thousand believers, mainly the lower classes, in spite of severe persecution. Hongyul You, *A History of the Korean Catholic Church*, 2 vols. (Seoul: Catholic Press, 1989), 1: 76, 83, 107-111.

²In the cases of Indochina and the Philippines, their Protestant missions began later than that of Korea. However their Catholic missions began far earlier than that of Korea. Taegboo Chun, *The History of Korean Church Development* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society in Korea, 1986), p. 12.

Notwithstanding its short mission history, the Korean church has grown remarkably in number. According to generally accepted statistics, the number of Christians had almost doubled every 10 years between 1950 and 1970: about 600,000 in 1950, 1,140,000 in 1960, and 2,200,000 in 1970. However the number in 1980 was 7,180,627 and in 1990 was estimated to have reached about 12,000,000:³ the number of Christians increased by nearly 5,000,000 during the 1970s and 1980s. This phenomenon implies that Christianity has a potentiality to influence power not only for the change of some particular locality but also that of the nation.⁴ There are, of course, highly complex socio-religious factors affecting the explosive church growth, especially that

³The number of the Protestants in 1992 was 12,571,062 (more than 25% of the whole population). Quoted in Kwangsun Suh, *New Consciousness of Korean Christianity* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society in Korea, 1985), p.25; Hyukyul Kwon, "11.6% of Believers in 0.06% of Churches" in *The Saenoori Sinmoon* [newspaper]. 20 February 1993; "The Church's Expenditure for Social Service: 6.2% of Its Budget" in *The Hankyoreh Sinmoon* [newspaper]. 4 July 1993.

According to *1992 Britannia Book of the Year* (p. 636), the number of Christians in 1987 was 43.6% (40.7% Protestant and 2.9% Roman Catholic) among the 43,520,000 population (in 1990). It seems that the number of Protestants was much overestimated while that of Catholics was underestimated. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the increase of church growth has continued throughout the 1980s.

⁴The estimated numbers of Protestant pastors and Catholic priests in 1982 were 33,581 (23,346 local congregations) and 11,950 (2,353 local congregations) while those of Buddhist monks and temples were 20,755 and 7,253 respectively. Kwangsun Suh, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. For the purpose of this dissertation, however, several phenomena, rather than the causes of growth, are to be focused on.

The history of the Korean Protestant church can be divided into four stages: (i) propagated by foreign missionaries (1884-1910); (ii) suffering under the Japanese persecution (1910-1945); (iii) the aftereffects of Japanese occupation and the Korean War (1945 to the middle of 1960s); and (iv) the affirmation and establishment of its identity (after the middle of 1960s).

Two contradictory things are to be noticed in relation to the characteristics of the church before and after 1945. Before 1945, the church had by and large penetrated into the common people and established itself among them: from the earliest time of its mission, as agreed by most Korean church historians, the church's concern about the life of the poor and oppressed had formed one of the most remarkable traditions of the Korean church.⁵ This means that the church had not stood for those of the upper social stratum, i.e. those who had vested rights in society.

After 1945, however, most churches have taken an extreme anti-communist line in a society founded on the

⁵The concrete sign of the church's "proletarianisation" was: (i) its constituent members were mainly composed of the people from a lower social stratum; and (ii) its language was that of those people. Yongbock Kim, *The Historical Development of Korean Christian Thought* (Seoul: Christian Centre for Asian Studies, 1991), pp. 4-5, 68-77.

American type of capitalism. This tendency resulted in the amnesia of the above mentioned earlier tradition and accordingly the church became more concerned with individual salvation rather than with its concrete socio-historical tasks. "The church's inclining attitude towards anti-communism and individualism has provided Korean Christians with negative consciousness as well as escapist consciousness."⁶

Since the middle of the 1960s, the military government had concentrated its power tenaciously upon the industrialisation of the nation. (After a military coup in 1961, the government, in order to justify its power, had adopted anti-communism as a fixed line of national policy and infused strong anti-communist sentiment into the minds of citizens. On the other hand, the government had presented a bright blueprint for a high level of economic growth.) Most burdens caused by that policy had been shouldered on the socially weak, especially the laborers and farmers; consequently their basic human rights were harshly violated. It cannot be denied that the church as a whole, between the economic development of the nation and the victimisation of the powerless, had cooperated with the government and its policy of high economic growth, owing to its ecclesiastical interests, i.e. the increasing of

⁶Interview with Hyungki Kim, pastor of Taepyung Church in Seoul, 12 February 1992.

congregations. The church had justified, directly and indirectly, the government policy rather than standing up for the oppressed; and the government, in reward for this, had positively supported the church in its activities for the expansion of religious influence.

Any interpretations of church growth cannot but be inevitably partial. Nevertheless, one generally accepted view is that church growth and socio-political reality have been intimately related to each other. That is to say, political corruption and social instability, along with the oppressiveness of a capitalistic economic system, have promoted the gathering of the middle and high classes into the church in order that they could clear their consciences for their unjust activities on the one hand and in order that they maintain their vested rights in an unstable political situation on the other hand: "the church has usually been regarded as a necessary medium to take an advantage of various social connections afforded to them by the communicants."⁷

The same socio-political reality drove the poor too into the church. Industrialisation has caused a great number of rural people to give up farming. They, against their will, left their hometowns to take up a new life in urban areas; as a result, sizable poor settlements came

⁷Hyukyul Kwon, *Op. cit.*

into being on the outskirts of most large cities. The poor faced crises of losing a previous identity and community conscienceness in their new life situations. These phenomena made the urban poor not only "identity seekers" or "community seekers"⁸ but also made them trust God as the One who would provide them with material blessings. All sorts of people are intermixed in most churches. One common denominator is: their faith life is generally related to individual life affairs and material blessings. Korean Christianity, in its real sense, can be called shamanised Christianity, or Christianised shamanism, as one Korean theologian pointed out:⁹

[Most Korean churches are a kind of pentecostal church and only emphasise the power of the Holy Spirit.] The practice, theology, and structure of spirit possession is the same in the *mudang* [shaman] religion and Korean Christianity. ... Korean Protestantism has almost been reduced to a Christianised *mudang* religion. That is, the form and language of the worship service are Christian, but the content and structure of what Korean Christians adhere to are basically the *mudang* religion.

Particular socio-political situations have made it possible for a society to produce a kind of escapist

⁸Wansang Han, "A sociological Study on the Rapid Church Growth" in *A Study on the Pentecostal Movement in Korea*, ed. Korea Christian Academy (Seoul: Dehwa Press, 1982), pp. 168-182.

⁹David Kwangsun Suh, *The Korean Minjung in Christ* (Hong Kong: CCA, 1991), p. 116.

community which is even asocial and apolitical. It cannot easily be denied that most churches, no matter how big or small they are, emphasise the coming of the last day: inconsistently, not in terms of the eschatological way of ethical living but in terms of individual and material blessings.¹⁰ Sometimes a new community has emerged in the form of a gigantic church, the so-called "mammoth church."¹¹ (According to *The Christian World* [February 1993], among the world's fifty biggest churches, twenty-three are Korean churches including the largest congregation, Yoido Full Gospel Church, which has more than six hundred thousand members.)¹²

It is true that the Korean Church as a whole has many negative aspects, particularly in terms of its social

¹⁰94.4% of pastors and 89.1% of laymen believe that the last day is at hand; and 74.6% of pastors and 66.9% of the laity link the meaning of Christian salvation to individual blessings in this world and then a heavenly life after death. Quoted in Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development (CISJD), *General Report of the One Hundred Years of the Korean Church* (Seoul: CISJD, 1982), pp. 60-61.

The statistics were gathered from 787 pastors of 16 denominations and 1,991 laymen of 10 denominations between 20 August 1980 and 4 November 1980 by the same institute.

¹¹"As a mammoth could not move properly and after all became extinct because of its imposing bulk, urban churches, once they become too big, cannot help losing their vitality because their primary concern becomes, willingly or unwillingly, the maintaining of existing organisations." Interview with Yehyun Woo, pastor of Dasom Church in Osan, 22 January 1992.

¹²Hyukyu1 Kwon, *Op. cit.*

concern and participation.¹³ The ethical practice of most Korean Christians has been, to one degree or another, centred within the boundary of individual level. This tendency is indirectly testified by the following chart indicating attitudes to drinking and smoking which have been recognised as a determining criteria of a Christian's proper faith life:¹⁴

unit:%	smoking is immoral			drinking is immoral		
	yes	no	no reply	yes	no	no reply
pastor	89.7	8.4	1.9	90.8	7.5	1.7
laity	80.9	17.0	2.1	84.6	13.8	1.6

However, it is also true that the present reality of the Korean church cannot be accurately defined in disregard of those major churches: without their participation in a Christian social movement, the Korean church could not support effectively a social service in its society. More positively speaking, it is envisaged: once the enthusiasm of those churches in their individual faith life is only linked to concrete social issues, the Korean church could exert far-reaching influence on the change of society more

¹³Cf. "The gospel is the good news of the kingdom, not a word in the ear of the individual concerning his private morals and personal destiny." D.B. Forrester, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare* (London: Epworth Press, 1985), p. 97.

¹⁴Quoted in the same report by the CISJD, p. 74.

than any other social group and organisation.¹⁵ The rest of Part Three is to suggest how the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper could stimulate and affect the transformation of an existing Christian community into an alternative community which could carry out socio-historical responsibility.

A three-fold Christian responsibility is involved. First, there is the task of sustaining, renewing, clarifying, revising, and commending a Christian social vision ... Secondly, there is the tricky but unavoidable responsibility for relating the vision to current policy options ... Thirdly, the church has always had a concern for influencing people's attitudes and values, for encouraging the endeavour to "bring every thought into captivity of Christ."¹⁶

2. A Changing Attitude to the Lord's Supper

Historically and traditionally, "the Korean Protestant church has not emphasised the importance of the eucharistic celebration in worship."¹⁷ Particularly in its early

¹⁵Notwithstanding all criticism, the positive faith life of Korean Christians may well be worth recognising. According to the same report (pp. 66-67), 92.9% of pastors and 92.5% of laity think that home worship is indispensable in Christian family life; and 83.4% of pastors and 82.8% of laity understand that a devoted Christian should attend early morning prayer meeting. In fact, 96.5% of laymen participate in common worship at least once a week (more than 4 times: 43.1%; 2 or 3 times: 41.7%; once: 11.7%).

¹⁶D.B. Forrester, *Op. cit.*, p. x.

¹⁷Interview with Kyungbae Min, Korean church historian, 17 February 1992.

mission era, for some time foreign missionaries had not allowed Koreans Protestants to participate in the eucharist: "this was perhaps because of the missionary understanding about Korean converts' lack of religious imagination."¹⁸

[The Rev.] Underwood landed in Inchon in April, 1885, but he could not imagine celebrating the eucharist with Korean believers. It was on 11 July 1886 that the first eucharist was secretly celebrated among the missionaries. In July and November of 1887, Semoonan Church and Jeongdong Church were pioneered: that is, Korean churches, which did not know the eucharist, were established. It was on 27 April 1889 that the first Korean could participate in the eucharist not in Korea but in China, four years after the gospel had been proclaimed in Korea. Long afterwards, the first official eucharist could be celebrated in Pyongyang on 8 January 1894, eight years after the Korean Bible had been published [i.e. eighteen years after the first Korean was baptised].¹⁹

The worship of the Korean church has always been language-oriented. The sermon has been so much emphasised that it is often said that the pastor's sermon has been the only tool which has made it possible for the Korean church to grow quickly; and the sermon is still the only tool

¹⁸M. Thurian, ed., *Churches Respond to BEM*, vol. 6, p. 137 (Quoted in the response of the Theology Committee of the National Council of Churches in Korea).

¹⁹Kyungbae Min, "Church Patterns in Early Stage" in *Christian Thought* (March 1965): 85.

It is usually known that "there was almost a 25-year gap between the first baptism and the first [common] administration of eucharist." M. Thurian, *Op. cit.*

which sustains the Korean church today.²⁰ Accordingly, the balance between the Word and Sacrament has not been preserved from the beginning. As to the frequency of the eucharist, it is celebrated in most churches only twice, at the most three or four times, a year: traditionally the Korean church has followed Zwingli's memorialism.²¹ As a result, many churches still hold on to an anti-sacramental standpoint. The response of the National Council of Churches in Korean to the BEM statement asserts:²²

In the light of these theological reflections, baptism would be interpreted as a response to the call of God and as a participation in the work of God for liberation of the world. And the meaning of eucharist would become clearer as an act of celebration in the process of such participation in God's work in the world. The ministry of the whole people of God will be found in this life of the worshipping community. Therefore, even without liturgies for baptism or eucharist, as we learn from the people in the Salvation Army, the life and work in the Christian ministry will be regarded as the important ingredient of participating in the liturgical life of the Christian communities.

However, even with the infrequency and negligence of the eucharistic celebration in public worship, one cannot draw a hasty conclusion that the Korean church has had

²⁰It is not difficult to see that Korean Christians often identify "to worship" with "to hear a sermon."

²¹Changbok Chung, *Introduction of Liturgiology* (Seoul: Chongro Book Center, 1985), pp. 153-154.

²²M. Thurian, *Op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

nothing to do with eucharistic interests at all. It is because the church, both the Roman Catholic and Protestant, had led a eucharistic life in the early days of its mission, though not in the light of the biblical eucharistic tradition but in the light of the ethical teaching of the Bible along with its own transmitted meal tradition.

As stated before, a Catholic community was established in 1784 by Koreans themselves. "One notable characteristic of that community was that it was a community of eucharistic practice."²³ Its characteristic was: *First*, it was above all a community of sharing of food together. "Marvelously enough, there was no one starved to death within that community even during the time of famine."²⁴ Moreover, the believers fed and even adopted abandoned children.²⁵ *Secondly*, it was an egalitarian community.

²³Interview with Ik Chang, priest of Naesoodong Cathedral in Seoul, 16 January 1992.

²⁴Interview as above.

This tradition seems to have been continued. Ch. Dallet witnessed the sharing of food among the community members in the situation of death from hunger: "One clear thing is -- whether owing to the special protection of God or owing to the spirit of mutual love amongst believers -- that the number of believers who starved to death is much less than those who worshiped idols." Quoted in *The "One Heart-One Body" Movement* [pamphlet, 1991] by Headquarter of the "one heart-one body" movement, p. 16.

²⁵During the famine, many children were abandoned because of poverty. Kwang Cho, *Two Hundred Years of Korean Catholic* (Seoul: Hedbid Press, 1989), p. 48.

Though it came into being within a strict class society, the community put an end to social barriers: though people in the upper class first accepted the gospel, soon the community expanded to other parts of the nation and people of all classes gathered regularly at fixed times and places for common worship.²⁶ *Thirdly*, the community cherished eschatological expectation for a new society. It is well known that the community suffered under severe persecution by the then government which espoused Confucianism as its religious ideology.²⁷ The persecution made believers realise that religion and politics, i.e. the church and society, were not separable in their faith life: they recognised by experience that religious persecution and political persecution befell them as one and the same calamity; likewise a religious vision and a social vision were also envisaged in terms of the same future and thus expressed by the same language.

²⁶Kwang Cho, *Ibid.*, pp. 30-34.

Particularly the community endeavoured to increase the rights of women. It not only allowed a widow to remarry but also strongly prohibited the believers following polygamic customs. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

As a token of equality among the believers, from the beginning the community used *Hangeol*, the language of the lower class people. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

²⁷The main reason of persecution was the believers' refusal of ancestral rites. But behind this external reason, there was a socio-political reason: a conflict between the class system of Confucianism and the egalitarianism of Christianity, i.e. between old and new social orders. Wonsoon Lee, *A History of Korean Catholic Church* (Seoul: Tamgoo-dang, 1990), p. 30.

The persecution lasted for almost one hundred years, until 1882. Unfortunately, after the persecution the missionary work was however in a stalemate. As a result, "there was little historical linkage between the Catholic church and the following Protestant church."²⁸

The early Korean Protestants had established and maintained their own table community without any particular eucharistic theology and experience. After worship, mainly after Sunday service, however, they had participated in the common meal together. (The sharing of food after some event has been one of the most widespread social customs among the Koreans. For example, even when a wedding is celebrated at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, both the families concerned usually hold a banquet for all participants as a part of the wedding.) "It is reported that the believers, those of the upper class and lower class together, shared the common meal as a symbolic act of community building in the Semoonan church, known as the first Korean Protestant church, after worship every Sunday."²⁹

The common meal was celebrated in the form of the then dietary practice; but its meaning was far more significant

²⁸Kyungbae Min, *A History of Korean Church* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society in Korea, 1983), p. 115.

²⁹Interview with Sungwon Park, pastor of Pusanjin church in Pusan, 7 October 1991.

than the mere eating together. The collective excitement in the common meal among people of all classes provided the believers of those days with a revolutionary socio-ethical implication: the scene of the common meal demonstrated that there was no social distinction within the community. *The Dongnib Sinmoon* [the Independence Newspaper] mentioned the egalitarianism of Christian life in its editorial on 2nd September 1896:

When all the people of the nation believe in Jesus and then abolish social barriers and love and help one another as if all are brothers and sisters, right and noble customs and laws could be formulated. It is because all are equal before God: there is no distinction between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant.³⁰

The historical reality of the spontaneous table community suggests to the church that "the table community established by the early Korean Christians can be the archetype of the Korean church as it ought to be."³¹ *Theologically*, the meal experience of the early Korean Christians could provide the church with a way to lay its foundation of eucharistic theology in the particular context of Korean society. *Practically*, their meal experiences could help the church not only to restore its original identity as an eschatological community for the

³⁰Quoted in Yongbock Kim, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

³¹Interview with Ik Chang on the same day.

kingdom of God but also to continue Jesus' table community movement in relation to its concrete socio-historical tasks. *Liturgically*, these theological and practical reflections could influence the church on its vital celebration of the eucharist; and the ritual again could affect its eucharistic theology and practice. These processes could bear fruit when they are stimulated by the church's concern about the celebration of the eucharist in worship.

There are some visible signs that the Korean church is coming to recognise the need of the eucharist, owing to two practical reasons: the one regarding the renewal of worship, and the other that of church. As to the renewal of worship, it is perceived that the church begins to face a crisis caused by the limitations of language-oriented worship. The increasing demand of the laity to come out of their passiveness, i.e. to rediscover their role as the subjects of worship, requires the church by degrees to transform its liturgical monotony into a more vitalised one. "The religiosity of Korean Christians will no longer tolerate the pulpit where pastors enjoy a game of language with the word of man not that of God"³²

As to the renewal of church for the restoration of its

³²Changbok Chung, "The appraisal of Lima Liturgy from the standpoint of the Koreans' Ritual Culture" in *Jangsin Nondan* [The Forum of Presbyterian Theological Seminary] 6 (1990): 346.

essential function, the church is beginning to avert its eyes from quantitative growth to qualitative growth, i.e. from its own internal affairs to its socio-political responsibilities. That is to say, the church is beginning to realise the social, historical, and political implications of the eucharist. For example, when the representatives of the North and South Korean churches celebrated the eucharist and embraced each other as a symbolic act not only becoming one body of Christ but also one nation in Glion, Switzerland (23-25 November 1988) and then this very scene was reported to Koreans Christians at home, the act of celebrating the eucharist provided them with a more vivid vision for the reunification than the vision which could be given by language-oriented worship.

The importance of the eucharist in Christian life is still not much emphasised in the church, especially on the local congregational level. Nevertheless, there is a big potentiality to vitalise the eucharist, in terms of its meaning (theology), celebration (liturgy), and realisation (practice).

In the major churches, the eucharist is more and more recognised as a necessary instrument to overcome the limitations of language-oriented worship for the restoration of (i) "the sacramentally balanced act of worship which has been inherited from the early Christian

community and reformed tradition"³³ and (ii) for that of "the church's social responsibility towards the people of God in the world."³⁴ Moreover statistics on the attitude to the eucharist shed light on the development of this potentiality: 92.4% of pastors (727 out of 787) and 87.8% of laymen (1,748 out of 1,991) answered "yes" to the question, "Is the participation in the eucharistic rite indispensable for proper faith life?"³⁵

The understanding of the Lord's Supper, i.e. both of the common meal and the eucharist, in the minjung church gives a challenging example to the major churches. The minjung church, through its celebration of the Lord's Supper, expresses the believers' life situation in the light of the table community of the historical Jesus; on the other hand, the minjung church envisions primarily a new type of church as a table community and further a new society where the essence of the table community could be

³³Changbok Chung, *Op. cit.*, p. 353.

³⁴Interview with Yehyun Woo on the same day.

³⁵Quoted in the same report by the CISJD, p. 65.

Traditionally the Korean church has mainly emphasised the importance of baptism: it has been recognised as a symbolic rite whereby a person is made a member of the church, mainly in terms of its expansion in number. In fact, it is not rare to see thousands people baptised together at the same time and same place, e.g. in a military camp.

Nevertheless, the eucharist is regarded as a more important rite than baptism: 64.5% of pastors and 68.9% of laymen think that baptism is a necessary rite in order to be a Christian.

practiced in the eschatological expectation of the coming kingdom of God.

It cannot be expected that the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church is to be directly applied to the major churches: in fact, it is not necessary to imagine that a model of eucharistic practice in a particular situation be repeated as it is in different situations. However, it is certain that the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church stimulate major churches to restore the authentic meaning of worship and church, along with their own efforts for the renewal of worship and church.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE MINJUNG CHURCH

1. The Minjung Church as a Faith Community

Both minjung theology and the minjung church emerged contemporaneously in the early 1970s. It was a time when: (i) the oppression of the socially weak, the so-called minjung, by the military government reached an extreme; (ii) the absurdity of the high rate of economic growth was already exposed; (iii) the discontent of the minjung began to be plainly expressed; (iv) Korean society as such expected the religious circles to do something for the

minjung; and above all (v) the church did not respond properly to the expectation of society, especially that of the minjung.

Minjung theology raised a serious question about the meaning of the existence of existing churches. It disclosed the nature of Jesus' mission in Galilee, and insisted that the prototype of church was the very *event* where Jesus received the Galilean minjung as the subjects of his mission and where the message of the kingdom of God was being practiced.³⁶

Though the first minjung churches were formed by some leading pastors in the early part of the 1970s,³⁷ a more systematic and collective activity of the minjung church was developed in the 1980s: during the 1970s, most pastors, who later pioneered minjung churches in 1980s, either led their lives in the midst of the minjung, usually as ordinary labourers, or were in prison on a charge of instigation. The following diagram shows that most minjung

³⁶Sometimes even the existence of major churches *per se* was denied by some theologians. "The church of the minjung can be called the Third Church which has emerged after the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church. Because the Third Church is an event, the existence of church buildings and its organisation are not fundamentally necessary." Namdong Suh, *A Study of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Tamgoo-dang, 1983), p. 194.

³⁷It is not easy to designate the first minjung church, because the minjung church did not mean a church building: before the emergence of a visible church of the minjung in a particular place, a pastor lived as a minjung among them in that locality. Nevertheless, Joomin Church in Seoungnam is generally regarded as the first minjung church.

church were pioneered from 1980s, and particularly after 1983:³⁸

(as of January, 1992)

period	70-75	76-80	81-83	84-85	86-87	88-89	90-91	total
number	3	2	5	21	24	35	22	112

The fact that the number of minjung churches increased from the 1980s onwards suggests that they have been more influenced by the concrete changes of society than by theology. "The minjung church in its real sense was established in response to the practical demand of the minjung and that of society rather than according to theological necessity."³⁹ That is to say, the minjung church came into existence, when industrialisation produced a great many poor people in urban areas, and some of them who were not satisfied with the conservatism of major churches

³⁸*Directory of Minjung Church (1992)* by the Association for Korean Minjung Church Movement.

The number of the member churches of the Association for Korean Minjung Church Movement is very small in comparison of 37,190 Protestant churches (1992). Quoted in Hyukyul Kwon, *Op. cit.*

However if churches which practice a minjung church movement are included, the number will be thousands. In this sense, when "minjung church" is referred, those churches could be included. Interview with Sungbong Lee, general secretary of the Association for Korean Minjung Church Movement and pastor of Hanwoolim Church in Seoul, 3 March 1992.

³⁹Interview with Jaeho Lee, secretary of the Association for the Minjung Church of the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea, 31 January 1992.

attended house church worship led by a labourer-pastor. Especially, after the Kwangjoo People's Movement for Democratisation in May 1980 which resulted in a massacre by the military, the demand for a visible church which would take sides with the minjung increased.

According to minjung church pastors, they usually divide the development of the minjung church into three phases: (i) it was mainly affected by minjung theology until the early period of the 1980s; (ii) it was mainly concerned about participation in a secular minjung movement until around 1987; and (iii) it was transformed into a community of the faithful after 1989.⁴⁰

The first stage: Both minjung theology and the minjung church are directly related to the real life situation of the minjung. More concretely, the death of a young devoted Christian labourer stimulated many theologians and pastors as well as students and labourers.

Minjung theology started in 1970 ... Taeil Chun, a 22-year-old textile labourer, worked in the Peace Market, Seoul, where most workers were between 15 and 20 years of age. They had to work about 15 hours a day; and their working conditions were even worse. In order to expose their situations to others, he visited the Office of Labour, City Hall, and especially the pastors of famous churches ... At last, in order to expose the situation of labourers to the world, he poured petrol on himself and burned himself to death:

⁴⁰The above division does not mean that those categories are exclusive, rather they overlap. Interview with Sungbong Lee on the same day.

he offered his body as a living sacrifice, as Paul said. It was on the 13th of November 1970. Minjung theology came into being with the event of Taeil Chun as its beginning.⁴¹

His death was identified by minjung theologians with the death of Jesus; and they proclaimed, "Jesus was a minjung; and the minjung are many Jesuses."⁴² Many younger pastors penetrated into the lives of the minjung in order to practice the sacramental life of Jesus, i.e. "in order to be bread for the minjung."⁴³ A note left behind by Taeil Chun reminded the younger pastors of the true meaning of Jesus' mission and death "in terms of the table community of the historical Jesus."⁴⁴

... Please don't forget me of this moment. And I hope that you keep me in your valuable "study of memory."
... I am kept in your valuable memory ...

I,
who you know,
a part of you,
as an invisible man,
sit by you.
I am sorry, please forgive me. Please arrange a seat

⁴¹Byungmoo Ahn, *A Story of Minjung Theology* (Seoul: KTSI, 1988), pp. 257-258.

Conservative churches denounced his death as suicide, i.e. a violation of Christian dogma. They rejected the proposal of younger Christians to hold memorial services for him.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴³Interview with Kisung Ahn, pastor of Dalgoobul Church in Daegu, 25 February 1992.

⁴⁴Interview as above.

for me in the centre of the table. I would like to sit between Wonshim and Jaechul. Please listen to me if you are seated around the table.

Now I am going somewhere. I shouldn't be long. ... [But] let me continue my unfinished race.⁴⁵

The second Stage: After the Kwangjoo People's Movement for Democratisation in 1980, the participation of the minjung in a social movement became more active; consequently, the oppression by the government became more severe. The church was one of the most suitable places to discuss the so-called minjung movement. "The main function of the minjung church was to educate labourers, rather than to worship. It was more recognised as a "life-together community" rather than as a worship community."⁴⁶ Many non-Christian activists gathered in the church to secure a safe place. As a result, *internally* traditional church activities were more or less neglected; nevertheless *externally* the gap between the church and society was narrowed. After the June People's Movement and the August Labour Movement in 1987, however, a secular minjung movement acquired popularity and thus became vitalised. The role of the minjung church in a minjung movement was

⁴⁵Quoted in World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Testimonies of Faith in Korea* (Geneva: WARC, 1989), p. 152. The last words of Taeil Chun were: "I am hungry. Don't let me die in vain."

⁴⁶Interview with Jinchul Yim, pastor of Eewood Church in Seoul, 14 January 1992.

relatively reduced.⁴⁷

The Third Stage: After broad discussion on the dissension between faith and ideology until around 1989, the minjung church professed that "a church is a community of believers before it is a community of social participants."⁴⁸ This idea implied, on the one hand, a reflective conclusion that the social sciences cannot be an ultimate tool to explain the Christian meaning of suffering, and, on the other hand, a confession that the past minjung church movement, which had neglected the two thousand years of Christian traditions, e.g. the Bible, prayer, worship, spirituality, etc., was definitely erroneous.⁴⁹

The emphasis on the tradition of the Church meant that neither minjung church joined major churches, nor gave up its intrinsic tasks, i.e. the minjung church is a

⁴⁷Many of the constituent members were absorbed into various secular organisations resulting in even the disappearance of some churches, like the Handdeod Church and Yerim Church. Interview with Jaeho Lee on the same day.

⁴⁸Interview with Sungbong Lee on the same day.

⁴⁹Interview with Jaeho Lee on the same day.

Cf. "When the Church resolutely betakes itself to its own ground, renouncing all kinds of fundamentally unimportant and ambiguous strongholds and spheres of influence, it is in fact not retreating at all, but advancing. From the pure preaching of the gospel and the proper celebration of the Holy Communion it will acquire the commission and the authority to carry out circumspectly, justly, and courageously the guardianship in the political and social sphere ... without becoming a dumb dog instead of a true Church. K. Barth, *Against the Stream* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 122.

church of the minjung. Rather, the minjung church, in order to reestablish its identity, began to reinterpret its past 20-year-experiences in the light of the Christian tradition: its experiences cannot be underestimated. A new understanding of the Lord's Supper is one of the most visible fruits. That is to say, the experience of the minjung church in the lives of the minjung provided it with a foundation to a new understanding of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁰

The task to theologise the first and second stages of the minjung church has been undertaken mainly by minjung church pastors themselves. Therefore the understanding of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church is primarily dependent on the pastors' own empirical materials discussed in the third stage, i.e. from the perspective that the minjung church is a faith community.

The Lord's Supper in the minjung church relates to both the common meal among the congregation and the celebration of the eucharist in their worship. The common meal and the eucharist are like two concentric circles with a common radius: the former as the representation of the table community of the historical Jesus; the latter as the expression of eschatological faith for the kingdom of God. They are complementary for the integral understanding of the Lord's Supper.

Therefore, the celebrations of the common meal and the eucharist are first looked at one after the other, and then

⁵⁰Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

an examination of their relationship is followed.

2. The Minjung Church and the Common Meal

(1) The significance of the common meal

The common meal has played an important role in the minjung church because the justification for the existence of the minjung church is "to represent the mission of Jesus in the present context of Korea":⁵¹ for many minjung church pastors, the community of Jesus has been called a "rice-table community".⁵² Nevertheless the common meal had not suggested any liturgical meaning during the early stages of the minjung church: in those days, ritual was not the church's primary interest. "Neither minjung pastors nor the believers understood the common meal regarding the

⁵¹Sangsi Chung, "The Emergence of the Minjung Church and the Reform of the Korean Church" in *The Suffering Korean Church*, ed. Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development (Seoul: Minjung-sa, 1990), pp. 39-40.

⁵²Traditionally, rice has been meant life for the Koreans. In this sense, the establishing of a rice-table community is more directly related to the sharing of life than to that of food. The most distinctive characteristic of minjung church pastors is that their lives are deeply rooted in the real life situations of the minjung. Therefore, the intrinsic meaning of the common meal cannot be revealed, if one neglects the fact that the common meal is the extension of common life, not only between pastor and the minjung but also amongst the minjung themselves.

eucharist or church worship itself."⁵³ The common meal was shared according to the old meal tradition of the minjung themselves, as a popular minjung folk song, entitled "Rice [for] freedom, equality, and peace," discloses the inner meaning of rice-sharing.

In poverty and hunger, what we want is:
Rice, freedom, equality, [and] peace.

...

In order to accomplish true liberation;
In order to live as a human being,
What we want is:
[The sharing of] rice,
For freedom, equality, and peace.

However, while celebrating the common meal, the minjung congregation found gradually that "the table of Jesus among the sinners and publicans is very similar to the table of Korean minjung."⁵⁴ From that time on, minjung church pastors began to theologise their experience of the common meal in the light of Jesus' mission in the Bible. Moreover, the believers themselves also began to recognise the significance of the common meal in relation to the essence of the church.

⁵³Interview with Byungseo Huh, former pastor of the Dongwol Church, one of the earliest minjung churches in Seoul, 26 January 1992.

⁵⁴Interview as above.

The common meal is regarded as one of the central events in the present context of the minjung church, especially as the second half of the worship, for several reasons. *First*, it helps the congregation to experience that the Word is not isolated from their own lives: that is, the common meal bridges the gap between worship and life. The minjung ask how Jesus can be the Messiah to them in their desperate situations. The Word is often regarded as something related to an abstract faith. The preaching of the pastors hardly communicates power to overcome their hopeless situations. "The common meal fills up the emptiness of the Word. By its celebration, the congregation experience that the Word is being realised among them. Consequently it strengthens the authority of the Word."⁵⁵

Secondly, the common meal makes the whole process of worship progress in a festive atmosphere: the joy of the common meal as a second half of worship not only eases the tension of worship but also transforms the worship as a whole into a kind of festivity. "The minjung want to be consoled through worship because their lives are strained. They are like people standing on the edge of a precipice. If the worship does not progress in a festive atmosphere,

⁵⁵Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

it will not give any consolation to them."⁵⁶

Lastly, the common meal provides the church with a better understanding of the eucharist. The common meal has preceded the eucharist within the history of the minjung church. However, pastors have endeavoured to express the experience of the common meal in worship, ever since they recognised the importance of worship in Christian life. "The excitement acquired from the common meal has gradually affected the celebration of the eucharist in church worship."⁵⁷

To have a common meal together has been a widespread practice in the minjung church. It is known that most minjung congregations have been sharing the common meal at least once a week after Sunday worship (21 churches: 86.7%).⁵⁸ Other churches have it once a month (2 churches: 9.1%) or occasionally (1 church: 4.2%). In this respect, it can be said, as one minjung church pastor affirms, "the life of the minjung congregation is so closely related to the common meal that we cannot imagine the life and work of

⁵⁶Interview with Bangjoo Jin, general secretary of the Youngdongpo Urban Industrial Mission Centre and pastor of Sungmoonbak Church, 31 January 1992.

⁵⁷Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

⁵⁸The statistics regarding the common meal and the eucharist in this chapter were gathered at the fifth regular general meeting of the minjung church pastors of the Presbyterian Church of Korea held at the Korean Church Centennial Building, Seoul, on 13-14 January 1992. Out of 32 minjung churches 24 churches answered the questionnaire.

the minjung church without this common meal."⁵⁹

(2) The celebration of the common meal

The common meal is shared in general without any particular formality. The main reasons for it are:⁶⁰ (i) to help the congregation to experience the inner meaning of a common meal through the body rather than through the words; (ii) to make them envision a new community themselves; and above all (iii) to give them the opportunity of training to find out for themselves how to participate in the kingdom of God movement. However through the whole process of the meal -- preparing the meal, sharing the meal, and cleaning the table -- the congregation are recommended to discuss their feeling about it freely.

The way to prepare the meal is different from church to church. In urban churches the meal is mainly prepared in turn by designated people. They bring materials for side dishes from home and the market, and then cook them together. In rural churches, however, the meal is prepared with the materials which the believers themselves have produced. The congregation are strongly advised to bring clean vegetables, which have been grown without

⁵⁹Interview with Kyuman Oh, pastor of Hanbut Church in Soowon, 13 January 1992.

⁶⁰Interview with minjung church pastors, Korean Church Centennial Building, 14 January 1992.

agricultural chemicals. They are often blessed on the communion table during worship. This demonstrates that the very nature of the church movement is a "life movement."⁶¹

As far as steamed rice as a main dish is concerned most churches cook it with the rice collected occasionally by the whole congregation according to their old traditions.⁶² Some churches preserve their rice in the traditional rice chest which is also used as the communion table. "The preparation of the meal can give the congregation a new experience of an egalitarian community. By men and women, especially by the educated and uneducated,⁶³ equally preparing the meal in turn and by sharing money for the meal according to each other's financial resources, they experience that the barriers of sexism and social discrimination are overcome."⁶⁴

⁶¹The meaning of life has been particularly underlined in the minjung church - the life experienced through the sharing of small things in poverty. Clean vegetables symbolise the life activity of the minjung. It suggests that the sharing of the common meal is related to the creation of life.

⁶²It has been a very old custom to set aside a small amount of rice at every meal in order to help the poorer. Even today, most religious people, regardless of their religion, offer "offertory rice" (sometimes in the form of money).

⁶³Besides the so-called minjung, a good many students are members of the minjung church.

⁶⁴Interview with Youngwoon Kim, pastor of Jageon Church in Seoul, 14 February 1992.

While several people prepare the meal, the rest of the congregation have time to learn minjung songs to traditional melody with accompaniment of the traditional harmony on original instruments and to share their lives by exchanging views on happenings within the church and outside it. When the table is ready, after the singing of a song, the whole congregation share the meal together. The words of the song are: either

Rice is heaven.

As no one can monopolise heaven
so we have to share the rice together. or

While feeding steamed rice to one another,
while washing the dirty feet of one another;
With two mackerel and five rice cakes,
we, as many as five thousand, can be satisfied.
Look at us you who accumulate and take
two thousand fishes and five thousand cakes
and never are satisfied.

While feeding steamed rice to one another,
while washing the dirty feet of one another;
With two mackerel and five rice cakes,
we, as many as five thousand, can be satisfied.

The first song is quoted from the poem of Jiha Kim. It is very much affected by the minjung's meal tradition: "it describes the very essence of minjung's desire of a new

community."⁶⁵ However when it is sung in the church, it is theologised: "the first phrase, *rice is heaven*, is related with the theology of the common meal, the second phrase, *as no one can monopolise heaven*, with the essence of the worship, and the third phrase, *so we have to share the rice together*, with the social ethics of Christianity."⁶⁶ The second song comes from Jesus' feeding miracle. The words of the song demonstrate through a collective experience of the table fellowship: (i) the congregation are denying the present structure of the world by exposing it; (ii) they are overcoming it by sharing their lives; and (iii) they are anticipating the future of God in a foretaste of the kingdom of God in the present time.

The celebration of the common meal usually ends with "the liberation dance." At this time, all the people who participate in the common meal dance together demonstrating that they are the people of God's kingdom. "The table is often cleansed by men. It is another sign that a traditional value structure is replaced by a new one."⁶⁷

The common meal among the congregation is often expanded outside of the church: by visiting local society in urban areas, especially sit-down strikers, and by giving

⁶⁵Interview with Jiha Kim, a poet and philosopher, 3 March 1992.

⁶⁶Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

⁶⁷Interview with Youngwoon Kim on the same day.

a village feast in rural areas. The same questionnaire shows nearly 80% of the church are doing so (12 churches: 50%) or planning to do so (7 churches: 29.2%). Only 5 churches (20.8%) answer that the common meal is limited within their boundaries.

(3) The meaning of the common meal

The common meal make the congregation reinterpret their own table tradition in the light of the table community of the historical Jesus. The emphasis of *today* is one of the strongest points of the minjung's meal tradition: through the sharing of food, the minjung have tasted *tomorrow*, which is different from *yesterday*, in the present. This tradition helps the congregation to perceive that the table community of Jesus is restored by their sharing of a meal at the same table: that is, they experience that "the same Jesus, who shared meals with the poor two thousand years ago, also shares meals with them in this present time."⁶⁸ Moreover, the very scene of the common meal is understood as a partial realisation of the promised community.

The equal sharing of the meal provides the congregation with a strong sense of "we-feeling." They experience that a completely new community is being

⁶⁸Interviews with minjung pastors on the same day.

established in their midst, i.e. the birth of a new family.

The most significant effect of the common meal is that it transforms the congregation into a qualitatively different community. Besides the overcoming of sexual and social barriers, the common meal overcomes the traditional value of family. In and through the common meal, the individual families are dispersed and then all the congregation are united into a new family. ... The common meal teaches the congregation that the process of becoming members of a new family is only possible by social conversion, not by intellectual conversion.⁶⁹

This moving experience of mutual love and solidarity enables the minjung to anticipate a new society, and moreover the kingdom of God, better than any theological interpretations can do.⁷⁰ The present socio-political situation is never acceptable to the minjung: it is the situation that must be changed. But when they taste the kingdom of God in the present time beyond their suffering situation, the minjung transcend the existing value system which defined them.⁷¹ This experience enables them not to

⁶⁹Interview with Youngwoon Kim on the same day.

⁷⁰A "family community" built by the common meal is the smallest society which can be concretely experienced on the way to building a new society. In this sense, the common meal plays a role as the point of departure for the kingdom of God.

⁷¹The unrestricted atmosphere of the common meal is very similar to that of the mask dance because of their festive aspects. Moreover, through the common meal, the congregation experience and express the same "critical experience" over this world which minjung theologians have found in their theological interpretation in the mask dance. cf. Younghak Hyun, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea" in *Minjung and Korean Theology*, ed.

wait for the future passively but to participate actively in the kingdom of God movement.

Through the common meal, as an antepast of the messianic banquet, the congregation are aware that they are the subjects of history even though they are economically poor and socially marginalised: this awareness comes about in a way similar to what the minjung have experienced in their village rituals.⁷² In this sense, the common meal can be called "a feast of the liberated."⁷³

As Jesus often shared food joyously with the poor minjung and his life with them was vindicated through the

Committee of Theological Study or the National Council of Churches in Korea (Seoul: KTSI, 1985), pp. 360-367.

Minjung's transcendence is not an individual self transcendence but a collective one beyond the dominant power of the world: the former for escaping from history, the latter for throwing themselves into the tangles of history in order to transform it. The minjung experience this transcendence through their overcoming of sufferings in the present time. This makes the minjung the subjects of history. Byungmoo Ahn, *Op. cit.*, pp. 225-227.

⁷²Traditional village rituals are still being held by the people in many regions. The village ritual is a kind of a ceremony performed in order to consolidate the consciousness of villagers as one community of common destiny. Through it, they discern their true identity. Loosi Hwang describes one village ritual which was held in a peripheral area of Seoul as follows: "it is a feast held by the people who have engaged in farming from generation to generation. Now none of them tills the soil. But they still have the mind of farmers. ... they are all poor people. They possess no land at all. But they have their pride as village subjects. No matter how much land strangers may have, they are the subjects of that land." *The Kut of Koreans and Mudang* (Seoul: Mooneum-sa, 1988), pp. 62-63.

⁷³Interview with minjung church pastors on the same day.

resurrection, the lives of the congregation are consoled through the common meal as a feast. They are even given new life through it which is celebrated in hope against hope. The central word of the common meal is "life" -- life of the resurrection. It is the strongest power that the church can use to transform the world. "Because of life experience, the kingdom of God movement of the minjung church has never been entombed within a secular social movement. Moreover, its life experience could influence major churches."⁷⁴

The minjung church has professed itself to be a faith community since about 1989. Owing to the dialectical relationship between suffering (death) and hope (life), the movement of the minjung church has been transferred from a secular movement through social struggle to a life movement through Christian faith. This transformation has given the church a deeper understanding of sufferings, and thus changed the concept of its mission and strategy when participating in the mission of God. Mission is often identified, by many congregations, with the expansion of the table community into a society, and the strategy of it with the enduring communication of the power of life to the world.

⁷⁴Interview with Yehyun Woo on the same day.

3. The Minjung Church and the Eucharist

(1) The significance of the eucharist

The eucharist had not been recognised as an essential part of the worship until minjung church pastors understood a church as a faith community. Before that time the *echan*, literally meaning love meal, had been celebrated more frequently, both in Sunday worship, especially small-scale worship, and in group meetings.

It is not easy to distinguish the *echan* from the eucharist theologically. The *echan* is a modified type of the eucharist in which every member of the congregation including children can participate.⁷⁵ It is celebrated without strict formality: it can be conducted even by the laity. In contrast, the eucharist is celebrated ceremoniously only in Sunday worship. Unbaptised believers and children are excluded from participating in it.⁷⁶ Because of its openness, many minjung churches still prefer the *echan* to the eucharist. The *echan* also provides an opportunity to experience the same excitement as the common meal on a small scale because it is generally understood as

⁷⁵The *echan* is celebrated with ordinary bread and grape juice, which can be easily found in everyday life, rather than specially prepared elements for the eucharist.

⁷⁶Some churches, like the Jageon Church, have allowed all the congregation, along with unbaptised believers and children, to celebrate the eucharist as a token that they are also members of the same community.

a miniature of the common meal.

With the understanding that a church is a community of the faithful, minjung church pastors began to ask themselves about the meaning of the minjung church with the universal Church beyond the boundary of their particular situation. They have tried to find out its meaning in the two thousand years of Christian history.

We [minjung church pastors] have emphasised that the mission of the minjung church is to expand the community of Jesus. So we have regarded the early Christian community as the archetype of the minjung church. This idea has not been changed all through the past history of the minjung church. However, in practice, we have neglected to relate the core of the Christian tradition to the specific situation of the Korean minjung. Practically we have had lack of Christian spirituality in a true sense. Theologically we have despised the Doctrine of God.⁷⁷

As a result of this self-examination, the importance of worship began to be seen in a new light. Pastors often discussed the experiences of the minjung congregation in order to express them in worship. The importance of the eucharist began to be particularly emphasised. They had tried to express the excitement of the common meal through the eucharist: up to that time the common meal had been understood mainly in connection with the *echan*.

It would be difficult to draw a hasty conclusion that the eucharist has recovered its original place in the

⁷⁷Interview with Yehyun Woo on the same day.

actual worship of the minjung church. Surprisingly, the frequency of the celebration of the eucharist in the regular Sunday service is still very low in spite of their recognition of its importance.⁷⁸ The same questionnaire shows that:

frequency per year	1-2	3-4	5-9	above 10
number of churches	9	9	2	3
percent	37.5	37.5	8.3	12.5

* one church(4.2%) did not answer.⁷⁹

Nevertheless 91.7% of the pastors (22 churches) believe that the celebration of the eucharist is indispensable for the church, especially for regular worship. Furthermore 18 pastors (75%) relate the common meal to the eucharist; among them 11 pastors intentionally explain the relationship of the eucharist and the common meal to their congregation (61.1%). Therefore it can be said that the process of

⁷⁸Many of the minjung church pastors seems to have no regard for the frequency of the eucharist *per se*, because they think that more careful discussion is needed among the congregation in order to apply their experiences to worship. Interview with minjung church pastors on the same day.

⁷⁹In addition to the celebration of the eucharist in regular worship, many churches celebrate it occasionally in their special worship: (i) in the framework of events like joint worship with other churches (4 churches: 16.7%); (ii) in the framework of social events like worship for the labour movement, worship for the reunification, etc. (8 churches: 33.3%); and (iii) in the framework of individual events of the congregation like marriage, enlistment, house-moving, etc. (6 churches: 25%).

theologisation of the common meal in the light of the eucharist is still going on.

As to the significance of the eucharist, there are certain facets of it that cannot be easily prescribed in the present state of things. One thing we can predicate, however, is that the common meal experience of the congregation has preceded the celebration of the eucharist, even though the latter has affected the former to a certain degree: that is, the eucharist is understood as an internal basis of the common meal, and moreover of a new community. In this sense, one cannot but admit that this process has made it possible for a minjung church to be a *Christian church* in its specific situation, as a confession of one minjung church pastor asserts:⁸⁰

When I was pioneering a minjung church, I thought the minjung were God. But after seven years' ministry at the church, I and my congregation come to confess that "we are sinners" in tears. It is mainly through the mystery of the eucharist that we confess in this way. We come to realise that we need the grace of God most of all: a Christian should participate in a social movement as a man of God's grace ... Without celebration of the eucharist [and the common meal], we could have not experienced it. Our experience witnesses that the Lord's Supper is the centre of Christian life.

(2) The celebration of the eucharist

⁸⁰Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

The character of the minjung church is first and foremost that it is the church of the poor. Through poverty, the believers have common social experiences to a certain degree. A minjung church in urban industrial areas, for example, mainly consists of labourers while in rural areas they are mainly farmers. In the context of Korean society, these people have their own social problems. They have socially wounded hearts. Therefore worship concerns not only the God who is an absolute subject but the God who intervenes in their concrete lives. Through worship they ask real questions and are given answers to their problems.

The worship service mainly progresses not with a pastor alone but with the common participation of the pastor and believers. Worship is usually called "madang." *Madang* is an open round stage for the Korean mask dance or Korean type of opera. It is a typical Korean stage that unites all the audience: one distinctive characteristic is that it shows what is presently happening and what is being felt in the audience so that the audience itself may no longer be an onlooker but an active participant. The pulpit is located on the same level as the believers. Korean hymns are sung with the accompaniment of traditional harmony in several churches. Often poems, stories, and plays of the people in a similar situation are read, told, and performed by believers themselves.

It is an undeniable fact that most minjung churches

celebrate the eucharist several times a year. However it may be inadvisable to jump to the conclusion that infrequency of the eucharist signifies the minjung church's negligence of it. Many pastors have been trying to theologise their meal experiences as well as faith lives as a whole and their efforts begin to bear fruit only recently. As a result, the eucharist is celebrated in some churches according to their own liturgies. The eucharistic liturgy of Eewood Church, for example, shows how minjung church pastors have endeavored to express their experiences through worship: Eewood Church is located in the urban industrial area and its congregation are mainly labourers.

The framework of the Eewood Church liturgy is borrowed from the Lima liturgy;⁸¹ and its theology is dependent both on "the BEM statement on the eucharist" and on the particular situation and experience of the church. The reason for this is: "(i) to demonstrate that the minjung church is not a church only related to its own context but to the universal Church and (ii) to be in solidarity with other churches of the world by means of a common participation in the eucharist."⁸²

⁸¹Cf. M. Thurian, ed., *Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), pp. 236-247.

⁸²Interview with Jinchul Yim, pastor of Eewood Church, 14 January 1992.

Cf. "Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration" (The BEM statement on the eucharist II,D,19). WCC, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*

However, the Eewood Church liturgy differs from the Lima liturgy in several respects. *First*, it stresses more the life of the historical Jesus. The minjung church as "a community of faith, life, and liberation" is the extension of Jesus' table community:⁸³ the Lima liturgy does not recommend the participants simply to remember the earthly life of Jesus. *Secondly*, it reflects the concrete experience of the congregation as well as the tradition of the Church. Especially, the experience of the common meal is directly or indirectly indicated. *Thirdly*, it is opened to a new society: the socio-ethical implication of the eucharist and the commitment of the participants are particularly underlined. The meaning of the eucharist not only lies on the building of a new community but also on its expansion into the world. *Lastly*, the laity are encouraged to participate more positively. They are regarded as the subjects of eucharistic celebration, because the eucharist is ultimately related to their life in the world for the kingdom of God.

Let us compare the framework of the two liturgies and then examine the liturgy of the Eewood Church.

Eewood Church Liturgy

Madang of Entrance

1. Entrance Psalm

Lima Liturgy

Liturgy of Entrance

1. Entrance Psalm

(Geneva: WCC, 1982), p. 14.

⁸³From "the Confession of Eewood Church."

2. Greeting
3. Confession
4. Absolution
5. Gloria

Madang of the Word

6. Prayer
7. Scripture Lesson
8. Alleluia
9. Homily
10. Silent Prayer
11. Confession of Faith

Madang of the eucharist

12. Invitation and Response
13. Dialogue
14. Preface
15. Epiclesis I
16. Institution
17. Anamnesis and Commitment
18. Epiclesis II
19. The Lord's Prayer
20. The Peace
21. The Breaking of the Bread
22. Communion
23. Thanksgiving Prayer

Madang of Offering and Sharing

2. Greeting
3. Confession
4. Absolution
5. Kyrie Litany
6. Gloria

Liturgy of the Word

7. Collect
8. First Lesson
9. Psalm of Meditation
10. Epistle
11. Alleluia
12. Gospel
13. Homily
14. Silence
15. Creed
16. Intercession

Liturgy of the Eucharist

17. Preparation
18. Dialogue
19. Preface
20. Sanctus
21. Epiclesis I
22. Institution
23. Anamnesis
24. Epiclesis II
25. Commemorations
26. Conclusion
27. The Lord's Prayer
28. The Peace
29. The Breaking of the Bread
30. Lamb of God
31. Communion
32. Thanksgiving Prayer

24. Offering and Hymn

33. Final Hymn

25. Sharing of life

Madang of Mission

26. Hymn of Mission

34. Word of Mission

27. Blessing

35. Blessing

The Eewood Church liturgy consists of five *madangs*. *The Madang of the Eucharist* is placed in the middle. Other *madangs* are connected with it: the first two help the congregation to prepare for right participation in the eucharist and the last two make them relate the meaning of it to their own life situation. One noticeable character is that the liturgy often uses various response readings (16 times) and several popular minjung songs so that "the whole congregation may participate in the worship more effectively."⁸⁴

In *the Madang of Entrance*, the whole congregation confess their sins. Sin is understood both traditionally and socially: it regards their "refusal to love Jesus and neighbours under the pretext of the evil structure of the world" (in the Confession). And the forgiveness of sins is related to the creation of new humanity: Jesus, the Son of the minjung, is proclaimed as "the One who liberates the minjung from an obsession which defines them as slaves [under the evil power of the world] to new human beings"

⁸⁴Interview with Jinchul Yim on the same day.

(in the Absolution).⁸⁵ God is glorified as "God of the minjung" and the congregation declare "the minjung are the subjects of history" (in the Gloria).

Preaching of the Word is a central act in *the Madang of the Word*. "It focuses on communicating the reality of Jesus' table community to the congregation."⁸⁶ The Confession of Faith follows the Homily. It is a new interpretation of the Apostles' Creed in the context of the congregation: the Apostle's Creed and its interpretation are read in turn passage by passage. The following is an abbreviated form of the church's interpretation.

We believe in God, the source of truth and life, who is labouring through the minjung. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Liberator of the minjung, who was conceived by the Spirit of Liberation, was born as the son of a minjung, practiced the movement of minjung liberation against oppressors of the minjung, and was crucified to death. He arose again with the minjung from unjust power and cut the chain of death; He is continuing the kingdom of God movement through the minjung; He shall come again to consummate history as the Messiah of the minjung. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of liberation, who gives us power and courage to conquer the world.

We believe that a church is a sharing, serving, and confessing community. God makes us serve one another through the forgiveness of our sins.

⁸⁵The forgiveness of sins is again emphasised: both in the Confession and in the Thanksgiving Prayer right after the Communion. The former is related to the mutual service of the congregation to one another; the latter is related to their mission in the world, i.e. to the expansion of the eucharistic community.

⁸⁶Interview with Jinchul Yim on the same day.

We are called to expand this community into the world until the minjung become the subjects of it.

By confessing the Apostle's Creed and its interpretation which reflects a specific context, the congregation confess that the God of Christianity is not only God of heaven but also God of earth. The minjung know that where God is proclaimed only as God of heaven, they are forced to serve other gods in the world.

My employer who gives food for my family
is my heaven

When I go to the hospital
with hands pressed by a machine,
the doctor who can give
and take away my life
is my heaven

Without wages for two months
I was taken by the police, for
I organised a Labour Union.
The policeman who takes an innocent person
is my horrible heaven.

The judge who can make me guilty or innocent
is my fearful heaven.

The officer who sits in the office and
can help or destroy me

is my dreadful heaven.

The person of high position,
the powerful person, and
the rich person
are all heavenly beings.⁸⁷

Instead of these gods, the minjung confess that the God of the Bible is suffering with them in the midst of their sufferings. This God is the God whom they can seek in their desperate situation.

May God respond to us: God who has no tongue.
May God hear our prayer: God who is deaf.
God is turning His face away: God who gets burnt.
But You are the only God: the Father of the minjung.
O God, are You gone?
Or are You weeping in a dark back street?
Or are you buried under the dump?
O pitiable God!
God is turning His face away: God who gets burnt.
But You are the only God: the Father of the minjung.⁸⁸

⁸⁷This poem, titled "Heaven", was written by Nohae Park, a labourer and poet, in 1984.

⁸⁸This song, titled "the Father of the Minjung", was written by an anonymous Christian at an early period of the minjung church.

Minjung's understanding of God clarifies the character of the incarnation and mission of Jesus. Through "the Father of the minjung," they discover that Jesus *is* with them in their present sufferings as He was with the Galilean minjung. This idea helps the congregation to have a better understanding of the present sufferings and thus of the participation in the body and blood of Christ: not as "a magical or mechanical action"⁸⁹ but as a symbolic act to "fill up in [their] flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body" (Colossians 1:24; NIV).

The third *madang*, *the Madang of the Eucharist*, begins with the Invitation and Response. On particular occasions, i.e. Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Sunday, Christmas, etc., the contents of these response readings are replaced with another one. The Invitation and Response characterises the contents of the eucharistic worship: the congregation are invited and gathered to "a table where tear, despair, and death are turned into joy, hope, and eternal life" (in Easter Day); or to a table where they celebrate their fruits of labour "with God who is creating a new world and history by means of their labour" (in Thanksgiving Day); or to a table where "the true meaning of the birth of baby Jesus is fully realised in our body and life" (in

⁸⁹WCC, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

Christmas). However the common denominator of these response readings is that God is confessed both as the Liberator and the Creator: as the Liberator, God "leads His people into the promised land," and as the Creator, God "gives food to His people in order that they can participate in the kingdom of God movement with this food."

The confession of God as "the One who creates liberation by providing bread as food for the kingdom of God" is linked to the centre of a minjung's life: "labour." The minjung church consists mainly of poor labourers or farmers: most of them should work somehow for a living, both man and woman. They understand that God is working for the fulfillment of His creation and human beings are created to till the ground in response to God's works (cf. Genesis 2:5). However the present situation does not allow the minjung to do so, because reality tempts and compels them to eat and to produce unclean bread. Therefore, the taking of Jesus' body and blood as their food symbolises not only their refusal of compulsory work under the power of the world (i.e. the act of salvation) but also their resolution to participate in a life movement (i.e. the task of creation): "the bread that God gives ... brings life to the world" (John 6:33).

The Holy Spirit is ultimately associated with the eschatological expectation of the return of Jesus. It is the power granted to the minjung to continue Jesus' kingdom

of God movement. Jesus is understood as both "the Spirit of new life" and "the Spirit of liberation" (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45): "He [Jesus] arose from death on the third day and he, as the Spirit of Liberation, becomes the leader and friend of the suffering minjung" (in the Preface). In this sense, the invocation of the Holy Spirit relates to the continuation of his liberating works, i.e. the kingdom of God movement (In the Epiiclesis I):

...

- C. ... this [the celebration of the eucharist] is to proclaim and witness the death and resurrection of Jesus to the suffering minjung.
- P. It is also to reaffirm that we, as the disciples of him, are participating in his movement in order to establish the kingdom of God.
- C. O God, grant us the Spirit of the Lord to this table. And Help us to live as a faithful people with new life in the Lord until the last day.

(P = Presiding Minister, C = Congregation)

The warrant for relating the eucharist to the kingdom of God movement is that the eucharist unites the whole life of the Christian community through the ages (Cf. Hebrews 12:1).

- P. O Lord, through this ceremony, unite us into one: with the predecessors in the faith who followed

the way of the Lord and also with the people of a future generation who will practice the will of the Lord to the end of the earth. Let us promote solidarity with other brothers and sisters who strive for truth in this unjust world. And let us be with those who are persecuted because of righteousness in spite of their desperate life situations.

- C. Let us overcome all the power of despair and death by sharing the joy of Your kingdom in our present lives.
- P. O Lord, as You sacrificed Yourself thoroughly on the altar of the kingdom of God movement, we offer ourselves to You...
- C. Maranatha, our Lord Jesus Christ the Liberator comes!
(in the Anamnesis and Commitment)

The Eucharist II and the Peace reveal that a Christian community is a covenant community to participate in the kingdom of God movement. And the responsibility of the covenant people is to establish justice with peace. (This covenant relationship between God and the minjung is reaffirmed in the Thanksgiving Prayer.)

- P. God who makes the suffering people the subjects of the kingdom of God [movement] by establishing a covenant with them; Jesus Christ who has realised

the will of the Father in history; The Holy Spirit who is descending upon us with the power of transformation; All honour and glory are yours.

C. [Response is made by "Amen Song" for three times.]
(in the Epiiclesis II)

P. Jesus said: "peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." Let us become ambassadors of the peace to work for unity and reconciliation by overcoming the evil of the social structure.

C. Amen.

P. The peace of the Lord be with you all!

C. And also with you. (in the Peace)

The Communion follows a resolution that "we will also give our bodies to the minjung and history." The congregation receive the elements one by one and shake hands with or embrace lightly each other as a sign of reconciliation and peace. This act symbolises that their thanks are extended not only to God but also to one another. Koreans say *gomab-da* or *gomab-ssumnida* when they express thanks to others. This means, in its original meaning, that "you are a heavenly being."⁹⁰ Therefore the

⁹⁰Howan Jung, *Imagination of Our Language* (Seoul: Jungsun-sege-sa, 1990), pp. 39-44.

When expressing thanks to others, the Japanese often say *arigadai*, meaning "[you have shown] unreal reality." These expressions of both Koreans and Japanese signify that an ideal community can be established through mutual respect among a community, theologically the mutual discovery of God's image within one another. Interview with Chiyong Kim, pastor of Hanaleumil Church in Daegu, 8 March

act of exchanging their thanks with one another signifies that they regard others not as people of the world but people of God who are born of Jesus: "The life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). In other words, the individual forgiveness of sins (in the Absolution) is developed to the mutual forgiveness of the congregation to one another: that is, the vertical relationship with God is also experienced through the horizontal relationship among a community. During the Communion, those who are not receiving the elements sing several songs quietly. Songs express both the oneness of a community and their eschatological expectation of the coming of Jesus.

1. Sharing of this bread is sharing of our love,
Now you and I are comrades in the same laugh.
2. Sharing of this wine is sharing of our love,
Now you and I are comrades in the same cry.

(refrain)

As you and I are from the same heaven,
we are of the same blood.

As you and I live under the same heaven,
we are going to the same place.⁹¹

1992.

⁹¹Both the words and music for this song, titled "Sharing," are written by Changwoo Baek.

1. Frozen heaven, frozen fields;
The lightless sun, a dark and poor street;
Where do they come from, people of a haggard face.
What are they looking for, people of dry-boned
hands.
2. O street, lonely street;
The rejected hands, a dark and humiliated street:
Where is the kingdom of Heaven?
Does it lie in the green forest beyond death?

(refrain)
O Lord, come here, now! (three times)
O Lord, come here, now; be with us!⁹²

After the Communion, the congregation declare that "the kingdom of God has arrived among a community in this present time." This idea comes not only from the old minjung tradition but also their experience of the common meal. The fact that the minjung experience the kingdom of God in this present time motivates them to continue Jesus' kingdom of God movement.

We ... do not come to anchor in the freedom which we have already acquired but practice with all our might the life of Jesus through participating in His death

⁹²This song, "Jesus in Golden Crown," is written by Jiha Kim. It is inserted in his play of the same title.

and resurrection.⁹³

The third *madang* ends with the Thanksgiving Prayer. Thanks is extended to God "for giving life through the body and blood of Christ." Life of the resurrection is the power which makes it possible for the community: (i) "to spread the righteousness and truth of the Lord to the end of the earth" and (ii) "to follow the way of the cross until the sufferings and groanings of their neighbours are transformed into the joy of liberation." This prayer clarifies the character of the kingdom of God movement as well as the justification of the existence of the church in a secular society.

"The last two *madangs* are in fact similar to those of ordinary Sunday worship except in relating the meaning of the eucharist to their real life of the congregation as well as to their mission."⁹⁴ In *the Madang of Offer and Sharing*, the congregation contribute offerings, the fruits of their labour in the covenant relationship with God, and share lives with one another by discussing the happenings around and about their community. To solve problems through a community helps the congregation to be united into one body of Christ: they each know what difficulties the others

⁹³From "the Second Common Confession of Sinmyung Church (6 March 1986)" in *Minjung Church* 1 (January 1990): 4.

⁹⁴Interview with Jinchul Yim on the same day.

have and try to find solutions together.

The Madang of Mission is a closing *madang* where the whole congregation reaffirms joyously that they are called to work for the kingdom of God, i.e. for the expansion of the table community, with new life which has been acquired through the body and blood of Jesus. From the flow of the liturgy, the sign of this life is "peace": it is the same peace which was given to his disciples by the Risen Jesus at the post-Easter table for the continuation of his table community movement. The eucharist commissions the congregation to spread this peace, i.e. the power of life, into the world.

The worship is followed by the common meal. "The common meal is by no means a supplement to the worship but the second half of it"⁹⁵: *Ubi missa, ibi mensa*. Through the common meal the congregation experience how the fellowship with Jesus through His body and blood is realised among them in the real world. They also demonstrate that they are united with those who are striving after the kingdom of God.

(3) The meaning of the eucharist

Like the common meal, the experience of "life" -- life of the resurrection -- is also essential in the eucharist;

⁹⁵Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

however, the eucharist provides a better understanding of its biblical meaning than the common meal. Life is first and foremost understood as a gift of God: it is not a matter of this world. Nevertheless the life does not come only from above or before; rather its source is concretely based on the overcoming of oppressive situations by the sharing of sufferings with one another: as the resurrection of Jesus was the extension of his cross, life is gifted from the midst of real sufferings. The partaking of the body and blood of Christ together implies not only a "confession" that Jesus gave his body for the sake of the sufferings of the Galilean minjung and that the same Jesus is present in their sufferings but also a "commitment" to give their bodies to one another to overcome their sufferings. In this sense, the eucharist helps the minjung to recognise the deepest meaning of their sufferings in the light of Jesus' suffering which is symbolically represented in the eucharistic elements.

The significance of life expressed and experienced through the eucharist is related to (i) the minjung's everyday life, (ii) their Christian identity, and (iii) their participation in a secular movement.

The minjung's every day life: Life experience helps the minjung to reinterpret their everyday affairs in the light of the suffering of Jesus and *vice versa*. The Eewood Church Liturgy shows that the congregation, prior to their

participating in the Communion, confess together that their lives in the world, even though they seem hopeless, are under the protection of the Holy Spirit, the life-giving Spirit. They invoke the Holy Spirit as a power (i) who enables them to experience the presence of Christ even in their desperate situations, and moreover (ii) who encourages them to follow him in hope against hope: the Holy Spirit is by no means understood as a transcendental power to guarantee more affluence. The congregation praise the mysterious immanence of the Holy Spirit in their daily affairs:

1. Was it you, who had been promised to come?

Your words; they were too ordinary.

2. Was it you, who had been promised to come?

Your attitude; it was too humble.

3. Was it you, who had been promised to come?

Your ideal; it was too simple.

(refrain of 1,2, and 3)

[Our] hearts were filled with disappointment;

But [we] now realise the meaning.

4. We will follow you;

In you we will practice this meaning.

In your power, which has overcome death,

We will live for love and freedom.⁹⁶

⁹⁶From the Epiclesis I of the Eewood Church Liturgy.

When the congregation celebrate the eucharist as a sign of confession that Jesus is present in their sufferings, they can taste the life of the resurrection. Because the sufferings of the minjung are very real, their partaking of the body and blood of Christ is directly related to their real lives: this attitude prevents their hope from being reduced to an abstract one; rather it makes the hope eschatological.⁹⁷ (The life of the resurrection is tangibly experienced in the common meal which is shared right after the worship; and this experience again gives a more profound meaning to the eucharist and makes it not merely spiritualised or ritualised.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator.

We want to co-participate in your death;

And in your life of the resurrection.

May you be with us!⁹⁸

Besides life experience from their own suffering, the congregation are urged to remember in the eucharist the life experience of the faithful who have died for the kingdom of God movement between the time of Jesus and the present and of those who are presently suffering "because of righteousness" (Matthew 5:10; NIV). This is because a

⁹⁷Eschatological hope has a potentiality for a social transformation and historical process. Yongbock Kim, *The Historical Development of Korean Christian Thought*, p. 33.

⁹⁸From the Institution of the Eewood Church Liturgy.

Christian community in the present is connected both with past and next generations and with other contemporary Christians.

When we remember the body and blood of Jesus in the eucharist, we should remember the deaths and sufferings of other believers, precedent or contemporary, not to beautify them but to have the meaning of their deaths and sufferings in our community.⁹⁹

The minjung's Christian identity: The minjung's life experience, which is more vividly created in the eucharist than any other church activities, helps a minjung to be a Christian minjung; and it also makes a minjung church a member of the family of Christian churches, not just because it calls upon the name of Jesus as other churches do but because it possesses the same life experience through the same body of Christ.

Scholars have classified the minjung culturally, socially, economically, and historically. They all agree that "the minjung are the subjects of social and historical transformation." But they take an equivocal attitude to the question: "what is the very nature of the minjung which justifies this statement?" Minjung theologians, though they have tried to clarify the biblical understanding of the

⁹⁹Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

In the minjung church, the eucharist is often celebrated in a memorial service for dead labourers and in the worship for those incarcerated.

minjung, generally keep silent about the question: "What is the essence of the Christian minjung movement in comparison with a secular minjung movement?"¹⁰⁰ The life experience of the minjung, however, gives an answer to the above questions: life activity and eschatological hope of the minjung.

Many farmers use too many agricultural chemicals for a greater harvest. This is actually an act which kills life. But Jesus's movement was a life movement. As long as we, as those who take his body as food, use harmful agricultural chemicals, we cannot "remember" his death. Not everything is allowed to the minjung even though they are victims. Rather they have a particular responsibility to spread the power of life to the world. This is the privilege of the minjung because the non-minjung cannot do it.¹⁰¹

We [minjung church pastors] come to a conclusion that the core of a church is life, which cannot be given from this world, because life is a gift from God. It enables the congregation to live eschatologically for the kingdom of God. This idea, of course, is very traditional. But we realise it not from theological books but from our own experience.¹⁰²

Life experience is not restricted within the boundary of the minjung church. This experience also influences

¹⁰⁰Minjung theologians usually show a tendency to neglect the specific role of the Christian minjung in a secular minjung movement because of their preferential concern about the solidarity of the minjung for social reform and their unconditional option for the minjung.

¹⁰¹Interview with Jongin Han, pastor of Sangdae Church in Habchun, 23 February 1992.

¹⁰²Interview with Yehyun Woo on the same day.

major churches as such. It is true that there has been antagonism between the minjung church and the major churches. Many major churches have regarded the minjung church as a Christian "group" of social participation rather than a "church" of the Christian tradition, while the minjung church has criticised the indifference of major churches towards social transformation. However, life experience bridges the gap between the minjung church and the major churches: "it influences many conservative churches to join a kind of minjung church movement, even though they do not call themselves *minjung church*: their number is estimated to be far more than that of the minjung church belonging to the Association for Korean Minjung Church Movement."¹⁰³

The minjung's participation in a secular movement:

Life experience ultimately influences a popular movement beyond the boundary of Christian circles. Many minjung church pastors agree that the eucharist can provide the church with a norm for a new society. "The eucharist enables the congregation to experience the very nature of

¹⁰³Interview with Jaeho Lee on the same day.

When I visited Dongwol Church on the 26th of January 1992, I met with several pastors of conservative denominations who came to observe the church. We discussed how to restore the vitality of the church and agreed: (i) the life experience of the minjung church was stimulating major churches to change their attitude to the poor and social participation and (ii) life experienced in the table fellowship of the minjung church was one of the most crucial foundations of this transformation.

the ideal community and the way to participate in it."¹⁰⁴ "This experience gives more powerful motives [to Christians] than any isms can do, because Jesus, by giving his own body to others, demonstrated the utmost dimension of human practice";¹⁰⁵ and furthermore "it helps the church to participate in a secular movement as a *Christian community*."¹⁰⁶

Some minjung theologians, however, hesitate to accept the influencing power of the eucharist in a popular movement. They find in general the meaning of the resurrection within the minjung's self-consciousness rather than in the Bible; consequently they think that "the eucharist cannot be directly related to social ethics"¹⁰⁷ or "the eucharist does not possess in itself concrete power which could transform a society."¹⁰⁸ This kind of attitude to the eucharist seems to have resulted from their prejudice against the eucharist and reluctance to follow what and how the minjung themselves have experienced in their celebration of the eucharist. In other words, the

¹⁰⁴Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Bangjoo Jin on the same day.

¹⁰⁶Interview with Jinhan Suh, director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development in Seoul, 14 February 1992.

¹⁰⁷Interview with Kwangsun Suh, Ehwa Women's University in Seoul, 13 February 1992.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Yongbock Kim, Christian Centre for Asian Studies in Seoul, 20 February 1992.

minjung theologians have by and large rejected the tradition of the Church because of its lethargy: their interests have usually fallen on the minjung *outside* of the church, not those *inside* of the church.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, minjung theologians have said little about the church's particular role in a secular movement, even though they have continuously stimulated major churches from outside.

However, the minjung church has shown how the church should participate in a popular movement, i.e. what the church must not do to make a compromise with secular groups. The eucharist reveals that its life experience is the power which makes: (i) its socio-historical bearings Christian; (ii) the church involve itself in social and historical transformation more positively; and above all (iii) the church influence a secular movement so that it may be carried out in the realm of the kingdom of God movement.

The eucharist [and common meal] is a synonym for mission in my church because the intrinsic nature of the church can be understood as a community which

¹⁰⁹Both Kwangsun Suh and Yongbock Kim emphasise the importance of life experience: "Resurrection is understood as the rising up against the principalities of death on the cross" (Suh in *The Korean Minjung and Christ*, p. 182); "Resurrection is the utmost realisation of the minjung's hope and desire." Yongbock Kim, *Korean Minjung and Christianity* (Seoul: Hyungsung-sa, 1981), p. 103.

However, they seek the meaning of life not from the present experience of the minjung in church but from their secular experience, i.e. from their old tradition, e.g. the mask dance play (Suh), or from their story, the so-called "minjung's social biography" (Kim).

shares rice with neighbours. We must not confuse the kingdom of God movement with a secular movement. In the eucharist itself, we have the politics of God and the economics of God together. ¹¹⁰

For the minjung rice is life; their prayer for rice is a prayer for life. They know this because they have been deprived of their table. When they experience life in the eucharist, they know in what way they should share rice together. For example, they understand the reunification movement as one table movement between a divided people. The eucharist has social-ethical aspects in itself.¹¹¹

4. The Interrelationship of the Two Meals: a Twin Polarity

The minjung church has inherited two meal traditions: the eucharist from the Church and the common meal mainly from their own traditions. Notwithstanding their different origins, these two meals are not recognised as two separate meals because of their complementary relationship: (i) the eucharist helps the common meal to be understood as a meal

¹¹⁰Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

¹¹¹Interview with Bangjoo Jin on the same day.

Some minjung churches split a loaf of bread into two as a symbol not only of the broken body of Christ but also of a divided people and nation, just before they distribute the bread in the worship for the reunification. With half a loaf they take part in the body of Christ leaving the other half of bread on the communion table. This symbolises: (i) their celebration cannot be a full participation in the body of Christ as long as people are divided, and (ii) they are commissioned to take part in a reunification movement.

from Jesus; (ii) the common meal prevents the eucharist from falling into a mere ritualistic activity; and therefore (iii) both are necessary for an integral understanding of the church's mission as a table community movement.

The eucharist has been received to the Church as a gift from the Lord. Through its celebration, the congregation not merely recall the sacramental life of Jesus but also express their eschatological expectation: the congregation are consoled in their desperate lives by the death of Jesus who lived with the Galilean minjung, by the resurrection of the same Jesus who arose from death for them, and by the expectation of his coming that will bring the messianic kingdom. The eucharist is recognised as a symbolic meal from which the congregation can be encouraged to live as the people of God.

However, in actual worship, the eucharist is apt to lose its true meaning, mainly because it is usually understood as a ritualistic event and therefore it is celebrated, willingly or unwillingly, in an uncomfortable atmosphere. (Moreover, too often worship itself seems stale and lacking in vitality to many Christians.) As a result, the eucharist alone is hardly connected with a real practice of the congregation. In a case like this, the collective excitement acquired from the common meal in a festive atmosphere serves for the effectiveness of the

eucharist in worship.

In contrast to the eucharist, the common meal hardly even communicates an ethical tension (i.e. the meaning of Jesus's passion and death) though it delivers a more deepened excitement of joy and abundance of life which is expressed through the table fellowship of Jesus' community and that of the early Christian community. At such a time, the eucharist provides the congregation with a more penetrating meaning of the cross of Jesus behind the excitement of the common meal. Consequently the congregation experiences the whole event of Jesus through the reciprocal relationship of the eucharist and the common meal; and this reciprocity leads them to participate in the kingdom of God movement more eschatologically.

In order to have a better understanding of what and how the congregation experience in these two meals, let us observe a case of the Gogee Church and look at the interrelationship of these two meals.

Gogee Church is a small rural church in Yongin District.¹¹² The congregation number about ninety altogether (35 adults, 15 juveniles, and 40 children): there are about sixty families in the vicinity of the church. Most of the

¹¹²I myself have been a pastor in charge of this church between October 1986 and June 1990. Gogee Church is not a member church of the Association for Korean Minjung Church Movement; but it generally takes sides with the minjung church.

congregation are poor and uneducated tenant farmers. The church celebrates the eucharist four times a year; however, the common meal after Sunday service is enjoyed about twice a month, one only for adults and one for all the congregation. Occasionally, non-believers are invited to the common meal. The following is a brief report of the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper extended over three consecutive weeks in November 1989.

On the first Sunday (the 1st of November): It was a week before Thanksgiving Day. The congregation were advised to bring clean vegetables that they had produced during the summer. The vegetables were put on the communion table at the beginning of worship. The congregation gave thanks to God for His granting them a participation in His creative works. After worship, they prepared side dishes for the common meal themselves with the vegetables: meats were purchased from the market. Rice had been grown in the church's own paddy field. It had been farmed in turn by the congregation, without using harmful agricultural chemicals as a sign of the church's life activity. Two large traditional iron cauldrons for the common meal had already been installed in the backyard kitchen:¹¹³ each of them could produce steamed rice or soup at least for eighty

¹¹³The partaking of rice from the same cauldrons is an old custom of the Korean people which symbolises the building of community as one family.

adults.

The church had been planning to hold a village thanksgiving feast on the next Sunday. Several non-Christians were invited to the common meal to discuss the feast with the church: some of them attended Sunday service. While the common meal was being prepared, the others spread straw mats on the ground in order to set tables and they sang some songs with children on those mats. The whole process of the common meal progressed as a continuation of worship; but the common meal was less formal and more practical. After the common meal, the congregation discussed the village feast with other village people.

*On Thanksgiving Day (the 8th of November):*¹¹⁴ During the last week, the whole congregation were busy preparing food for the village feast and Thanksgiving Day, many village people helping them. Two pigs were slaughtered on Thursday. A letter of invitation had already been sent to every family in the village. For this event, the congregation had saved money during the year. It was an unusual occasion for a church to hold this kind of event in the Korean social context, especially in rural areas.

The village feast had a two-fold meaning. For the church, it was a good opportunity of training to link its experience of the common meal to its mission outside of its

¹¹⁴The date of Thanksgiving Day differs from occasion to occasion according to the time of harvest.

walls; and for the village, it helped non-Christian people to overcome their prejudice that the church was an exclusive institution which had nothing to do with worldly affairs. For the past year, the church had positively participated in its mission to the village, by giving scholarships to the poor students, by helping the sick and elderly in their farming fields, by setting up benches in bus stops, by providing its attached building for a peasant band to practice in, and so on. To hold a village feast was understood as a symbolic act of the church's mission to the village.

Both the rice-cake and rice-wine were indispensable for the feast: the former was prepared by the women's association in the church; and the latter was prepared by the peasant band. The other expenses were borne by the church. The village feast began at noon after Sunday worship. All programmes progressed under the joint auspices of the church and village. After a short thanksgiving service with village people, all danced together joyously to the accompaniment of the peasant band. The common meal followed and then farm music and dance again continued. Intermittently some people delivered words of thanksgiving. Food was provided to anyone whenever needed. About two hundred people enjoyed the feast which lasted until five o'clock. Several kinds of rice cakes were distributed to the families which did not come to the feast.

On The third Sunday (the 15th of November): On this Sunday the eucharist was to be celebrated. It had been announced to each congregation, including children, that they should bring a fruit of any kind. At the beginning of worship, the congregation (i) stood up one following another while the others were singing a hymn of praise, (ii) place the fruits one by one in the middle of the nave, (iii) formed a cross with the fruits, and then (iv) sat on the floor boards around the cross face to face rather than facing the pulpit. It was a symbolic act of confession that (i) the congregation, no matter how their lives were led in the world, were under the power of the cross, i.e. they were sinners who need the grace of God, (ii) now they were invited to the cross, and (iii) their sins would be forgiven before the cross. And then they were given a few minutes of time to contemplate the cross in relation to their lives with God and with one another.

The eucharist itself was celebrated in silence, because the congregation knew what to do by experience: they were advised to meditate what relationship existed between the taking of the body and blood of Christ and standing before the cross. While meditating, those who had been baptised came near of their own will to the communion table and took the elements. Sometimes children chattered amongst themselves; however the atmosphere was by no means destroyed.

During the celebration of the eucharist, the congregation took the fruits back from the cross one by one: consequently each had a different fruit from his or her original. This symbolised: (i) their lives were renewed through the cross; (ii) they were given back the cross into their lives; and moreover (iii) their lives received a new meaning through the lives of other people. The congregation holding hands sang a song as a conclusion of the worship, and then shared the fruits with one another. The words of the song were:

We love one another with the love of the Lord.

We love one another with the love of the Lord.

As brothers and sisters,

Seeing the glorification of the Lord;

We love one another with the love of the Lord.

In the evening worship, the whole congregation had a time to exchange their opinions regarding the three meals of the past three weeks, i.e. the common meal, the village feast, and the eucharist. They all confessed with one consent that they had been moved by the whole process of those meals: particularly, they affirmed that the eucharist was much influenced by the other two meals. Their experiences of the three meals helped them: (i) to find the true meaning of the cross and resurrection in their own life situations; (ii) to recognise the nature of the

church's mission to its neighbours; and moreover (iii) to expand their missionary imagination to contemporary socio-historical tasks, as one of the congregation confessed:

After the eucharist in the morning, I, even though ignorant, poor, and socially weak, at last come to realise why I as a Christian have to pray for the people who are in prison and for the reunification of the nation (Youngsoon Kim).

In the minjung church, the body of Jesus is shared through two channels: through the eucharist as the remembrance of him and through the common meal as the representation of his table community in its given context. The bilateral relationship of the two meals are reviewed:

First, the congregation perceive the indispensability of God's righteousness mainly through the eucharist while they learn how to respond to it mainly through the common meal. That is to say, these meals are celebrated in terms of the covenant meal: the interdependence of the two meals helps the congregation to discern their covenant relationship with God by experiencing the communion with Jesus which is revealed in the mutual service among themselves. The common meal enables the participants to realise that the eucharist is not just a symbolic meal at a sacred table but it is celebrated as a climax of their ordinary meals in which their social activities are reflected; on the other hand, the eucharist helps them to know that their ordinary meals also come from the Lord,

i.e. they are to be understood in the light of the eucharist.

The Lord's Supper implies that a sacred meal and a plain meal are not two separate meals to the minjung. It means that the minjung can find the righteousness of God and respond to it in their real life situations. This experience refuses a kind of Platonic dualism which hinders the minjung in discovering their own reality by dividing heaven and earth, the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the profane, and so on.¹¹⁵

Secondly, the reciprocity of the two meals clarifies the interrelationship between worship and ethics. The congregation celebrate the eucharist as an act to confess their sins and receive the body of Christ as a sign of the forgiving of those sins. The common meal is shared as its extension; therefore it suggests a strong implication of reconciliation.

The experience of the confessing and the forgiving of sins is an important characteristic of the minjung church, because this experience makes it possible for the minjung to embrace the non-minjung rather than to reject them, as

¹¹⁵Dualistic thoughts force the minjung *politically* to be dazzled by the political messianism and *religiously* by the salvation beyond this world. It cannot give an answer to the present sufferings of the minjung. Therefore "the power of dualistic thoughts enslave the minjung to submit to the existing value structure. The minjung church stimulates the minjung to struggle against this power by celebrating their own lives." Interview with Yehyun Woo on the same day.

Jesus forgave them when he gave himself on the cross (Cf. Luke 23:34). "This attitude comes from the collective confession of sins which has been experienced through the table fellowship. It shows the minjung's eagerness to sit at the same table with the non-minjung, of major churches as well as of the world."¹¹⁶

... and may God lead us to forgive
 pastors who are better off than believers,
 churches which are more affluent than societies,
 scholars who live better than disciples,
 Poets who are richer than readers,
 and the rulers who are fatter than their people.¹¹⁷

Lastly, the tasting of life is essential in both meals and their reciprocity enables the congregation to experience life more concretely: the eucharist helps the congregation to experience the mystery of life; and the common meal shows that this experience is more open to their social lives. In this sense, the celebration of life is a powerful demonstration of liberation against a dominant value structure, i.e. against the anti-life power of the non-minjung. Life can serve the inner basis for a Christian way of liberation, inside and outside of the

¹¹⁶Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

¹¹⁷From a poem, titled "A letter to Yahweh", by Junghee Koh.

church.

Major churches in general are so largely enculturated to the ethos of consumerism that they have almost lost (i) the memory of the historical Jesus, especially that of his table community movement, and moreover (ii) the eschatological hope for the kingdom of God. Their depreciation of memory and ridicule of hope are mainly caused by their loss of life experience, and *vice versa*. As a result, they have little power to hold the faith tradition *internally* or to act against the idolatrous systems of the world *externally*. The minjung church as the representation of Jesus' community demonstrates that life is experienced in the sharing of small things rather than in material affluence. Its celebration of life, both in the eucharist and the common meal, is a symbolic but powerful sign which influences the major churches in their overcoming of prevailing value systems aimed at material prosperity as well as in their restoring of the true nature of the church.

Life experienced from the mutual influence of the two meals also directs the Christian way of participating in social transformations: the more vividly the church experiences life, the more clearly its language communicates life to the world for a new society, and eventually the more positively the church can participate

in contemporary social issues.¹¹⁸ "The role of life may look somewhat abstract in the sight of those who have been oriented by the social sciences. Life, however, cherishes the minjung's eschatological expectation better than any other secular movements in the world."¹¹⁹ The Lord's Supper, therefore, serves the minjung church as a counter-cultural community which demonstrates its life experience to the dominant culture of the church as well as that of the world.

III. CONCLUSION

The most distinguishing characteristic of the minjung church in relation to the Lord's Supper lies without doubt on the significance of the common meal, which makes possible for the church to reinterpret the meaning of the Jesus' community in the context of Korean society. The history of the minjung church witnesses that the common meal has influenced greatly not only the theology and practice of the eucharist but also the whole life and work

¹¹⁸The language of transcendence is necessary. Without it, in the first place, politics is distorted and, in the second place, faith itself is to be distorted. "The mystique nourishes the politics." D.B. Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Politics: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 81-83, 99.

¹¹⁹Interview with Kisung Ahn on the same day.

of the church.

As observed in the first chapter, the Korean church has several possibilities for its vitalisation of the eucharist. The minjung church's experience of the common meal is expected to inspire a deeper understanding of the eucharist within major churches, mainly in two ways.

Firstly, the experience of the common meal could prevent the eucharist of major churches from being caught up in the present tendency of the Korean church as such, i.e. from deteriorating into an extremely individual experience. The fact that some churches have exploited the eucharist as a tool for a mystical experience (e.g. Yoido Full Gospel Church)¹²⁰ implies that the eucharist has another possibility, that of being taken hostage by many major churches as long as they are only interested in quantitative church growth. The experience of the common meal could contribute some suggestions to the Korean church not only for its rediscovery of the meaning of Jesus' community and the early Christian community but also for a recovery of its own meal tradition established in the early

¹²⁰Yoido Full Gospel Church suggests two contrasting possibilities. The one is that the church celebrates the eucharist once a month. This implies that large churches could celebrate it more frequently if they wish to do so.

The other is that the church gives its deviated example. During eucharistic celebration, the preacher, by often shouting "Hallelujah!" and by using an ecstatic utterance in a loud voice, leads the congregation to a mystical atmosphere, i.e. to an individual relationship with God. Cf. Wansang Han, *Op, cit.*, pp. 208-209.

mission era; and eventually the common meal experience could help the eucharist to become related to the building of a new community rather than be limited to individual experience.

Secondly, more positively, the experience of the common meal could provide major churches with a new understanding of a Christian community in terms of its mission to the world. The minjung church *on the one hand*, as seen in the Eewood Church Liturgy, has disclosed the social aspect of sin by confessing that it is a "refusal" (i) to love Jesus and neighbours under the pretext of the evil structure of the world, (ii) to reestablish the community of the historical Jesus in its given situation, and (iii) to follow the way of Jesus, i.e. to participate in the kingdom of God movement. *On the other hand*, the minjung church demonstrates how those sinful situations are overcome by life experience in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, both in the eucharist and the common meal. Especially, the scene of the common meal is often professed by the participants themselves as the foundation of a new church and moreover of a new society: what is spiritually experienced in worship is materialised in the common meal, i.e. what is proclaimed is not isolated from what ought to be done in real lives.

It is not easy to declare the results of how much the common meal experience of the minjung church has influenced

major churches in their understanding and celebration of the eucharist, because the history of the minjung church, especially a church as a faith community, is very short. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the minjung church's experience of the Lord's Supper has not only proposed a challenging example of how the Korean church can participate in the body and blood of Christ in its social context but also it has given a lesson to major churches that if the socio-ethical implications of the common meal is fully communicated to the liturgy, worship becomes more suggestive and thus could be more influential to the changes of the participants' life style.

In order for major churches to utilise the significance of the common meal to their worship and practice, they too are required to develop more positively their existing table fellowship experience. Many churches, for example, maintain dining halls for a lunch after Sunday service according to custom (it is an old custom for Koreans to enjoy table fellowship after participating in the same event) and a practical necessity (in the afternoon many believers have something to contribute by their church positions). Simple meals are served at cost to anyone who wants to partake; and most worship attendants enjoy table fellowship, group by group. Though this meal practice is customarily continued without any particular interpretations (in the early mission days, the sharing of

food itself implied the overcoming of social barriers), its meaning could be reinterpreted in the light of Jesus' table community and their own meal tradition; accordingly the whole process of the meal can also be changed in terms of the building of a new table community.

Besides a direct meal practice among the congregation, the major churches' growing concern about social problems can also deepen their understanding of the eucharist. For instance, major churches initiated "The Rice of Love Movement" with the support of *The Hankook Ilbo* [newspaper] in March 1990. The purpose of the movement was "to share surplus rice with the poor and needy neighbours."¹²¹ Because the sharing of rice with the needy has been a tradition of long standing, many non-Christians too have shown a friendly disposition to the movement. During the first year of the movement 2,622,452,885 won (about 3.2 million US dollars) were collected by five hundred thousand odd people; and rice was bought with the contributions and distributed to needy people both at home and abroad, several Asian and African countries including North Korea.¹²² This movement has continued for more than three years. It is true that this movement has started and been carried out by the practice of Christian love; however if

¹²¹The Hankook Ilbo, *Let's Share Rice of Love* (Seoul: The Hankook Ilbo newspaper, 1991), p. 7.

¹²²*Ibid.*, pp. 15, 33.

this sharing of rice is reinterpreted in terms of a social practice of their "offertory rice" tradition and if it goes a step farther and can be related to the participation in the body of Christ, it could enrich the eucharistic tradition of the Korean church in its understanding and celebration. The minjung church's experience of the Lord's Supper should be able to help major churches in their rediscovery of a social and historical meaning inherent in their customary meals, enabling a transformation of their own communities.

PART FOUR

CONCLUSION: THE LORD'S SUPPER -
THE BREAD FOR TODAY AND THE BREAD FOR TOMORROW

The last part of this dissertation puts together the meal tradition in the Bible (Part One), that of the Korean minjung (Part Two), and the understanding of the Lord's Supper in the Korean Church (Part Three). There are several points of similarity and difference between the biblical meal tradition and the minjung's meal tradition. These points, in spite of some incompatible factors, could enrich each other's understanding for a deeper comprehension of the Lord's Supper. The first chapter discusses the similarity and difference of two meal traditions in relation to the minjung church's celebration of the Lord's Supper; and the second chapter suggests a new direction of the eucharistic theology and its practice.

I. THE CONFLUENCE OF THE TWO MEAL TRADITIONS

1. The Point of Similarity

The following are some similarities between the

biblical and minjung tradition which enrich the eucharistic theology and practice of the minjung church.

First, in both traditions, the common sharing of food plays an important role in relation to the building of a new society; and the common meal suggests strong ethical implications.

In the biblical tradition, bread is gifted as a fundamental medium used to maintain the creation order in its perfection. Since human beings disobeyed God by eating His forbidden fruit, their management of bread has become problematic and the original state of *koinonia* is no longer sustained. And the messianic kingdom, where the broken creation order will be restored, has been envisaged: it is frequently described in terms of the heavenly banquet.

Bread is a powerful language to interpret the process of liberation towards the consummation of God's salvation history. The proximate goal of liberation is concretised by table fellowship with God and amongst His people. The table community of Jesus is the historical counterpart of what he envisages and proclaims. In his prayer, the kingdom of God is the place where bread is shared together: to pray for the kingdom of God and to pray for bread are the same thing. The sharing of bread is concerned about the transformation of a community; and the community is eschatologically opened to the messianic kingdom. This idea is well expressed through worship. The breakdown of table

fellowship, therefore, is directly related both to the split of a community and to the distortion of worship. Mission is identified with the expansion of the table community in the world. Bread is the food for the kingdom of God.

In the minjung tradition, rice is above all understood as a gift from Heaven. Rice contains the will of Heaven and thus is recognised not only as the embodiment of Heaven but also as a medium with which to practice the will of Heaven. Rice, therefore, should be shared amongst people as many and as evenly as possible. The scene of the common meal is often described as the basic figure of *the world of great solidarity*: it is the point of departure for a society the minjung have dreamed of. As most minjung's stories about paradise are filled with a picture of rice-sharing in affluence, the common meal is the best expression of their desired society. The sharing of rice, as practical ethics, has been underlined as a social and religious requirement.

The minjung church reinterprets the biblical meal tradition on the basis of the minjung's meal tradition. In and through the common meal, the minjung church demonstrates that Jesus' table community is being represented in the midst of the minjung. Moreover, they confess that the kingdom of God has been partly realised in the sharing of food together. The common meal experience helps the minjung not only to overcome their desperate

situations but also to celebrate their lives in the eschatological expectation of the messianic age. The common meal gives them the opportunity of training in order to find out for themselves how to participate in the kingdom of God movement: it is used as an indispensable means to link their faith life (worship) to their social life (practice).

Second, the presence of divinity is an essential theme of the common meal in both meal traditions.

The common meal celebrated in the presence of God ratifies the relationship between God and His people. The presence of God is always related to concrete historical events (it is more clearly manifested through the three-fold incarnation of Jesus) and thus the meal experience is related to the process of history. In the presence of God -- the God who controls food -- people experience radical egalitarianism: neither can people exploit others nor disobey Him by means of food. Moreover, the presence of God makes it possible for His people to know that His righteousness precedes human justice and encourages them to participate in the kingdom of God movement in *His* way for the spread of *His* will in the world.

The presence of Heaven is also essential in the minjung's understanding of rice, through which Heaven and the minjung can be united. The sharing of rice is a symbolic act to demonstrate that the will of Heaven is

realised amongst people who share Heaven together: it is the act to receive Heaven in their bodies. When people share together the same Heaven in their bodies through rice, they can serve others as Heaven. The common sharing of food, therefore, is not understood as just eating together, but as participating in each others' destiny and hope.

The meal celebration in the minjung church is characterised both by the experience of the presence of Jesus Christ and by the table fellowship created by this presence among the congregation. The experience of his presence combines two main themes: "God is Bread" of the biblical tradition and "Rice is Heaven" of the minjung tradition. The latter enables the congregation to discover the secret of Jesus' three-fold incarnation, not as a fixed doctrine but as a presently happening historical event, and moreover to commit themselves to follow him.

Lastly, the presence of God or Heaven experienced in the meal makes several theological topics be understood in a clearer sense, e.g. the people of God, a community as one family, peace as a sign of Emmanuel, etc.

The people of God: the poor are without doubt called as the nucleus of the table community movement throughout the biblical tradition. However two things should be noticed. The one is that rich are not excluded from the invitation to the table community movement, although their

repentance is a precondition that cannot be compromised. The other is that the poor are not guaranteed a part in the feast of the kingdom. They are also called to repentance. This two way repentance through table fellowship brings about reconciliation between the rich and the poor. The people of God in a biblical sense are defined in the light of their repentance and the following reconciliation.

The minjung's meal tradition witnesses that Heaven is found in the midst of the minjung, especially in their sufferings. And from the viewpoint that the spirit of Heaven is manifested through the minjung: the minjung are recognised as the subjects of history. In the presence of Heaven, the minjung transcend not only over the non-minjung who oppress them but also over themselves. This experience of "critical transcendence" discloses the attitude of the *true* minjung to the non-minjung.

Through the experience of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church, the minjung recognise that they are the subjects of the kingdom of God movement. Nevertheless, the minjung confess that they are at the same time but sinners whose sins should be forgiven. This confession implies that the sins of the minjung cannot be justified under the pretext that they are victims of the evil structure of the world. On the other hand, the minjung's self-awareness of their sins, traditional and social, leads them to forgive the non-minjung and moreover to embrace them as the same

people of God. The Lord's Supper makes it possible for the minjung themselves to realise who the people of God are.

A community as one family: In both Testaments, the common sharing of food plays a role in uniting each diner into a family relationship. As the table is one of the best places where a family can communicate with each other on equal terms, the egalitarianism in the table community as a new family overcomes dominant social, economic, and racial barriers. It is in the family metaphor that the reconciling power of the common meal is fully exercised.

The community-family idea is more directly expressed in the minjung tradition. A family (*siggu*) originally means "those who share rice from the same cauldron." The community-family idea is so strong that the minjung think more of rice-relationship than blood-relationship. When a common meal is shared among a community, all the communicants become associated as one family. The we-feeling created by family consciousness has made a new society envisaged as the place where rice is shared as if among a family. In this respect, the minjung tradition identifies the process of the table community movement with the expansion of this rice-sharing family.

The minjung church is regarded as a family. In and through the common meal, individual families are dispersed and then all the congregation are united into a new family. The idea of rice-sharing from the same cauldron is directly

applied to the partaking of the same body of Christ in the eucharist. To become one family is, as experienced and confessed by the congregation, the beginning of community ethics.

Peace as a sign of Emmanuel: To be given peace (*shalom*) is a sign of God's presence in the religious life of a community; moreover it is a sign of His continuing presence in its social life. The purpose of the common meal is to establish the peace of God. It generates *faith* in the faithfulness of God that His righteousness will eventually be victorious. In and through peace, the people of God can overcome dominant value structures. The function of peace is powerfully confessed in terms of historical war against God's enemies who are dependent on the bread of false gods. When peace is understood in the light of the resurrection, its meaning obtains a more eschatological significance in relation to the participation in the mission of God.

Peace (*pyunghwa*) in the minjung tradition is the ultimate purpose of rice-sharing, which is regarded as the most basic activity for the establishment of the world of great solidarity. The common sharing of rice creates peace. This small peace connotes a peaceful state amongst a community without any complication and a state where all causes of conflict are removed. This small peace is opened to a world filled with big peace, where the will of Heaven prevails.

Owing to both meal traditions, peace is particularly emphasised in the minjung church. However, the minjung's own understanding of peace is radically reinterpreted in the light of the congregation's life experience. This peace — the power of life — is the peace that the world cannot give. It is the power that the church can use to transform the world. The meaning of peace is summarised in the peace-proclamation: "Let us become ambassadors of the peace to work for unity and reconciliation by overcoming the evil of social structures."

2. The Point of Difference

Notwithstanding several similarities between the biblical and minjung tradition, some differences should be clarified so that the Lord's Supper in a particular context may not lose its true meaning.

The communion between God and humanity is revealed culminating through the cross of Jesus, where he gives his body as food for the continuation of his table community movement. His cross makes manifest who the true God is; and his cross also makes manifest who real humanity is. In this respect, the eucharist, where the church "proclaims the death of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:26), enables the celebrants to restore their relationship with God and to communicate with one another as *imago Christi* (2

Corinthians 3:18).

The minjung tradition shows how humanity can become united with Heaven by means of rice-sharing. The eating of rice is understood as the very act of the "receiving of Heaven" which develops into the "nurturing of Heaven" and then to the "practicing of Heaven." When rice is eaten, the minjung are able to confess that "Heaven eats Heaven" and to taste *the heavenly kingdom on the earth*.

It is true that the minjung tradition emphasises practical ethics, and its meal suggests strong ethical implications. However its ethic is not so thoroughgoing as that of the biblical tradition. The Bible reveals that there is a gate of the last judgement between the table in this world and the table of the heavenly banquet in the kingdom of God. The heavenly banquet will be celebrated only amongst those who are able to pass through the gate of the last judgement, which is also described in terms of the earthly practice of bread-sharing (in Matthew 25). Radical ethics in a social sense, therefore, is by no means given up in order to sit at the table of the heavenly banquet. This ethics is determined by how a community follows the crucified Jesus. In this respect, the ethics of the table community is called the ethics of the cross.

The practice of cross-carrying ethics is possible through the forgiveness of sins. (In the minjung tradition, no concept of sins is found. This fact has affected

directly or indirectly most minjung theologians' unconditional option for the minjung on the one hand and their radical denial of the transcendental God on the other hand.) As table fellowship is a powerful act of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' community, the minjung church partakes of a meal as a sign of forgiveness. When the grace of forgiveness is experienced collectively, this experience deepens their joy of liberation and provides them with new life. In this respect, the ethics of the table community is also called the ethics of the resurrection.

The presence of God or Heaven in this world is one of the main themes in both traditions. Heaven in the minjung tradition is easily identified with earth. This idea, of course, is the strength of the minjung tradition to the point that it overcomes a kind of Platonic dualism. This attitude, however, is apt to lose the idea of Heaven as an Absolute, seen that the new world of which the minjung dream is purely an earthly one. Contrary to the minjung tradition, God in the biblical tradition is the transcendental One as well as the immanent One. A transcendental God helps His people to sustain their eschatological hope against hope, whilst an immanent God enables them to overcome their present sufferings in liberating joy. The minjung church demonstrates that these two Gods are dynamically experienced as one and the same God in the Lord's Supper.

The fact that the Lord's Supper is celebrated in the remembrance of historical events, is a distinctive strong point of the biblical tradition: the common meal in the minjung tradition has been celebrated without being related to the remembrance of historical liberation. The historicisation of natural meals in the biblical tradition makes it possible for the minjung's meal tradition to be interpreted in the light of salvation history. When the minjung church discovers the historical meaning of the minjung's customary meal in its celebration of the Lord's Supper, their hope for the messianic age becomes more eschatological.

II. The Eucharist: Invitation to the Following of Jesus

As long as the God of transcendence is essential for a Christian community and as long as the community needs His forgiving grace, worship stands at the heart of its faith life.

The common meal makes it possible for worship to be offered in relation to the communicants' experience of the immanent God and to their confession of sins. The biblical meal tradition has witnessed that the presence of God is experienced through the common sharing of a meal, and the table fellowship is usually enjoyed in the realm of

worship; and the table fellowship has a ceremonial aspect when the confessing of sins and the forgiving of sins are experienced.

The eucharist should contain these common meal experiences in itself and be celebrated in continuation with the sharing of a real meal. By the common meal experiences, they sum up all social relationships that the congregation maintain among themselves and all the social bearings that they desire. Unless the eucharist as a *ritual* meal is inseparably related to the common meal as a *real* meal, it cannot find its significance in worship. That is to say, in order for the eucharist to restore its authentic meaning, eucharistic worship and eucharistic practice should be renewed at the same time. Most Korean churches, for example, provide a small piece of wafer, an uncommon form of bread, as a symbol of the body of Christ. In addition to the unfamiliarity of the wafer, their eucharistic worship rarely communicates the significance of the meal tradition or seldom historicises their own meal tradition in spite of much transmitted food-symbolism; and moreover they scarcely relate the partaking of his body to eucharistic practice. As a result, the recipients are hardly moved by wafers in actual eucharistic celebration.

The minjung church bridges the gap between the ritual meal and the real meal by celebrating both meals as mutually dependent. As they are understood as a twin

polarity, each meal does not provide the full significance of the Lord's Supper on its own. The theology and practice of the Lord's Supper in the minjung church has given a simple lesson: the narrower the gap between the ritual meal and the real meal becomes, the more the eucharistic worship becomes suggestive; inversely, the wider the gap between the two meals, the more the meaning of the eucharist deteriorates into a mere ritualistic activity. One practical suggestion: Notwithstanding the importance of the common meal, the eucharist in every local congregation cannot be always celebrated in relation to the common meal. Although the common meal is more direct, the minjung church has shown that the Word and church's social participation are to be substituted for it.

The unity of the ritual meal and the real meal makes the eucharist celebrated in following ways.

First, when the eucharist is interpreted in the light of the real meal, the eucharistic element is not regarded as some special holy symbol but as a kind of ordinary meal. The congregation are able to realise that its emphasis is placed on the transformation of the community and that its mystery is experienced in their community-transforming participation.

Second, the unity of the two meals make the eucharistic celebrants recognise that *now* is the eschatological time, that is, the present is not understood

in a chronological sense but in a kairological sense. Owing to this recognition, the kingdom of God is interpreted in terms of a concrete socio-historical process in the expectation of its eschatological fulfillment, not in terms of a futuristic or present eschatology.

Lastly, the unity discloses that worship and ethic are not separately dealt with. The minjung tradition demonstrates that the practice of Heaven, as a revolutionary process whereby the minjung regain their bereaved Heaven and rice, begins with the turning of an offering table around towards them which has previously faced false gods. Likewise, the minjung church, by celebrating the meal offered to God and the meal gifted from God at the same table, witnesses that true worship is the internal basis of Christian social ethics, and the latter is the external basis of the former.¹

In conclusion, an illustration is made in order to expound the basic role of the eucharist in the light of an ordinary Korean feast. At table, all courses are in common, whilst in the West each person has his or her own separate portion of food. When Koreans sit together at table, except for rice and usually also soup, all other dishes are eaten from a common bowl. Rice is the only requirement for a participation in the feast. Without rice, no one can enjoy

¹Cf. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), pp. 94, 228.

the meal with others even if he or she sits at the table. However, the table is always opened to anyone who has a bowl of rice even if he or she is late for the feast. A bowl of rice is like a letter of invitation which makes it possible to share the joy of table fellowship with others. The receiving of the eucharistic element can be understood in this way, when the fact that Jesus establishes his table community in the midst of the world is remembered. That is to say, the receiving of the element is no more than that of invitation to the table of Jesus, i.e. to the following of the historical Jesus. As rice is not meant as the main feast, although it is indispensable for its participation, the eucharistic element itself is only the antepast of the Lord's Table in the world, and furthermore of the messianic banquet in the kingdom of God. The broken body of Christ reveals the norm of Christian practice and moves the church to the Lord's Table from where Jesus invites the people of God, as the minjung confess that "all the truth of the universe is contained in a bowl of rice."

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